

MUSIC THEATRE INTERNATIONAL

MUSIC THEATRE INTERNATIONAL is one of the world's major dramatic licensing agencies, specializing in Broadway, Off-Broadway and West End musicals. Since its founding in 1952, MTI has been responsible for supplying scripts and musical materials to theatres worldwide and for protecting the rights and legacy of the authors whom it represents. It has been a driving force in cultivating new work and in extending the production life of some of the classics: *Guys and Dolls*, *West Side Story*, *Fiddler On The Roof*, *Les Misérables*, *Annie*, *Of Thee I Sing*, *Ain't Misbehavin'*, *Damn Yankees*, *The Music Man*, *Evita*, and the complete musical theatre works of composer/lyricist Stephen Sondheim, among others. Apart from the major Broadway and Off-Broadway shows, MTI is proud to represent youth shows, revues and musicals which began life in regional theatres and have since become worthy additions to the musical theatre canon. MTI shows have been performed by 30,000 amateur and professional theatrical organizations throughout the U.S. and Canada, and in over 60 countries around the world. Whether it's at a high school in Kansas, by an all-female troupe in Japan or the first production of *West Side Story* ever staged in Estonia, productions of MTI musicals involve over 10 million people each year.

Although we value all our clients, the twelve thousand high schools who perform our shows are of particular importance, for it is at these schools that music and drama educators work to keep theatre alive in their community. MTI shares with these educators the goal of raising the next generation of theatre artists and audiences. To help these educators, it has taken a leading role in theatre education by creating MTI THEATRICAL RESOURCES, a "theatrical tool box" designed to help not only ensure the success of each musical production, but also to establish the study of musical theatre as a permanent part of the school curriculum. These resources include: STUDY GUIDES designed to bring the study of specific shows into the classroom; MTI REHEARSCORES® which provide unlimited rehearsal accompaniment via an easy-to-use, fully interactive computer program on disk; professional TV SPOTS allowing companies to affordably advertise on television in local markets; LOGO PACKS to aide in poster and program design; TRANSPOSITIONS-ON-DEMAND to allow flexibility in casting and musical key changes; and VIDEO CONVERSATIONPIECES™ featuring video seminars with artists such as Martin Charnin, Stephen Sondheim and Scott Ellis discussing the creation of their shows from inception to production.

MTI is also a leader in providing materials to meet the increasing demand for symphonic arrangements of popular theatre music. The MTI CONCERT LIBRARY offers arrangements of selected songs, as well as full scores from Broadway shows.

Musicals are America's premiere contribution to the theatre and MTI is firmly committed to supporting and nurturing a musical theatre that will continue to develop and flourish into the next century.





Based on a concept by **David De Silva**

Book by **José Fernandez**

Lyrics by **Jacques Levy**

Music by **Steven Margoshes**

Title Song "Fame" written by **Dean Pitchford and Michael Gore**

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About *Fame — The Musical*

Fame — The Musical, which follows two successful predecessors, the hit movie and the television series, focuses on the last class to graduate from New York's High School of Performing Arts on 46th Street before the school relocated to Lincoln Center. *Fame — The Musical*, with a book by José Fernandez, and a score by composer Steven Margoshes and lyricist Jacques Levy, tells an insightful and exciting story about the passions and dedication shared by a group of young people with exceptional artistic gifts.

The show documents the prayers, hopes, and ambitions of a group of committed and talented streetwise students as they work to develop their unique talents with the encouragement of a supportive faculty. We learn about the temptations facing these aspiring dancers, actors, and musicians, their need for values, and the importance of discipline in their lives as they confront issues ranging like illiteracy, drug abuse to racial strife. We stay with them through four years of intense involvement with their art, following their frustrations and their triumphs from the first day of their freshman year until graduation.

A melting pot musical, *Fame* mixes rich, poor, black, white, and Latino in a charged environment packed with exhilarating, youthful energy as the students strive to meet academic requirements and yearn for stardom. Some excel, while others are unable to overcome the pressures. Others realize that even for the most talented, too much ambition too soon can lead to a collision with the wall of stark reality.

David De Silva conceived, developed and produced the MGM motion picture *Fame* and served as consulting producer for the TV series, which ran for six years on network television. Long believing that *Fame* would make a powerful musical theatre work, De Silva guided the project to a realization of that dream. De Silva has become known as "Father Fame" for his commitment to *Fame* through all its incarnations.

The Show had its world premiere at the Coconut Grove Playhouse in Miami in 1989

The Characters in *Fame: The Musical*

The Actors:

NICK PIAZZA is a handsome and serious-minded boy who has had professional acting work. He longs to perfect his craft and play the classic roles on the stage.

SERENA KATZ is an emotional and insecure girl from Brooklyn. Meryl Streep is her professional role model.

JOE (JOSÉ) VEGAS is a Hispanic youth with energy and charm. He is a natural clown who seems more interested in impressing his classmates than his teachers.

The Dancers:

CARMEN DIAZ is a dynamic Hispanic girl who is fiercely ambitious and determined to succeed at all costs.

TYRONE JACKSON is a charismatic student who moves from “dancin’ on the sidewalk” in the rough neighborhoods of New York to becoming the best dancer in the school. He is illiterate and his poor academic performance and defensive attitude get in his way.

IRIS KELLY is blonde, beautiful and a trained dancer. Although she is initially perceived to be snobbish by the others, she really has a need to fit in.

MABEL WASHINGTON is a pretty, plump, black student. Her appetite threatens her ambition to be a dancer. She has a terrific sense of humor about herself.

The Musicians:

SCHLOMO METZENBAUM is a sincere and sensitive violinist. As the son of a successful composer, he is confident of his musical abilities but lacks social confidence among his peers.

GRACE LAMB (“LAMBCHOPS”) is a quirky, tomboyish percussionist from Staten Island.

GOODMAN KING (“GOODY”) is a trumpeter.

The Teachers:

MISS SHERMAN is a dedicated English teacher. She has never married and is completely devoted to her students. She seems unbending, but is ruled by a deep commitment to preparing her students to survive in the real world.

MISS BELL is a well-meaning, intense dance teacher who is dedicated to teaching the discipline of dance as a foundation for learning, even if it precludes academic achievement.

MR. MYERS is an attractive, easygoing drama teacher who teaches acting technique and looks for ways to challenge all of his students.

MR. SHEINKOPF is a music teacher who represents tradition. He teaches the music Mozart and Bach and a respect for technique.

Also:

A CHORUS of dancers who play a composite of the rest of the student body.

Synopsis of *Fame – The Musical*

ACT ONE (Freshman and Sophomore Years)

Fame —The Musical is set in New York City's old High School of Performing Arts building on 46th Street during the years of 1980 through 1984. The piece never leaves the grand, historic and dilapidated school as the students change clothes, catch up on homework, sneak a cigarette, move from class to class or just hang out. The school would be like every other high school except in the halls dancers may be exercising, musicians may be practicing and actors may be rehearsing. The outside world is heard in the rumble of the subway and the muffled blare of taxi horns.

As the curtain rises, a group of students appear with sealed envelopes in their hands and sing the prologue "Hard Work/Pray I Make P.A." They open the envelopes and discover, joyfully, they have been accepted into "P.A.," the competitive High School of the Performing Arts. As they are welcomed by Miss Sherman, their new homeroom teacher, they realize the school is a far different reality than the one they had seen fantasized in the movie "Fame."

"THIS AIN'T NO PICTURE SHOW
PLAYIN' IN A THEATER
OR A VIDEO FANTASY
I WAS ALWAYS HOT TO SEE ON THE T.V."

But they are wildly anxious to show the faculty what they can do and wonder which of their new classmates will come out "shining like a jewel in the 'Fame' School."

Miss Sherman tells them if they think they'll "live forever" or expect to dance on top of cars the way their movie counterparts did, they are sadly mistaken. She warns them P.A. is still a public school and academic subjects demand equal time.

Arguing amongst themselves that their specialties — drama, music or dance — are the hardest professions in the world, the students resolve to survive and prove they can take the pressure.

"I'M ALIVE
AND I WILL SURVIVE;
SHOW THE WORLD THAT I CAN TAKE IT.
WHEN I HIT THE HEIGHTS
PUT MY NAME IN LIGHTS
SHOW THE WORLD THAT I CAN MAKE IT
BY DOIN' HARD WORK!"

Serena, who has a crush on Nick, tells him she is really impressed by the commercials she has seen him in on T.V.. He is embarrassed by them, as he would like to become a "serious" actor in the theatre. He introduces her to Stanislavsky's *An Actor Prepares*. He sings:

"I WANT TO MAKE MAGIC
I WANT TO ELECTRIFY THE PLACE
I WANT TO BE MORE THAN JUST
A FOOL WITH MAKE-UP ON HIS FACE."

Nick suggests they work on a scene together. She hopes it will be a romantic one.

In dance class, Miss Bell introduces a new girl, Iris. She is a beautiful, "trained" ballerina who immediately becomes the center of attention. When Tyrone becomes enamored with Iris, Carmen becomes jealous and a rivalry develops. The class dances to Beethoven's *Spring Sonata* as Tyrone and Iris wind up as partners.

The acting class is working on sense memory exercises. Nick does a serious

exercise involving his father, who abandoned him. José does a comic one that leads to “Can’t Keep It Down,” a song about his uncontrollable physical response to a girl in the class (Carmen). Mr. Myers warns José, who goes on, heedless of Mr. Myers mirthless response.

In the music room, Schlomo, Lambchops and Goody practice Mozart’s *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* until Mr. Sheinkopf leaves the room, then they break into a rock selection. Schlomo is feeling insecure and frustrated at his unsuccessful attempts to form a band, but promises Lambchops he will continue to try.

Tyrone and Iris are dancing to Tchaikovsky’s *Romeo and Juliet*. The dance partners begin to quarrel when Iris suggests she has a lot to teach him because of her classical background. She criticizes his technique and he erupts into “Tyrone’s Rap.” Iris apologizes and they resume practicing with new respect for each other. Jealous of the new friendship between Tyrone and Iris, Carmen takes center stage in the lunch room with a show-off dance number: “There She Goes/Fame.” She imagines the star she is destined to be:

“I’M GONNA LIVE FOREVER.
I’M GONNA LEARN HOW TO FLY.
I FEEL IT COMIN’ TOGETHER.
PEOPLE WILL SEE ME AND CRY.
FAME!
I’M GONNA LIVE FOREVER!
BABY, REMEMBER MY NAME!”

Nick and Serena are rehearsing a scene from Chekov’s *The Seagull*. Serena stops, saying she is tired of playing character parts with him. She wants to work on something romantic like *A Streetcar Named Desire*. He objects, saying those scenes are overdone and romance is overrated. Out of the blue, she confronts him with the thought that he may be gay. Nick becomes infuriated and suggests if that’s what she thinks, she should find another scene partner. He storms off. Serena, devastated, sings “Let’s Play a Love Scene.”

Carmen hears Schlomo playing the last melody his father composed. She has set a lyric to it. Together, they create the song "Bring on Tomorrow." Carmen says she wants to sing with his band and write songs with him. He is flattered she is paying so much attention to him. She kisses him as she leaves for an audition. Lambchops sees the kiss, which Schlomo assures her is meaningless. He announces that Carmen will be joining their band as a singer. Lambchops insists Carmen is only using him.

Miss Sherman confronts Tyrone about not having handed in a book report. She tells him he has a fifth grade reading level and threatens to keep him from dancing in the school festival if his grades don't come up to a passing level. Miss Bell overhears their exchange and tells Miss Sherman Tyrone has the potential to be a true artist. They sing "The Teacher's Argument." Miss Bell argues:

"ARTISTS ARE SPECIAL, CELESTIAL FOOLS
BLESSED WITH A TALENT FOR BREAKING THE RULES,
UNFIT FOR CONFINEMENT IN CUBICAL SCHOOLS.
ARTISTS ARE SPECIAL."

Miss Sherman responds:

"ARTISTS ARE PEOPLE, NOT PRIMITIVE FOOLS
THEY LEARN WHAT TO DO BEFORE BREAKING THE RULES.
THEY KNOW THAT THE MIND IS THE FINEST OF TOOLS.
ARTISTS ARE SPECIAL."

Tyrone steams into the scene and announces he plans to drop out of school. Miss Bell vows she will keep him in school. All the other students are stunned but keep working: "I'M ALIVE AND I WILL SURVIVE."

ACT TWO (Junior and Senior Years)

It's dress rehearsal for the Fall Dance Festival. All the performing arts departments are participating. Nick sings: "I Want to Make Magic" (Reprise). When Miss Sherman spots Tyrone dancing with Iris in the Festival, she is furious. She confronts Miss Bell, saying: "I failed Tyrone in English. Why are you letting him dance?" Miss Bell answers: "Miracle of miracles, he went to summer school and passed."

Nick congratulates Serena on being cast as Juliet in the school production. He is playing Mercutio. "Then who's Romeo?" As he storms on, it's clear from his frustration that a very unhappy Joe has been cast. Serena is shocked.

Carmen, who is in a very agitated state, discovers Nick doing Tai-Chi. She tells him she uses another method of relaxation as she kisses him passionately. Serena sees this and flies into a rage. She tells Nick she thought he was gay. He says he wasn't ready to "screw around" just because someone else was. She orders him away. Unable to control her fury, she suddenly realizes she must remember this emotion and use it one day as part of her craft as an actress. She sings, "Think of Meryl Streep."

Carmen confronts Schlomo with her plan to leave school and go to Los Angeles. She has met a Hollywood agent named Elliot Greene, who is sending her a plane ticket. Schlomo begs her not to go. He has seen her get into Elliot's limousine outside of school before and accuses her of using cocaine with him. Schlomo tells Carmen he loves her, but when he realizes he is powerless to stop her, he turns his attention to his violin.

In Miss Sherman's English class, Tyrone is spotted reading a Superman comic book. Miss Sherman confronts him by forcing him to stand up in front of the class and read from the comic book. Embarrassed, he accuses her of trying to make him look stupid: "Wanna fail me again? Go ahead. I'll pass in summer

school, bitch.” Miss Sherman gives him a resounding slap in the face and walks off. Defensively, Tyrone says to his shocked classmates he doesn’t need her help. “I’m choreographin’ my own life.” This leads to his fantasy dance number, “Dancin’ on the Sidewalk.” Confronting his pain and frustration, Tyrone goes to the blackboard, writes “I WILL READ,” and runs off. Miss Sherman enters, sees what he has written, and is deeply touched. (“These Are My Children.”)

“I WASN’T BLESSED
AS OTHER WOMEN IN THIS LIFE
TO HAVE MY OWN, TO BE MOTHER AND WIFE.
BUT I WAS BLESSED
BEYOND WHERE WILDEST DREAMS CAN REACH,
FOR I HAVE THE PRIVILEGE
YES, THE PRIVILEGE TO TEACH.
THESE ARE MY CHILDREN...”

A baroque trumpet-call sounds as the drama students rehearse *Romeo and Juliet*. Joe, insecure playing Romeo, has been ad-libbing. Serena pleads with him to be serious in the part. Nick offers to show him how to play Romeo and winds up kissing Serena in their first romantic moment. Tyrone asks Iris why she has been avoiding him all year. She says she doesn’t want to be tied to a loser. He takes out a copy of *Leaves of Grass* and reads to her, showing her he has a whole new attitude about learning. They dance a *pas de deux*.

Mr. Sheinkopf, Mr. Myer and Miss Sherman confront Miss Bell about influencing a summer school teacher to pass Tyrone even though he never showed up. They insist he must repeat the year. But the Dance Theatre of Harlem is ready to take him, says Miss Bell. “Let them wait!” says Mr. Sheinkopf. Miss Bell, left alone with Miss Sherman, finally admits she may be losing her perspective and suggests she take a sabbatical.

Carmen is standing in front of the school looking physically wasted and dis-

oriented. She spots Schlomo and after a warm embrace, she tells him the truth about her experiences in Hollywood (“In L.A.”). Carmen promises him she is going to go for her equivalency diploma, but right now she needs money. He gives her a couple of dollars and sadly departs.

At the farewell party, everyone is dressed up and the celebration is loud and festive. Tyrone tells Miss Sherman he is going to repeat his senior year and give her another chance to whip him into shape. Joe announces not only is Lambchops finally wearing a dress, but he is going to be opening at a comedy club — and they’d all better be there. Serena is on her way to Brooklyn College and Nick is headed for Yale. They wonder about their future together (“Let’s Play a Love Scene”).

Schlomo, in cap and gown, takes center stage and dedicates “Bring on Tomorrow” to Carmen Diaz, who had written the lyrics for it. Looking to heaven, he sadly asks “Are you listening, Carmen? We’ll always remember your name.” The other graduating students, flanked by the teachers, sing about their feelings as they leave P.A. and go out into the world. With gospel fervor, they celebrate their passage:

“BRING ON TOMORROW,
LET IT SHINE LIKE THE SUN COMING UP ON A
BEAUTIFUL DAY
IT’S YOURS AND MINE.
WE CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE. IT’S NOT TOO LATE.
BRING ON TOMORROW!
WE CAN’T WAIT!”

Themes and Topics to Explore

Questions and Assignments

Our study guide focuses on a wide-ranging list of themes and topics suggested by *Fame —The Musical*.

Avenues for exploring each theme and topic are suggested in the form of:

Questions:

Designed to prompt in-class discussions before and after viewing or reading *Fame*.

Assignments:

Designed to be researched and written out of class.

Themes and Topics to Explore

CHARACTERS, RELATIONSHIPS AND SETTING IN *FAME*

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Retell the story of *Fame — The Musical* in your own words.
- What are the key turning points in the show? Which actions make the outcome of the plot unavoidable?
- If you could change one thing about the ending of *Fame*, what would it be? Why would you want to make this change?
- Is there a character in *Fame* with whom you particularly identify or whom you admire? Give your reasons.
- Trace the development of Tyrone, Carmen, Serena, Nick, and Schlomo through the show. How do they grow and change?
- If you were going to present your own production of *Fame — The Musical*, would you keep it set in 1984 or move it to this year? Why? What changes would you have to make if you set it in the present?
- Look at each of the characters.
 - Whom do you see as the most motivated character in *Fame*? How important is it to plan your means of success when entering the arts? Measure the levels of confidence in each of the characters.
 - How does low self-esteem and affect those who suffer from it? Who has too much self-esteem and how does it affect others? What are some of the sources of low self-esteem?

— Who has a sense of humor? How do Mabel and Tyrone apply their senses of humor in different ways?

ASSIGNMENTS: RESEARCH AND WRITING PROMPTS

- On the first day of school, the students arriving at P.A. are full of apprehension and unrealistic expectations. Where have they gotten some of their unrealistic expectations? Have you ever had unrealistic expectations about a new experience? How did you feel as reality sank in? Write about a “first day experience” from your own life.
- A song lyric describes the students at P.A. as suddenly “feeling small and against the wall during roll call.” What about the situation is making them feel that way? Write about a similar sensation in your life.
- Write the thoughts and feelings of any one of the characters in *Fame* as he or she tries to “size up” the competition on the first day at P.A.
- Schools are for the education of the individual, but competition between students still exists. How do students compete at school? Is competition in a school setting a positive or negative thing? Does it promote education? How do different people deal with competition in school? Write a monologue for a student who has trouble dealing with competition.

PERFORMING ARTS HIGH SCHOOLS AND MAGNET SCHOOLS

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- There are many kinds of magnet schools. What are the strengths of a magnet school, whether in arts, math or science? Can you see any weaknesses?
- How would you feel about spending additional hours in school each day to pursue a performing art?

- Do you think that students studying a special field such as performing arts should also be held accountable for a full load of academic studies with high standards? Why?
- Magnet schools such as the one described in *Fame* tend to have very competitive admissions policies. Entrance is by audition only. Is this fair? Should the fact that employment opportunities in the arts are very limited be considered as part of the justification for limiting admissions to only the most promising candidates?
- Do you think having a special arts school is as important as having special math and science high schools?
- What other kinds of special interest schools would you like to see established in your school system?

ASSIGNMENTS: RESEARCH AND WRITING PROMPTS

- Find out if there is a performing arts high school in your community or in a nearby community. Interview a student who goes to the school and discover how your local school compares to the school in *Fame*.
- How many performing arts high schools exist around the country? Are there many? In what kinds of areas are they located? Why do you think this is? How many graduates of these schools go directly into careers and how many attend college?
- Research professional training in the arts in other countries such as the United Kingdom, France, and Russia. Is free training available for gifted students? At what grade does such training begin?

- Evaluate the arts training available in your school system for both students who wish to pursue careers in the arts and those who are just interested in learning about them. Is there an arts discipline you would like to study which is not currently offered by your school. Design a curriculum for such a course.
- For many years, black Americans were discouraged from pursuing careers in classical ballet. Investigate the reasons for this situation. Learn about Arthur Mitchell, who is the “Jackie Robinson” of classical ballet. Read about his career in the New York City Ballet and his pioneering work as the founder of the Dance Theatre of Harlem. Describe how pioneers like Mitchell and Alvin Ailey opened the way for a student like Tyrone to pursue his ballet studies.
- Investigate street art forms like rap singing and break dancing that give young people who grow up outside a world of privilege a chance to express their artistic gifts.
- Do you think intensive training in the arts should begin at an earlier grade level than high school? Investigate theories of how early a dancer, an actor, a singer and a musician should begin training.

STUDYING THE ARTS

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Do you think it is necessary to study the arts? Why? When looking to make a career in the arts, is it enough to just have talent?
- Is talent innate? Or can you learn it?
- Tyrone has no training. Iris has been taking lessons since she was four years old. What do they have to learn from each other?

- Why is it important to study the classics? Can they inform contemporary work? How? What would some “classics” be to a math student? A business student? An athlete? How are the “classics” in each field learned and discussed?
- Each teacher thinks his or her discipline is the most important and the hardest to master. Which do you think is harder to master: dance, acting, singing, or instrumental music? Why?
- Students at P.A. keep trying to bring the music and dance of their own generation off the street and into the classroom. Should arts training be limited to training in classical forms? Why? Why not?
- Mr. Myers tells his acting class they will spend two years learning to discover themselves before they begin to work on classic roles. Do you think this is necessary? Why?

ASSIGNMENTS: RESEARCH AND WRITING PROMPTS

- In the performing arts, is there more to study than performance? As an exercise, find out what kinds of instruments are in a standard orchestra. Learn the basic principles of at least three different kinds of dance. Listen to examples of the four major vocal types in singing. Find out about the purpose of opera or music in a Pacific Rim country such as Indonesia or Bali.
- Read about the Stanislavsky system of “method” acting and learn more about the magic “if.” Also read about other established acting training systems. Bring in some acting exercises and lead the class through them.
- Read about Viola Spolin’s system of teaching actors to improvise. Try some of the exercises in class.

- Read about the art of dance partnering (which is being studied by Tyrone, Carmen, and Iris in the show.)
- Mabel gives up being a dancer when she grows weary of smelling pudding instead of devouring it. Explore the physical travails of dancers including the need to stay exceedingly thin. Read about the problems many dancers have with anorexia nervosa and bulimia. The former prima ballerina Gelsey Kirkland's autobiography *Dancing On My Grave* paints a vivid portrait of this side of a professional dancer's life.
- Read a review of a local live performance. What makes a review positive? Now attend a performance of the show or concert that was reviewed. Did you find that your perception of the performance was colored by what you read in the review? Would you have written the same review? Do you feel the review was accurate and fair?

PERFORMING ARTISTS AT WORK

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Miss Sherman says that 90 percent of their students will not have careers in the arts. Is this figure accurate?
- Primary artists create the art. Interpretive artists perform it. What's the difference between the two? Who has more control over the content of the work? The performance? Name some famous artists who fit into each category and some who fit into both. Which would you rather be and why?
- Winston Churchill painted. Albert Einstein played the cello. What kinds of things do you think highly successful people gain from their experiences in the arts? How do you think such experiences prepare them for their positions?

- Discuss the abilities a young person must have in order to become a dancer, an actor, a singer, or a musician. What kinds of work must they do to excel in their chosen field?
- What are some other characteristics a dancer, actor, singer, or instrumentalist must have?
- Why do you think some people become performing artists?
- Do you think audiences appreciate the hard work that goes into becoming an artist? How could the public become better educated about this?

ASSIGNMENTS: RESEARCH AND WRITING PROMPTS

- Write about a time you reached for a goal even though the odds against reaching it were overwhelmingly against you. What made you try anyway?
- Read the biography of a famous dancer, actor, singer or musician. Write a report describing that artist's training and the road he or she followed to success.
- Invite a professional dancer, actor, singer or musician to visit your class to discuss that artist's careers and preparation for work. Ask about how much of the artist's income is derived from art. What other kinds of jobs has the artist had to pay bills, etc.?

THE MULTI-CULTURAL WORLD OF *FAME*

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- What are the advantages of studying and socializing with students of different backgrounds?

- Many characters in *Fame* come from ethnic backgrounds that differ from those who appear in the works they are studying and performing. Is it important works of art be performed by people of the same heritage? What can be learned by both performer and audience when classic roles are cast “against type”?
- Many characters in *Fame* identify with different neighborhoods or areas. Does allegiance to an area affect overall community values in a positive or negative way? Do people in your own community identify with different areas? Are there stereotypes connected to certain areas?
- In “Tyrone’s Rap,” Tyrone describes his dilapidated neighborhood. To what extent do urban problems make him want to succeed and escape? To what extent are those same urban problems affecting his attitude and making him self-destruct? How can urban problems both inspire and destroy city-dwellers?
- Will Iris with her privileged background or Tyrone with his street smarts have a better chance of making it? Why? Of the two, who is more likely to already know people in the arts? Can having friends or “connections” affect one’s chances for survival in the arts?
- The students at P.A. co-exist in a world populated by individuals of extremely diverse backgrounds. Does your own school have a homogeneous or multi-cultural population? Does your neighborhood have a homogeneous or multi-cultural population?
- What cultural and economic forces separate Tyrone and Iris? When he first meets Iris, Tyrone feels she is putting him down when she suggests she can teach him. What is he telling her when he sings “Tyrone’s Rap” describing what it means to be poor and black in New York? What is she trying to tell him about himself when she kisses him?

- What are society's views of romantic relationships between members of different religious, racial, or social groups? Do you agree with these attitudes? How have they been formed? Have they changed in the last 25 years? Do you think they will change in the near future? Why?
- In many ways, the students at P.A. seem free of prejudice. Why do you think this is the case? What lessons might be learned from their harmony?
- Does the fact that the students at P.A. are involved in collaborative art forms affect their sense of cultural harmony?

ASSIGNMENTS: RESEARCH AND WRITING PROMPTS

- Read and analyze the cause-and-effect aspects of a well-known work in which racial, social or class differences play a major thematic role. (Some suggestions: *Romeo and Juliet*, *A View From the Bridge*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*.)
- Write a story about two friends of different races, religions or social classes who experience negative community response because of their relationship.

INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS IN *FAME*

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Serena and Nick have a platonic relationship. What is a platonic relationship? Where does the name come from? When Serena discovers she is in love with Nick, how does that affect the balance of the relationship? If Serena's feelings for Nick had remained strictly friendly, do you think she would have minded so much if she thought he might be gay? Have you ever been in a platonic relationship where one person began to fall in love with another?
- Why does Nick react so strongly when he realizes that Serena's feelings for him are changing?

- What are the disadvantages and advantages of having a romantic relationship with someone you are working with professionally?
- Why does Serena jump to the conclusion Nick is gay? Why doesn't he actively disabuse her of this notion? Have you ever drawn a false conclusion about someone and later regretted it?
- What examples do you find in *Fame* of the students being able to communicate with one another? How do they support one another?
- The students don't appear to confide in their teachers, but turn to other students instead. Why do you think this is the case?
- No adult in *Fame* seems sensitive to or aware of Carmen's problems. Could their intervention have made a difference?
- Are communications gaps between generations inevitable? Do you have these gaps with adults in your life? Who is responsible for them? Can they be lessened? How?

ASSIGNMENTS: RESEARCH AND WRITING PROMPTS

- Write a story about someone who discovers he has romantic feelings for a friend. How do that person resolve his feelings if the friend does not reciprocate?
- Nick later explains he simply wasn't ready for romantic involvements in spite of the peer pressure around him. Write about a time when you've felt your peers were pressuring you to take a step you were not quite ready to take.
- Write a story about two actors playing roles that contradict or mirror their own lives.

- Write about a time when you felt a communications gap between generations was responsible for a major misunderstanding. Was it resolved? How?

THE TEACHERS' ARGUMENT

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Miss Sherman and Miss Bell radically disagree about the way the student artists should be treated. Miss Bell says:

"Artists are special, celestial fools
Blessed with a talent for breaking the rules,
Unfit for confinement in cubical schools,
Artists are special."

Miss Sherman responds:

"Artists are people, not primitive fools,
They learn what to do before breaking the rules
They know that the brain is the finest of tools,
Artists are special."

In other words, Miss Sherman does not think artists should receive special treatment simply because they are artists. Miss Bell disagrees. With whom do you agree and why?

- Miss Bell says she has taught hundreds of students who don't make it to the top because they lack one vital element such as drive, style, or basic technique. She sees that Tyrone can make it to the top with ease. She wants Miss Sherman to give him a chance and not impose the same academic standards on him as everyone else. Is Miss Bell justified in her request? Would Miss Sherman be helping Tyrone by granting it?

- Both teachers have experiences in their pasts that shape their feelings on this issue. As a black child growing up, Miss Sherman was pushed to learn all she could to give herself the best possible chance for success in a world where being black was a disadvantage. Miss Bell never had “what it took” to be a major star herself. How do these experiences influence their response to Tyrone?
- Have adults brought their own life experiences into situations in which you have been involved? Was this beneficial? How? Was this detrimental? How?
- Do you think it is possible for teachers or parents to totally separate themselves from their own past experiences and feelings when dealing with younger people?
- What are some of the practical arguments on each teacher’s side?
- Why does seeing Tyrone’s words “I will read” on the blackboard provoke such a profound emotional response in Miss Sherman?

ASSIGNMENTS: WRITING AND RESEARCH PROMPTS

- Miss Sherman believes her students are her children and they give her hope for the future of the world. She speaks of the “privilege to teach.” Write about a teacher you have had who felt it was a privilege to teach. How did this teacher influence your life?
- As we learn from the discussion in the teacher’s lounge in Act II, grade inflation is not an uncommon practice in some high schools and colleges with strong athletic programs. In other words, such institutions often give unearned passing grades to students because they are exceptional athletes. Research this issue.

LITERACY AND SELF-WORTH

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Tyrone is very defensive about his inability to read. How do we learn his real feelings about it?
- What would have probably happened to Tyrone if the teachers had not insisted he pass English?
- What are some explanations for the growing illiteracy rate in America?

ASSIGNMENTS: WRITING AND RESEARCH PROMPTS

- Research illiteracy in the United States. How widespread is it? What age groups are involved?
- Imagine you cannot read. Write a description of how you would get through a normal day in a busy city. How would this inability to read limit your choices of jobs?
- Find out about literacy programs in your community. Find out how you could volunteer. Report your findings to your class.

AMBITION: THE QUEST FOR FAME

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Popularity is fame on a smaller scale. Who is popular in *Fame*? What makes him or her popular? Why important is it to be popular? How important is it to be famous?
- Why does Carmen give herself a new name? In a copy of the *World Almanac*, look up the real names of famous performing artists such as Judy Garland and Fred Astaire. Can something like a name affect success?

- Carmen continually denies her shortcomings. To what degree is her quest for fame a quest for self-worth?
- When Tyrone rejects her, Carmen resolves to pursue her career. What earlier evidence have we had that Carmen is destined to put her career ahead of everything else in her life?
- What elements of fame attract Carmen? How they are in conflict with her need to study her art form?
- Carmen forms an alliance with Schlomo because he has a band for her to sing with and music for her lyrics. Does she have any real feelings for him? Does he for her? Can you imagine any scenario in which they could have ended up together?
- Describe what happened to Carmen from the time she met Eliot Greene, an agent from Los Angeles, until the end of the play.
- In the final scene, does singing the song for which Carmen wrote the lyrics in some way alleviate or heighten her tragedy?
- When at the end of the first act Tyrone becomes enraged and runs out, the rest of the students respond by declaring their intention to work hard and to not allow his problems to get in their way. Is this a normal reaction or something related to ambition that the environment of a school like P.A. causes?
- Carmen's life is endangered and eventually destroyed by her drug usage. Research the use of drugs by individuals in the performing arts. Why do individuals in the arts turn to drug use? What special physical and mental stresses may they be attempting to overcome? Prepare a written report on

what you learn. Compare drug use by artists related to performance demands, diet demands, and stress and drug use by athletes related to these areas.

ASSIGNMENTS: RESEARCH AND WRITING PROMPTS

- Investigate the difficult lives faced by many young girls like Carmen who run away to Los Angeles or New York to win fame.
- Write a follow-up to *Fame* explaining what you think happened to the characters after they graduated.
- Write about a time when you had to choose between the needs of family or friends or satisfying your own ambition. How did you resolve the situation? How did you feel later about your actions?

ROLE OF MUSIC AND LYRICS IN *FAME*

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Could this story be told effectively without music? What is the particular meaning of music in the world in which *Fame* is set?
- Discuss the way in which different musical styles have been used to represent each character in *Fame*. Would these musical moments work if they were presented using other musical forms? What styles of music would you add or substitute?
- Would *Fame* work with other forms of pop music in the score? What styles of pop music would you add or substitute for which songs?

ASSIGNMENTS: RESEARCH AND WRITING PROMPTS

- Select one of the following songs:
 - “Hard Work”
 - “I Want to Make Magic”
 - “Tyrone’s Rap”
 - “Let’s Play A Love Scene”
 - “There She Goes/Fame”
 - “Bring On Tomorrow”
 - “The Teachers’ Argument”
 - “Think of Meryl Streep”
 - “Dancin’ On The Sidewalk”
 - “These Are My Children”
 - “In L.A.”
 - “Bring On Tomorrow” (Reprise)

- Summarize the contents of the song. Discuss:
 - a. What do we learn about the world in which the show takes place from this song?

 - b. What do we learn about the character or characters who sing the song and their feelings about life and other characters?

 - c. What do we learn about the larger themes of the play from this song?

 - d. If your song is reprised, study the way in which it is used the second time. Does the lyric change? Has the situation changed? Why is it reprised?

- Can you think of another place in the show where a song might fit? What would a title for the song be? Who would sing it? What would it be about? Try to write the lyric or the melody.

FREE ADAPTATION

Using the setting of P.A., create a new set of student and faculty characters and a new series of adventures for them to experience.

Outline your new musical version of *Fame*. Make a list of characters and describe them vividly. What kind of music would your characters sing? When and why would they dance? How would the sense of instrumental music be present?

TURNING A FILM INTO A MUSICAL

- *Fame* was a successful film before it was a musical play. Working with your class or on your own, pick a film you like that is currently available on videotape that could be turned into an effective musical. View the film.
- Why would this film make a good musical? How would it “sing?” What role would music play in it? What kind of music will your characters sing? Will the musical include dance? What kind?
- Outline your musical scene by scene.
- Make a list of the characters you would include.
- Make a list of the songs you would include.
- Write a rough draft of a scene involving a peak emotion which leads to a song. Think of who would sing this song and what thoughts it would express. Think of a title for your song. Write a rough draft of your lyric. What musical style do you select for the character and moment?

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

ASSIGNMENT: WRITING REPORT

- Write a review of a performance of *Fame*. Include any of the following elements in your review.

1. Did *Fame* hold your interest? Why?
2. Describe how the story was presented to the audience. What was the dialogue like?
3. Describe the structure of the story. Was there one central story or were there several concurrent plots? How did these plots connect? Was anything about the story unexpected? How did it begin and end?
4. Describe the way the music, lyrics and dance worked in the show.
5. Musical theatre is unique because it allows many kinds of talents to participate. The students at P.A. were highly dependent on the talent of backstage technical personnel. Investigate the roles of the costume, lighting and scenic designers. What does a technical director do? How does he or she differ from the stage director, musical director and choreographer? What are the duties of these people, and those of a stage manager, in preparing a musical theatre production?

In your review, pay special attention to how set, lighting and costume design affected your perception of the performances and the piece as a whole. How did their execution by the crew either help “make magic” or detract from the experience?

6. Discuss the effectiveness of the performers.

7. Discuss the ideas presented in the show. Analyze their importance to the audience.

8. Explain why others should make an effort to see the show.

About the creators of **Fame: The Musical**

DAVID DE SILVA (Originator) Mr. De Silva is known as “Father Fame.” He conceived, developed and produced the MGM motion picture “Fame.” The film received four Academy Award nominations. He was Consulting Producer on the television series which ran for six years on network television and syndication, received numerous Emmy Awards, and has been seen in sixty-eight countries. Mr De Silva believes that *Fame* will have its greatest success in the theatre. Its youth-oriented idealism and “live” performance energy will be an inspiration to young people everywhere.

JOSE FERNANDEZ (Book) Mr. Fernandez began his theatrical career as an actor. His Broadway credits included *The Me Nobody Knows*, for which he received the Variety Critics’s Poll Nomination for Best Actor, as well as *Hair*, *Truckload*, and *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. His career as a writer began with the off-Broadway musical *El Bravo!*, produced by Kenneth Weissman. Additionally, he completed a comedy for the stage, *XYZ, Examine Your Zippers*. Since 1984, Mr. Fernandez had collaborated with David De Silva on transforming *Fame* into a new and timeless musical. He was born in Havana, Cuba, on August 19, 1948, and died of AIDS on January 8, 1994.

STEVEN MARGOSHES (Music) won a Drama Desk Award for orchestrating *The Who’s Tommy* on Broadway (the recording, produced by George Martin, won the Grammy for Best Cast Album). He has arranged for Jim Steinman (Meat Loaf, Bonnie Tyler), Sarah Brightman, and the New York Philharmonic. He was commissioned by Andrew Lloyd Webber to write a symphonic suite of *Jesus Christ Superstar*. As a composer, he is now working on a new musical with his lyricist partner, Jacques Levy, as well as a suite of the *Fame* score for symphony orchestra. He is graduate of Juilliard.

JACQUES LEVY (Lyrics) has written lyrics with and for many well-known recording artists. He wrote Bob Dylan's album *Desire with Dylan*, and it became one of Dylan's biggest-selling albums ever, with the single "Hurricane" released from it. Levy has written a half dozen albums with Roger McGuinn... for the Byrds, the Thunderbyrd Band, and McGuinn's solo works, including the hit single "Chestnut Mare." His lyrics have also been recorded by Carly Simon, Crystal Gayle, Joe Cocker and Jerry Lee Lewis. A member of the Dramatists Guild, Levy has written a considerable amount for the theatre, including five produced musicals. Two of them, *Of, Calcutta!* and *The Golden Land*, were presented on the New York stage. Along the way, Levy's work has been honored with three Grammy nominations. He is currently head of the Theatre Program and Director of University Theatre at Colgate University. He lives in Hamilton, NY, with his wife and two children.

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Notes

Notes

SARAH SCHLESINGER is the Department Chair of the Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Program at New York University. She is a lyricist and librettist whose work has been seen Off-Broadway and at regional theatres around the country. She has been commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera Guild to write the librettos for two new operas — *The Amazing Adventures of Alvin Allegretto*, which premiered in 1995 and *Different Fields*, which premiered in 1996. With Nashville composer Mike Reid, she has written *The Ballad of Little Jo*, a new musical developed in the Harold Prince-Denver Theatre Center Musical Theatre Program. She is the co-librettist and lyricist for *Love Comics*, a new musical which has been optioned for Off-Broadway. She is also the author of recent non-fiction works published by Random House/Villard, William Morrow, Avon Books and the Princeton Book Company.

Fame: The Musical Study Guide Editor: Helen Sneed
Assistant Editor: Jason Cochran

Additional study guide material by David De Silva.

