School Matinee Series • Study Guide
2017/2018

TWO BEANS PRODUCTIONS
Miss Nelson is Missing
Mon • November 6 • 10 am
Welcome to the Hop

A performance needs an audience, so be prepared to play your part!

Theater Etiquette

When entering the Hopkins Center, show consideration for all those sharing the building by remaining quiet and respectful in common areas.

Be aware and use quiet voices. Remember that live theater differs greatly from watching television or movies or attending a sporting event. Live performers can hear and see you and are easily distracted by any talking or moving around in the audience. Even the smallest sounds can be heard throughout the theater, so it’s best to be quiet so that everyone can enjoy the performance. Applause is the best way to show your enthusiasm and appreciation!

Important to remember: Backpacks, food, drink, and gum are not allowed in the theater. Please turn off all cell phones and note that recording the performance or taking any photos is strictly prohibited. Hats off! It is respectful to remove hats during your time in the theater.

Information For Teachers

Prepare—review this study guide for context that will help your students engage with the performance. Check in with the Hop if you have any questions or concerns about content. Read the letter that accompanies this guide—Hop staff often requests details about your visit including how many buses you’ll be bringing and what accommodations you need.

Arrive—arrive 30 minutes prior to start time to allow time for Hop staff to check you in and escort students to their seats. Hop staff will ask you for a head count of students. Please review our bus policy before arrival: hop.dartmouth.edu/online/plan_a_successful_visit

Lunch—sometimes we are able to offer a space for schools to eat bag lunches following the show. Check the letter that accompanies this guide to confirm. If staying for lunch, please confirm with Hop staff one week prior to show. The day of the show, please bring lunches in boxes or tubs labeled with school’s name. Hop staff will take lunches to the lunch space and escort school group there following the show. Schools are responsible for calling their own bus back to the Hop when they are ready to leave.

Ticketing Policy—no tickets are issued for school matinee performances. Seating placement for each school group is determined by Hop staff. Please let them know if you have a seating request or accommodation; we do our best to keep each school group seated together. Payment is required 30 days before the performance regardless of whether all students are able to attend on the day of the show—please feel free to bring extra chaperones or school staff to fill any empty seats.

Photography—though photography by the audience is prohibited, the Hopkins Center may take photographs during the performance for use on our website or other promotional materials. If you or your students do not wish to be photographed, please let Hop staff know.

The Show Must Go On!—we do not cancel events due to school closings for inclement weather. Performances will only be cancelled if the artist is unable to reach the theater. Schools will be notified by phone if this occurs. We do not issue refunds for performances missed due to school closure. Please contact Hop staff if you find your school unable to attend for this reason.

This study guide was created by the Hop’s Outreach and Arts Education team. To download copies of this and other guides, visit hop.dartmouth.edu/online/outreach

Enjoy The Show!

Hopkins Center Outreach Department:
Stephanie Pacheco, Outreach Manager
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The Hopkins Center Outreach & Arts Education department embodies the Hop’s mission to “ignite and sustain a passion for the arts.” It provides Dartmouth, the community and beyond rare personal contact with artists and a broad context for the performing arts. Unveiling the creative process of extraordinarily diverse artists, Outreach programs touch more than 14,000 lives each year.

Did You Know?

• The Hopkins Center opened in 1962.
• The Hopkins Center was designed by Wallace Harrison, architect of Lincoln Center and the United Nations Building in New York City.
• The first three rows of The Moore Theater are on an elevator that goes eleven feet below ground to create an orchestra pit and can also be raised to the height of the stage to make it larger.
• Spaulding Auditorium houses one of the largest pipe organs in New Hampshire. Can you find it?
About the Show

The students in Room 207 are the worst-behaved class in the whole school—spitballs stuck to the ceiling, paper airplanes whizzing through the air—even though they have the sweetest teacher of all in Miss Nelson. When Miss Nelson unexpectedly does not come to school one day, the class gets the strictest substitute they have ever met: Miss Viola Swamp! The search is on for Miss Nelson, who seems to have vanished. Hopefully the students of Room 207 will find her before it is too late for them! Narrated by the character of Pop, the school custodian, this lighthearted musical reminds us all to appreciate the people in our life we value.

Cast

Miss Nelson: Rebecca Ruttle
Pop Hanson/Mr. Blandsworth/McSmogg: Steven Makropoulos
Adam: Pasquale Piccinonno
Allison: Veronica Marie Kelly
Cheryl: Amelia Fei
Miss Viola Swamp: ??????

The students in Room 207 and Miss Nelson.

Three characters from the show Miss Nelson is Missing are sad after learning their teacher is missing.

The investigation gets underway to find Miss Nelson!
About the Book Writer/Lyricist/Composer

Before she started writing plays and musicals Joan Cushing was an elementary school teacher, just like Miss Nelson. She has adapted 16 popular children books into musicals, including Junie B. Jones and a Little Monkey Business, Petite Rouge: A Cajun Red Riding Hood and Heidi. She lives in Washington, D.C. For more information about Ms. Cushing, check out her website at joancushing.com.

About the Author and Illustrator

Harry Allard, author

Born in Illinois, Harry G. Allard Jr. graduated from Northwestern College in 1943. He then served in the military overseas. After returning home, he moved to Paris and became fluent in French. He later studied French at Yale University and taught it to college students for many years. In Boston, he met illustrator James Marshall. Marshall’s art inspired him and the two became friends. Their first book, The Stupids Step Out, proved successful and they continued to work together, creating the Miss Nelson character. Mr. Allard lives in Massachusetts.

James Marshall, illustrator

Though he originally wanted to be a musician, James Marshall became a children’s author and illustrator after teaching school in Boston, MA. He wrote and illustrated many books, including the George and Martha series. He partnered with Henry Allard to illustrate Miss Nelson is Missing and The Stupids series of books. James Marshall died in 1992 from brain cancer.
Contextual Background

What is a tour?

Since Theatreworks USA goes on tour with its productions—meaning they travel from place to place—all the different parts of *Miss Nelson is Missing* were created specifically so the show can easily travel in a large truck or van. In addition to playing all the different characters onstage, the actors also help unload and set up the scenery and costumes. When the show is done, they pack it all up again and drive to the next venue. The actors are not alone; they have another person who travels with them who is called the stage manager. The stage manager keeps everyone organized by making sure the group knows which town they are going to next, and helps get the lights and sound set up at each venue. They also do many other things to make sure each performance goes well.

What is a musical?

This performance is a musical. A musical is a production that tells a story using song and dance. The characters talk to each other, but they also sing songs and dance when something important happens in the story or they have something important they want the audience to know. Music helps us understand a character’s feelings better and more quickly than just speaking.

What is acting?

In this performance, the actors pretend to be different people. They use their bodies, voices and imaginations to transform into their characters. Though all of the actors are older than the students in the book, they change their voices and movements to make themselves look and sound like kids. They put on costumes that help show what character they are. For example, the actor who plays Viola Swamp wears black clothes, just like the character in the book. The actor who plays Pop, a janitor, also plays Detective McSmogg. When one actor plays more than one character it is called double casting. Actors who are double-cast have a costume for each character they play. They change the way they walk and talk for each character so they look and sound different. It is difficult, because the actor does not want to confuse the audience.

The audience is a very important part of the show. They bring their eyes to watch, their ears to listen and, most importantly, their imaginations. When they see something funny, they can laugh. When they hear something they like, they can smile or clap. If an audience is using their imaginations, they will believe—just for a little while—that the actors on stage are kids who want to find their teacher.
Pre-performance discussion questions

- Why do you think the students in room 207 are bad? Do you ever misbehave at home or at school? Why is being respectful of one another important?
- The character of Pop is not in the book, but he is in the musical. Why do you think this character was added? Do you think adding a character will change the story? Why or why not?
- Have you ever lost anything? If so, what did you do to try and find it?

Post-performance discussion questions

- Which characters were double-cast? What did you see or hear that made each character different?
- Was there a moment that a song revealed information about a character or part of the story? If so, what was it?
- What was the surprise in the story?

Learning Activities

Story in Motion (grades K–2)
Read the story Miss Nelson is Missing aloud to the class, showing them the illustrations. Divide students into three groups—Students, Viola Swamp, and Miss Nelson/Detective McSmogg. Assign each group a sound and gesture to do whenever the story features those characters on the page. As each page is turned, have the students identify who is in the picture and do their sound and gesture. At the end of the page, repeat, adding in any characters who had dialogue but were not pictured. Sounds and gestures should be simple but relate to the character. For example, Viola Swamp might be a sharp clap followed by a cackle-y laugh; the Students might place a hand to shade their eyes and “look” with a loud sigh. Read through the story again switching groups.

Show Appreciation (K–2)
Appreciation is giving thanks to someone who helps us. The students in Room 207 only appreciate Miss Nelson after Viola Swamp treats them differently. Who do your students appreciate? Discuss the idea of appreciation and have them write a short letter of thanks or draw a picture to give to someone they appreciate. Have student deliver their work to their person.

EXTENSION: create a mural in the classroom of appreciation drawings. Include parents, teachers, friends and community members.

School Pride (grades 2–5)
Have students read the lyrics to the alma mater song that the cast of Miss Nelson is Missing sings at the beginning of the performance:

Hail to thee, oh alma mater
We are loyal, through and through
Proud to be your sons and daughters
To your colors we are true
Green is for the tree of knowledge
Gold is for the golden rule
Hail to thee oh Horace B. Elementary School
Briefly discuss that an alma mater (which means “nourishing or bountiful mother”) is a person’s school song and school pride is important. Discuss the words that rhyme in the song and see if students can point out which words rhyme. Ask students to write their own school song, including two or more rhymes and specific details about their school. For example if the school colors are blue and white, they might want to add that to their song (hint – both of those colors are also easy words to rhyme, for example, blue and true/white and right). Share songs with the rest of the class.

**Here We Come to Save the Day! (grades 2–5)**

Viola Swamp scared the kids into better behavior. She even looks a little like a witch. But Viola Swamp isn’t exactly what she seems. Many famous characters have created secret identities to help solve problems: mild-mannered Clark Kent was Superman; librarian Barbara Gordon is Batgirl. Have students think about how they would disguise themselves to make the world a better place. Would they have special powers? If so, what? What would their disguise look like? What problems would they want to focus on solving? Have students draw a comic strip of themselves with their new secret identity and share with the class.

**Make it a Musical (grades 3–5)**

What’s something you do every day without thinking about it? Something simple that helps you get through your day? Maybe eating breakfast or sharpening your pencil. Write a short song or poem about this activity. Use a super simple song like “Baa Baa Black Sheep,” “Mary Had a Little Lamb” and write new lyrics about your activity that fit the rhyme scheme. Keep the song positive. After the song is written, come up with 2-3 different gestures that represent what the song is about. For a song about brushing teeth, you could gesture brushing and then rinsing. If students want, have them share their song and gestures with the rest of the class in *Everyday Things—the Musical*.

EXTENSION: teach the song and gestures to other students and have everyone perform together.
Vocabulary

Actor: people who uses their imagination to act out characters on stage or in movies

Adapted: altering a book to make it suitable for performance

Author: someone who writes a book

Character: a person or thing in a book, play or movie that is played by an actor

Composer: a person who writes music

Costumes: pieces of clothing in a play or musical worn by actors to help portray their character

Custodian: a person who makes sure a building or other place is kept clean and tidy and often make repairs

Fluent: able to speak a foreign language easily

Hail: praise enthusiastically

Illustrator: someone who creates drawings for a book

Investigation: learning as much as you can in an attempt to answer a question, often regarding a crime

Lighthearted: easy going, fun

Lyricist: the person who writes the words to the songs in a musical; the words are called lyrics

Production: all the parts of a play or musical: costumes, lights, sound, actors and backstage workers

Scenery: also called the set, the pieces of furniture, walls and other items that create the place setting for a play or musical

Value: feeling that something or someone is important

Venue: a place where performances can take place; could be a school gymnasium, a park or the Hopkins Center for the Arts

Additional Resources and References

Study guide from Theatreworks USA: theatreworksusa.org/uploads/studyguide/studyguide_1526.pdf

librarypoint.org/james_marshall