

Malcolm X. Jefferson Elementary Proudly Presents A Fifth-Grade Production of *A Chorus Line*

By Gregory T. Burns

NOTES

Inspired by the tens of thousands of theatrical productions mounted across the country each year that, for lack of a nicer word, are less than stellar, *Malcolm X. Jefferson Elementary Proudly Presents a Fifth-Grade Production of A Chorus Line* pays tribute to the countless hours spent creating magic onstage during the rehearsal process. This sequel to *The 17th Annual Malcolm X. Jefferson Elementary Talent Show* brings new characters and storylines to the stage. This humorous satire brings a refreshing uniqueness to one of America's most beloved musicals of all-time, *A Chorus Line*, by having a group of fifth-graders take on the challenging material. This comic play may be performed by either a female or male and should be entered in Humorous Interpretation. There are a myriad of characters found within this play. With so many young characters, be sure to make each physically and vocally distinct. Miss Highnote, the choral director, is an especially challenging role. It will be up to the performer to determine just how over-the-top or realistic she should be portrayed. This is a very clever spoof on a musical theatre classic; therefore, it would advisable to have a good working knowledge of the original material being satirized. This selection is a top-notch choice for a top-notch performer!

Characters:

Miss Highnote, the choral director at Malcolm X. Jefferson Elementary

Rodrigo, a fifth-grader, portrays the character, Zach, the director

Bethany, a fifth-grader, the stage manager

Bertha, a fifth-grader

Henrietta, a fifth-grader

Hillary, a fifth-grader

Sarah, a fifth-grader, portrays the character, Diana, a dancer

Douglas, a fifth-grader, portrays the character, Paul, a 'happy' dancer

Maria, a fifth-grader, portrays the character, Cassie

Alice, a fifth-grader

The Scene: In and around the Malcolm X. Jefferson Elementary auditorium

Bethany: Dear Diary, Today we were all assigned parts for our upcoming, fifth-grade production of *A Chorus Line*. I didn't get an onstage role, but Miss Highnote, our choral director, asked me to be the stage manager. Mom's happy I won't be onstage, because she said Miss Highnote is nuts

for choosing such a mature musical in the first place. Tomorrow, we're having a mandatory company meeting, and I have to take notes.

Miss Highnote: (*Addressing the company*) Children, do any of you know what it means to really want something? I mean *really* want something?

Rodrigo: I wanted to go to Disneyland one time, but my parents said that families on food stamps can't go on dream vacations.

Miss Highnote: But, Rodrigo, you *wanted* to go to Disneyland, correct?

Rodrigo: Yes.

Miss Highnote: And when your parents told you that you were too *poor* to go, how did that make you feel?

Rodrigo: It made me feel sad.

Miss Highnote: But didn't it start a *fire* in you? Didn't it make you want to get out there, get a job, save your money and take your family to Disneyland someday?

Rodrigo: (*Beat*) No. (*Beat*) Uh-uh. (*Beat*) I'm only ten. I'm too young to get a job.

Miss Highnote: You're missing the point! All of you are missing the point! The dancers in *A Chorus Line* are saying to themselves, "I hope I have what it takes to be cast in the chorus." That's why they sing the song, "I Hope I Get It." Don't any of you hope you get the part?

Bethany: (*Raising her hand*) Miss Highnote, everyone's already been cast, remember? You auditioned us last week, and you posted the cast list yesterday outside the choir room door.

Miss Highnote: (*Irritated*) Shut up, Bethany! (*Beat*) There's a reason you were given the arduous task of being the stage manager. I never want to hear you speak! (*Beat*) Ever!

Bethany: Dear Diary, I think Miss Highnote really likes me. Tomorrow, she wants all of us to sit in the front row of the auditorium while she choreographs Henrietta, Bertha, and Hillary in their big number, "At the Ballet."

Miss Highnote: (*Humming along with the music*) Stop, stop, stop! All of you girls—just stop! I want the three of you to come down here to the front of the stage.

Bertha: (*Slightly out of breath*) What's the matter, Miss Highnote? Did we do something wrong?

Miss Highnote: Well, Bertha, let's see. The three of you were dancing...in your tutus...and it just dawned on me. Something is not quite right here. Something is amiss. Something is making me not buy into this whole idea that the three of you were really inspired to dance after seeing your first ballet.

Bertha: But we love the ballet. We all do. Don't we girls?

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Henrietta: Absolutely. I love ballet!

Hillary: I do, too!

Miss Highnote: (*Trying to be tactful*) Please, understand that I do not question your love for the ballet. It's just that I think the three of you have been inspired by something even *more* than ballet.

Hillary: (*Beat, looking at each other, confused*) We don't understand.

Miss Highnote: Well, Hillary, I think the three of you have been inspired by a little something called a "sweet tooth." All three of you. Look at yourselves, girls. Just look at yourselves. You look like Oprah—the "before" pictures they put on tabloid magazines to *shame* her into hiring another nutritionist.

Henrietta: (*Hurt and shocked*) Are you saying we're... *fat*?

Miss Highnote: (*Beat*) I don't think I have to say it, Henrietta. I think the proof is in the *pudding*—something the three of you have no doubt eaten a great deal of since being weined off the bottle. (*The girls start to cry*) Girls, please, don't cry. This is an easy fix. Instead of singing, "At the Ballet," I want all three of you to sing—"At the Buffet." It will make more sense to the audience. If you're singing "At the Buffet," the audience will understand *why* they are witnessing three hippos prancing about the stage pretending they're ballerinas.

Bethany: Dear Diary, Now that Miss Highnote knows she can make people cry, it's like she's constantly auditioning for the Wicked Wicked Witch of the West in *The Wizard of Oz*! And I swear to you, Diary, on all that is Shakespeare—if she actually auditioned—she'd get the part!

Miss Highnote: Sarah, I have a question for you. Are you a mannequin?

Sarah: (*Confused*) A mannequinn? (*Embarrassed*) Miss Highnote, I'm a girl—not a *man*!

Miss Highnote: Sarah, I know you're a *girl*. A mannequinn is a *dummy* they dress up in department stores. It's like a model—a *statue*—with no emotions. A mannequinn just stands there and doesn't do anything. (*Beat*) Like you! Not that you're a dummy! (*Beat*) You'd have to find some *emotion* to be as entertaining as a *dummy*!

Sarah: (*Misunderstanding the insults being thrown at her*) Thank you, Miss Highnote.

Miss Highnote: (*Trying to help Sarah*) In this scene from the musical, the character, Diana, is telling us she took an acting class and felt "Nothing," but in reality—she's dying inside. She has so *much* emotion that she's become almost numb! Do you understand this?

Sarah: I'm sorry, Miss Highnote, I just can't relate to this character.

Miss Highnote: (*Disappointed*) Okay, then. Thank you for that honest answer. (*Getting an idea*) Sarah, for your homework this weekend, I want you to slam your fingers in a door several times. If you don't think you