



The Guide to Musical Theatre

THE COLOR PURPLE

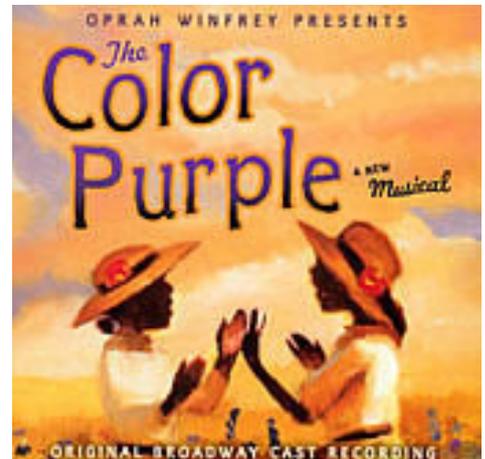
A Musical in 2 Acts. Based on the novel by Alice Walker and the motion picture.

Book by Marsha Norman. Music by Brenda Russell, Allee Willis and Stephen Bray. Orchestrations by Jonathan Tunick.

Premiered at the Alliance Theatre, Atlanta, Georgia.

Opened at the Broadway Theatre, New York - 1 December, 2005.

Closed 24 February, 2008, (30 previews; 910 perfs)



SYNOPSIS

"Celle is the kind of hero we all have a chance to be whatever happens to us in this life. She bears her own suffering with grace, and reaches out to others to provide for their needs and spare them harm. Our love for Celle grows as she makes her way through a perilous journey, as she prays without ceasing for some assurance that God sees her." — Marsha Norman

STORY

Act One

As the story begins, it is Sunday morning in rural Georgia, 1909. "Po chile' Celie, 14 years old and pregnant for the second time, is playing a clapping game with her beloved sister, Nettie. When she comes to church with her sister and their Pa, Celie goes into labour before the service ends. Later, Pa takes Celie's baby from her arms saying he is going to get rid of it, "same as the last one," and that she better not tell anybody except God what happened. Celie asks God for a sign, something that will let her know what is happening to her.

A few years later, when a local farmer, Mister, needs a wife to take care of his children, Pa says Nettie is too young, but offers him Celie instead, and throws a cow into the bargain. Although the girls vow never to be parted, Celie goes with Mister to save Nettie's dreams of becoming a teacher. As the local Church Ladies cluck their disapproval. Mister's field-hands introduce Celie to her life of hard work at Mister's.

Nettie arrives one day, fleeing from Pa's lecherous attentions, and asks if she can stay. Mister agrees, but then attacks Nettie on her way to school. When she fights back, he throws her off his property, swearing that the girls will never see each other again. Nettie has promised to write, so Celie tries to check the mailbox, but years go by, and Mister won't even let her open it.

Mister's son, Harpo, grows up and brings home Sofia, a strong-willed woman whom he loves and marries. But eventually, Harpo can't take being bossed around by Sofia. Mister tells him he has to beat Sofia if he wants her to mind. Even Celie agrees this is the only way to make a woman "jump when he says to." But Sofia gives as good as she gets. Not long after that, Sofia's sisters arrive to take her away. Sofia tries to convince Celie to come with her, but she can't. Left alone, Harpo turns their house into a jukejoint, and hires a new waitress, Squeak, to work there. Squeak soon moves in with Harpo.

The whole town prepares for the arrival of Shug Avery, a sexy singer who is Mister's longtime lover. But when Shug arrives, she is in such bad shape that in spite of local disapproval, Mister brings her home where

Celie nurses her back to health. As Celie takes care of Shug, she begins to experience feelings of affection and tenderness for the first time, as Shug befriends her.

When Shug sings at Harpo's Juke Joint Sofia returns with her new boyfriend and gets into a fight with Squeak. In Mister's house, Shug and Celia explore their newfound love for each other. Shug gives Celia a letter she has found from "someone in Africa, goin' by the stamps." Celie recognises Nettie's handwriting and knows instantly that her beloved sister is alive.

Act Two

Celia finds the rest of the letters Mister had hidden over the years, and learns that Nettie went to Africa with the missionary family who adopted Celie's babies, and that they are all now in Africa in a refugee camp. In Georgia, Sofia has been beaten and thrown in jail for punching the mayor. (His wife had invited her to be their maid, and wouldn't take no for an answer.) Celia goes to the jail to comfort her, and learns that Sofia will have to serve out her sentence in the custody of the Mayor's wife, as her maid.

Twelve years later, Sofia and Shug both return home for Easter. Shug discovers the extent of Celie's anger toward God and invites her to come live with her and her new husband in Memphis. After Easter dinner Celia tells Mister she is leaving. He protests and she finally confronts him about the way he treated her. Squeak is off to Memphis too, saying she wants to sing. Harpo defends her choice to his father, then after they leave, he invites Sofia to come back and live at the Juke Joint.

Mister soon feels the effect of Celie's curse. He's drunk all the time and is shunned by everyone. Harpo challenges him to make things right with Celie, and Mister tries to understand what that would mean. At Shug's house in Memphis, Celie discovers she has a gift for making pants. When she inherits the house she grew up in, she goes home and starts a business selling her unique designs. Mister tries to help Sofia's sickly youngest child Henrietta, and even Celie has to admit that Mister is trying to change.

Harpo and Sofia are spending a pleasant night at home when Mister comes to tell them that he has found Nettie, but she is having some trouble getting home from Africa. Shug tells Celia she has fallen in love with a young flute player, and asks Celia to let her have a fling with this boy. Walking home, Celia realises she isn't destroyed by this, and feels a deep love for herself, for the first time.

1949. As the whole community is gathered for a Fourth of July picnic at Celie's house, Celie hears a car door slam, then a familiar song from her childhood. Nettie runs up to the house, with Celie's grown children behind her. Mister and Shug have made this reunion possible, and Celia thanks them, and God, for the safe return of her family.

Original CAST (in order of stage appearance)

- Young Nettie, Mister Daughter - Chantylla Johnson
- Young Celie, Mister Daughter, Young Olivia, Henrietta - Zipporah G. Gatling
- Church Soloist - Carol Dennis
- Church Lady/Doris - Kimberly Ann Harris
- Church Lady/Darlene - Virginia Ann Woodruff
- Church Lady/Jarene, Daisy - Maia Nkenge Wilson
- Preacher, Prison Guard - Doug Eskew
- Pa - J.C. Montgomery
- Nettie - Renée Elise Goldsberry
- Celie - LaChanze
- Mister - Kingsley Leggs
- Young Harpo, Young Adam - Leon G. Thomas III
- Harpo - Brandon Victor Dixon
- Sofia - Felicia P. Fields
- Squeak - Krisha Marcano
- Shug Avery - Elisabeth Withers-Mendes
- Ol' Mister - Lou Myers

- Buster, Chief - Nathaniel Stampley
- Grady - JC Montgomery
- Bobby - James Brown III
- Older Olivia - Bahiyah Sayyed Gaines
- Older Adam - Grasan Kingsberry

ENSEMBLE:

James Brown III, laTrisa A. Coleman, Carol Dennis, Anika Ellis, Doug Eskew, Bahiyah Sayyed Gaines, Zipporah G. Gatling, Charles Gray, James Harkness, Francesca Harper, Kimberly Ann Harris, Chantylla Johnson, Grasan Kingsberry, Jc Montgomery, Lou Myers, Angela Robinson, Nathaniel Stampley, Jamal Story, Leon G. Thomas III, Maia Nkenge Wilson, Virginia Ann Woodruff

SWINGS:

Jeannette L. Bayardelle, Eric L. Christian, Bobby Daye, Stephanie Guiland-Brown, Corinne Mcfarlane

TIME: 1909-1949 / **PLACE:** Georgia, USA

MUSICAL NUMBERS

1. Overture - Orchestra
2. Huckleberry Pie - Young Nettie & Young Celie
3. Mysterious Ways - Church Soloist, Church Ladies & Ensemble with Pa, Preacher, Nettie & Celie
4. Somebody Gonna Love You - Celie
5. Our Prayer - Nettie, Celie, Mister, Doris, Darlene & Jarene with Pa
6. That Fine Mister - Doris, Darlene, Jarene
7. Big Dog - Mister, Celie & Male Ensemble with Young Harpo, Young Nettie & Church Lady
8. Lily of the Field - Celie with Nettie & Mister
9. Dear God — Sofia - Celie
10. A Tree Named Sofia - Doris, Darlene & Jarene
11. Hell No! - Sofia & Female Ensemble with Celie
12. Brown Betty - Harpo, Squeak & Male Ensemble with Celie
13. Shug Avery Comin' to Town - Mister, Celie & Ensemble
14. All We've Got to Say - Doris, Darlene, Jarene
15. Dear God — Shug - Celie, Shug Avery
16. Too Beautiful for Words - Shug Avery
17. Push Da Button - Shug Avery & Ensemble with Harpo
18. Uh Oh! - Sofia, Squeak & Female Ensemble with Celie & Buster
19. What About Love? - Celie & Shug Avery
20. Act I Finale - Orchestra with Shug Avery, Celie & Nettie
21. African Homeland - Nettie, Celie & Ensemble
22. The Color Purple - Shug Avery with Celie
23. Church Ladies' Easter - Church Ladies
24. I Curse You Mister - Celie with Mister
25. Celie's Curse - Mister
26. Miss Celie's Pants - Celie, Shug Avery, Sofia & Female Ensemble
27. Any Little Thing - Harpo & Sofia
28. What About Love? (reprise) - Celie & Shug Avery
29. I'm Here - Celie
30. The Color Purple (reprise) - Celie, Nettie & Company

ORCHESTRATION

Trumpets I, II, III; Trombones I, II; Woodwind I, II, III; Keyboards I, II; Drums; Percussion; Bass; Guitar; Violins I, II, III, IV; Violas I, II; Cello I, II