



# The Guide to Musical Theatre

## CORALINE

A Musical without intermission. Music and lyrics by Stephin Merritt, book by David Greenspan, based on the novel by Neil Gaiman.

The Lucille Lortel Theatre, off-Broadway - 8th May, 2009 - 5th July, 2009  
(26 previews, 35 performances)

### SYNOPSIS (based on the novel)

As the tale begins, Coraline and her parents move into an old Queen Anne style house that has been subdivided into three flats. Coraline's parents are always busy with their work and pay her little attention. Isolated, Coraline goes off to explore. She meets the other inhabitants of the house, Miss Spink and Miss Forcible, two elderly women retired from the stage, and an even older crazy man, Mr Bobo, who says he is training a jumping mouse circus which Coraline does not believe. She also encounters a strange black cat. Miss Spink, after reading Coraline's future in tea leaves and seeing something grim, gives her The Eye Candy to protect herself.

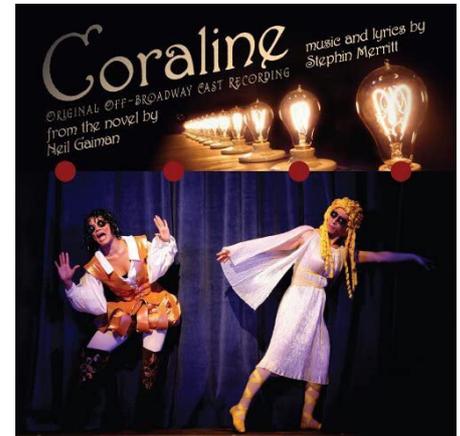
Coraline finds a locked door in the drawing room and, after finding the key and unlocking it, sees that the passage has been bricked. The next day she takes the key to the door, opens it, and finds a dark corridor leading to an apartment almost identical to her own. This alternate world is inhabited by her "Other Mother" and "Other Father", who are replicas of her real parents, the only difference being that they have buttons for eyes. She also sees the cat, who speaks after entering this world. The other parents at first seem more interesting, fun and caring than her real parents. After a few days, the Other Mother offers her a chance to stay in this world forever if Coraline will allow buttons to be sewn into her eyes. Coraline is horrified and dashes back through the door to go home, much to the disappointment of the Other Mother.

Upon her return to her apartment, Coraline finds that her real parents are missing. They don't return by the next day, and Coraline, discovering that they were kidnapped by the Other Mother, goes back to the Other World to rescue them.

The Other Mother becomes angry when Coraline refuses to accept gifts or love, and she imprisons Coraline behind a mirror as punishment. There she meets three children from different eras who had decided to stay in the Other World. These children tell Coraline that after they let the Other Mother sew buttons in their eyes, she eventually grew weary and tired of them. She then devoured their bodies and cast their spirits aside, and as the children inform her, the same will happen to Coraline if she doesn't escape.

Coraline challenges the Other Mother in a game to find the children's souls and her parents within the Other world, using her wits and the Eye Candy. After finding the children's souls and discovering that her parents have been imprisoned in a snow globe, she throws the cat at the Other Mother (much to the cat's dismay, though he later forgives her), grabs the snow globe, and escapes to the real world. In doing so, she forces the door shut on the Other Mother's hand, severing it. Back in her apartment, Coraline finds her parents safe and sound.

That night, Coraline discovers that her task is still not done: the Other Mother's severed hand is still in Coraline's world, attempting to steal the key that opens the door that connects the two worlds. Coraline allows the hand to follow her to a disused well and tricks it into falling into the well along with the key, ridding the world of the danger of the Other Mother.



## CHARACTERS

- Coraline Jones – The young heroine and explorer, she is clever, curious, resourceful, and brave. Coraline is often irritated by rain, crazy grown-ups (as they all seem to be), and not being taken seriously because of her young age and quiet demeanor, though perhaps her biggest annoyance is that everyone mistakes her name for Caroline (everyone in the real world at least, except the mice and her parents).
- Mel Jones – Coraline's mother works at her house on the computer. She is very busy most of the time, and sometimes a little inattentive, but she loves and cares about Coraline. She is pretty, nice, helpful, and outgoing, though Coraline considers her to be rather boring.
- Charlie Jones – Coraline's father works at his house on the computer which he spends most of his time on his job. He cares about Coraline very much and is kind, gentlemanly, brave, and helpful. But, like her mother, she finds him rather boring.
- The Cat – A black cat from Coraline's world. The cat acts as a mentor to Coraline and guides her through her journey. He claims to have no name, explaining that cats do not need names to tell each other apart. Unlike many of the characters in the novel, he does not have an "other world" counterpart, saying that unlike other creatures in the world, cats can "keep themselves together". He moves freely from one world to the next, although he can talk in the Other Mother's world. He is very sarcastic and helpful towards Coraline and defiant of the Other Mother, but seems to tremble at the thought of being stuck in the Other Mother's world.
- The Other Mother/The Beldam – The creature that created much of the 'Other' world and the main villain of the novel. She looks a little like Coraline's real mother but taller and thinner, with long black hair that seems to move by itself, black button eyes, paper-white skin, and extremely long, twitchy fingers with long dark red nails, and teeth as sharp as knives. She cannot create, but only copy, twist and change things from the real world when constructing her version of it. She collects children, with whom she quickly becomes bored or frustrated, and imprisons them behind a magical mirror, slowly sucking the life from them. She is referred to several times as "the beldam", a Middle English word meaning "Grandmother," "Ugly Old Woman," or "Hag". The word may have its origin in poet John Keats' 19th century ballad, *La Belle Dame sans Merci*, which has a story line that Coraline seems to parallel. [4].
- The Other Father – A creation of the Other Mother, who was used to try to help trick Coraline into staying in the Other Mother's world. Like her real father he has a study and sits there during the day and will not talk to Coraline for long. He does not work however, he merely occupies the study as he is not permitted to talk to Coraline by himself. He is much more fun than Coraline's real father and always tries to be cheerful and fun in front of Coraline. In reality the Other Father is sad and nervous. The Other Mother ends up punishing him for revealing too much to Coraline by transforming him into a grub-like creature.
- Miss April Spink and Miss Miriam Forcible – A pair of retired actresses, who live in the flat under Coraline's. They own many ageing Scotties, such as Hamish, Angus and Jock, and talk in theater jargon, often referencing their time as actresses. They recognize the danger Coraline is in after reading her fortune through tea leaves and give her a stone with a hole in it to help protect her. In the other world they are young, pretty, and perform unendingly in front of many different dogs, who, in the Other World, behave like humans, such as talking and eating chocolate, which can kill dogs in real life.
- Mr. Bobinsky – A retired circus performer living in the flat above Coraline's; he is commonly referred to as the Crazy Old Man Upstairs. Over the course of the book he claims to be training mice to perform in a mouse circus, and often brings Coraline messages from the mice, though at first Coraline doubts he even has mice to train, and she does not listen to what the man says was supposed to come from the mice. His counterpart in the Other World trains rats, and is in fact made of rats.
- The Three Ghost Children – A trio of children who were previously victims of the other mother, two girls and one boy. The boy is described as having a dirty face and red trousers. One of the girls has two butterfly wings, blond hair, and a silver circlet, the other has a brown bonnet and brown dress. They were trapped by the Other Mother at different times before Coraline, and reside in the dark space behind the mirror. After having their souls restored, they go to the afterlife, but the last Coraline sees of them, is in a dream where she picnics with them. Here, she sees their true appearances and they thank her for freeing them from the Other Mother. It is also shown that the winged girl eats flowers as food.

## MUSICAL NUMBERS

1. Overture - Other Father; Mr Bobo; Cat; Mother; Father;
2. A New House - Coraline; Cat
3. Am Miss Spink (And I Am Miss Forcible) - Mother; Father
4. A Mouse Circus - Coraline; Mr Bobo; Ensemble
5. Mum And Dad - Coraline; Father; Mother
6. At The Other End - Cat; Coraline
7. Song Of The Rats - Ensemble
8. When We Were Young And Trod The Boards - Father; Mother
9. Fluorescent Green Gloves - Coraline
10. Welcome Home - Other Mother; Other Father; Ensemble
11. A Lot Of Noise - Ensemble
12. Song Of The Rats - Ensemble
13. Theatre Is Fun - Father; Mother
14. Stay With Us - Other Mother; Other Father; Ensemble
15. The Ballad Of The Wasps - Coraline
16. O What A Lovely Trip - Father; Mother; Coraline
17. Go To Sleep - Other Mother
18. We Were Children Once - Ensemble
19. When You're A Cat - Cat
20. Song Of The Rats - Ensemble
21. Recollections - Other Father; Mr Bobo; Father
22. Whatever You Want - Mr Bobo
23. Song Of The Rats - Ensemble
24. The World Goes Flat - Ensemble
25. I Saw A Show On Telly Once - Coraline
26. Falling... Falling... - Other Mother; Ensemble
27. One Long Fairytale - Other Mother; Cat; Father; Mother; Mr Bobo; Other Father; Ensemble