



AMERICAN
BLUES
THEATER



CELEBRATING
30
YEARS

BACKSTAGE GUIDE

A publication of **COMMUNITY SERVICE** at
AMERICAN BLUES THEATER

BACKSTAGE CALLBOARD

LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS

Book and lyrics by Howard Ashman

Music by Alan Menken

Directed by Jonathan Berry

Music direction by Austin Cook*



Jonathan Berry & Austin Cook* with the cast
of *Little Shop of Horrors*

For years, *Little Shop of Horrors* has made audiences scream with laughter. In the gleefully gruesome musical, Seymour, a poor florist's assistant, allows his craving for fame and fortune to seduce him into playing nursemaid to a man-eating plant. The *New York Times* says this show "leaves the audience feeling like Audrey Two...ravenous for more!"

* Ensemble member of American Blues Theater

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Note from Producing Artistic Director Gwendolyn WhitesidePage 4

About the Writers.....Pages 4-5

Interview with Director Jonathan Berry.....Page 6

Interview with Music Director Austin Cook.....Page 7

Interview with Actors Michael Mahler and Dara Cameron.....Page 8

History of *Little Shop of Horrors*.....Page 9

“11 Bloodthirsty Facts About *Little Shop of Horrors*”Pages 10-11

About the Real “Skid Row”Page 12

“Somewhere That’s Green”: A Brief History of Suburban America.....Page 13

“Scared of the Dentist? This is Why, Say Neuroscientists”Pages 14-15

History of Doo-Wop Music.....Page 16

About Greek Choruses.....Page 17

“A *Little Shop of Horrors* Guide to Plant Care and Maintenance”Pages 18-19

Sketches from Designers.....Pages 20-21

About American Blues Theater.....Pages 22-23

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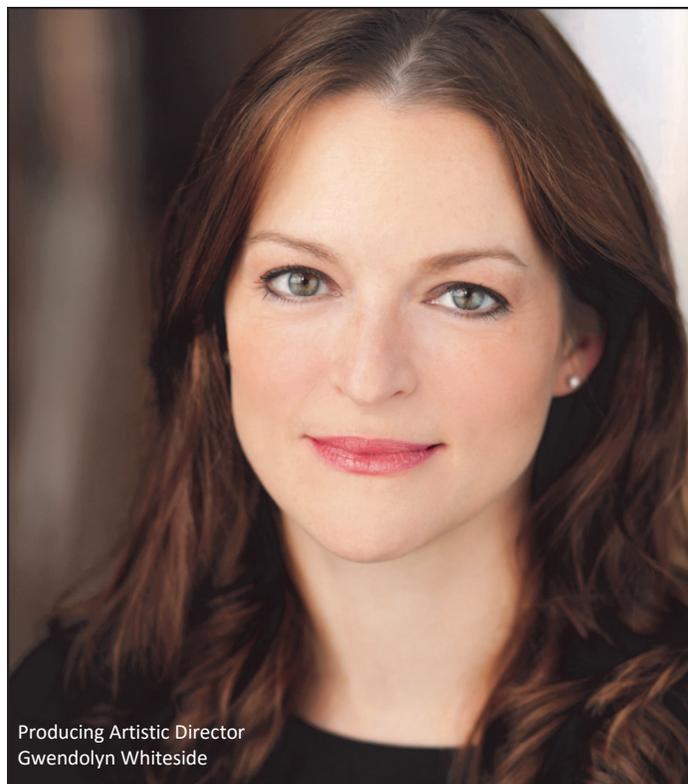


NOTE FROM PRODUCING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR **GWENDOLYN WHITESIDE & ABOUT THE WRITERS**

Welcome to the final production of American Blues Theater's 30th anniversary season "Seeing is Believing". Our founding Ensemble members never imagined Blues would exist many decades later. Our company, like most storefront theaters, began with a group of artists creating opportunities for themselves in hopes of attracting larger projects, more remunerative pay, and higher-profile work.

Our artists never hoped for fame; they craved a career in the arts. They wanted their chosen professions to afford a simple life: to own a small home, to buy fresh produce at a grocery store, to squirrel away a little savings every month, and to grow a family.

Thirty years later, while our multi-generational Ensemble and Artistic Affiliates are in various phases of their lives, the goal remains the same for all. Whether 24 or 73 years old, we still want to find "Somewhere That's Green" ...or in our case, somewhere that's *Blue*.



Producing Artistic Director
Gwendolyn Whiteside



Howard Ashman

In 1979 the art director of the off-off Broadway WPA theatre, lyricist, and playwright Howard Ashman teamed up with budding composer Alan Menken, who was working as a commercial jingle writer and songwriter in local New York City clubs. The success of their first collaboration, the production of the musical *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater*, cemented the groundwork for musical collaborations that would span a decade and take them from off-Broadway to Disney animated films such as "The Little Mermaid" and "Beauty and the Beast".

Their first staggering success came from their work on the musical version of Roger Corman's film "Little Shop of Horrors". Written for the stage of the WPA Theatre, *Little Shop of Horrors* became the third longest running musical in off-Broadway history, as well as the highest grossing off-Broadway production in history. The musical won the 1982-1983 New York Drama Critics Circle Award for Best Musical. It continued to scoop up coveted awards such as the Drama Desk Award, the Outer Critics Circle Award, and the London Evening Standard Award for Best Musical. The musical has been performed all over the world including productions in Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Hungary, Spain, and Germany.

ABOUT THE WRITERS

Menken and Ashman wrote two additional songs for the film version of “Little Shop of Horrors” and received their first Oscar nomination for best song for “Mean Green Mother from Outer Space.”

Their “horrorific” musical antics and ’60s doo-bops snagged the attention of Disney, and Ashman and Menken’s creative talent was used for a string of Disney animated film blockbusters. The composer and the lyricist received two Academy Awards and two Golden Globe Awards for Best Song (“Beauty and the Beast” and “Under the Sea”) and four Grammy Awards. Ashman also served as the producer for “Little Mermaid” and the executive producer on “Beauty and the Beast”. He and Menken also received an Academy Award nomination for “Friend Like Me” from “Aladdin”. Unfortunately, Menken had to finish his work on “Aladdin” with another collaborator because Ashman died from complications due to AIDS in March 1991.

“In animation we have two guardian angels. One is Walt Disney, who continues to touch every frame of our movies. The other is Howard Ashman, who continues to touch every note of our movies,” said a spokesman from the Disney Corporation.

Ashman was a man of diverse talents and unending creativity. His lyrics have become catchphrases for two generations of music lovers. Born in Baltimore, Ashman received his education from Goddard College and Boston University and earned an M.F.A. from Indiana University. After moving to New York in 1974 he started his career in the writing world as an editor at Grosset & Dunlap. During this time he wrote plays on the side including, *Cause Maggie’s Afraid of the Dark*, *The Confirmation*, and *Dreamstuff*, a musical version of the *The Tempest*. Ashman was the author, lyricist, and director of the Broadway production of *Smile*, for which he received a Tony nomination for best book.

Born on July 22, 1949 in New Rochelle, New York, Menken’s love of music was fostered by a family who loved Broadway musicals. His first efforts at composing began in high school where he studied piano and violin. He loved to play the piano, but he hated practicing. He says that when his mother left the room he would create his own versions of his practice songs. After graduating from New York University with a liberal arts degree he attended the Lehman Engel Musical Theatre Workshop at BMI.

His musical accomplishments have garnered him numerous awards, especially his work with Disney where he has teamed up with lyricists such as Stephen Schwartz, David Zippel, and Tim Rice. He has composed the songs and scores for “Hunchback of Notre Dame”, “Pocahontas” (Best Song Oscar for “Colors of the Wind”), “Little Mermaid”, “Beauty and the Beast”, and “Hercules”. His work in “Aladdin” received two Academy Awards, for best original score and best song (with Tim Rice) for that film’s “A Whole New World,” as well as four Grammy Awards.

In 1983 the composer received the BMI Career Achievement Award for a body of work for the musical theatre, including his work for *Little Shop of Horrors*; *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater*; *Real Life Funnies*; *Patch, Patch, Patch*; and contributions to several revues. The composer’s credits also include scores and music for several television features and films, including the purely orchestral score for the 1992 ABC miniseries “Lincoln”, and music and lyrics for the “Rocky V” theme song, “The Measure of a Man,” recorded by Elton John. With lyricist Jack Feldman he wrote “My Christmas Tree” for “Home Alone 2” and the songs for the musical “Newsies”. In 1994, Menken, along with Lynn Ahrens and Mike Ockrent, produced a stage musical based on the Charles Dickens classic *A Christmas Carol*. An instant hit at the Madison Square Garden’s Paramount Theatre, the show became a perennial New York holiday event.

Menken and his wife Janis, a former professional ballet dancer, have two children. ●



Alan Menken

(by Rachele Hughes, from Bard.org)

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR JONATHAN BERRY

Assistant Producer Elyse Dolan discusses *Little Shop of Horrors* with Director Jonathan Berry.

What initially intrigued you about directing *Little Shop of Horrors*?

It was one of the first musicals that I really fell in love with as a kid. I saw the movie in 1987, and it was an awkward time for me, and here was this story about an awkward guy that I related to and could see myself potentially playing. (At the time I was pretty sure I wanted to be a musical theater actor...) So the ability, now, to revisit that and to find out, now, what I love about it. While still nostalgic for me, I find that, beyond just loving the music and relating to its characters, it remains a remarkably prescient piece about what lengths people will go to when they feel such a palpable sense of desperation. On top of that, the opportunity to work with Michael and Dara again, and to work on something with Austin Cook, whose reputation as a brilliant music director preceded him—I really jumped at the chance.

This musical is a modern classic that is performed regularly around the world. Is there anything about this production that you envision being specific to the Chicago style of theater in terms of tone or aesthetic?

When Wendy (Whiteside) brought it to me as a possible project, I got very excited, but I said "I'm so absolutely down for this, but only if we can do a really gritty, real production that takes out



Director Jonathan Berry



Director Jonathan Berry at first rehearsal

the camp and the silliness and grounds it in the truth of the situation." Fortunately, for me, that was what she wanted in the first place. Chicago theater, when it's at its best, strips away the artifice and trusts the truth and simplicity of the story and the relationships. I'm just trying really hard to keep the focus on that. A group of people, poor and alone and without any real foundation, are given the opportunity to have everything they wished for, but never believed they'd achieve. What is the simplest, most direct way to honestly tell that story? That, for me, is the what the best of Chicago theater does and what I hope we'll achieve in this production.

What projects will you be working on next?

Well - I'm probably not going to start a new career as a choreographer! I will go immediately into directing Nick Payne's *Constellations* for Steppenwolf, and then I am incredibly excited to take the summer off from directing and maybe get to the beach a couple of times this year. Or refinish that hutch I've been meaning to get to for the last two years... ●

INTERVIEW WITH MUSIC DIRECTOR **AUSTIN COOK**

Assistant Producer Elyse Dolan discusses *Little Shop of Horrors* with Music Director and American Blues Theater Ensemble member Austin Cook.

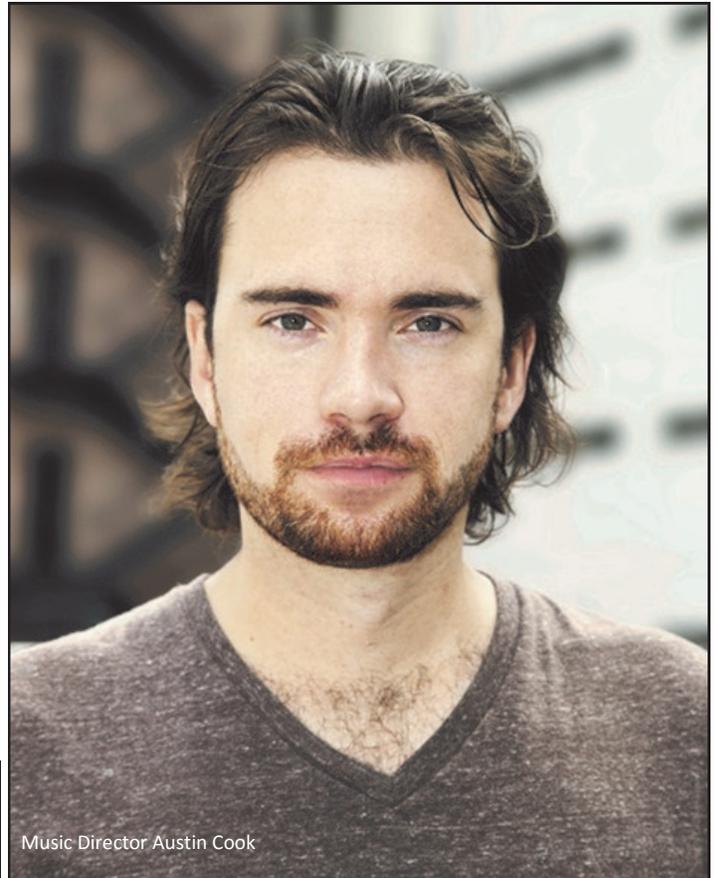
What excites you most about working on this production of *Little Shop of Horrors*?

Little Shop of Horrors is one of the best musicals ever written. It is as close to the “perfect” musical that you can find. The satire of the piece appeals to me - the satire of science fiction, the satire of B movies, even the satire of the musical theater genre. The music itself is a fun merger of musical theater and pop music of the 50s & 60s. It is always fun to music direct those decades of music when form was still simple, but the grooves were growing in complexity and rhythms.

Additionally, I am excited to bring this music to life in an intimate venue. You will be able to feel the punch of the kick drum, the warmth of the funky bass lines, and the groove of the electric guitar. In a smaller space you will be able to see the musicians and actors. You will see and respond to the subtleties of their performances. That excites me.



Ensemble members Austin Cook and Michael Mahler at first rehearsal



Music Director Austin Cook

What are the duties of a music director?

My job is to aid in the story-telling of the show musically. I must make sure that every choice - orchestrations, harmonies, cutoffs, dynamics, even sound design - supports the arc and story of the show. Yes, I must make sure that notes, harmonies & rhythms are correct and consistent, but good music direction is much more than that. I aid the director in consistent and honest story-telling.

Music is a powerful medium that is capable of eliciting strong emotional response. When it is used correctly, the audience has a stronger emotional connection to the show, and thus, comes back for more and tells their friends!

You'll also be playing piano/keyboard during the production, correct? Is there anything that's especially tricky about this music? Do you have a favorite song to play?

The music is not tricky, it's fun! Executing it cleanly and consistently is the only challenge. My favorite song is probably “Feed Me.” We move into a more funky part of the score - I love funk! ●

INTERVIEW WITH ACTORS MICHAEL MAHLER & DARA CAMERON

Assistant Producer Elyse Dolan discusses *Little Shop of Horrors* with American Blues Theater Ensemble members Michael Mahler (“Seymour”) and Dara Cameron (“Audrey”).

What excites you most about working on *Little Shop of Horrors*?

Michael Mahler: It's one of my favorite musical theatre scores of all time. It's so funny and full of heart and dark and light in equal measures; so full of melody and wit; so delightfully pastiche-y and still completely original. I think almost every musical that came after owes a debt to Alan Menken and Howard Ashman. On top of that, the chance to work with the brilliant Jonathan Berry again is a privilege I cherish as an actor. And to collaborate with my friend, the genius Austin Cook is a blessing. Plus to get to work opposite my wife Dara Cameron - well, that's a real gift.

Dara Cameron: We've been looking forward to this production for so long—I couldn't be more ecstatic to finally get to dive in. *Little Shop* is kind of in a class all by itself, I think—it's uniquely satirical and biting, honest and heartfelt, all at the same time. And the score is incomparable. If that weren't enough, American Blues truly has assembled a dream team—from the designers to Austin and Jonathan, to this cast. We're so lucky.

What is your favorite thing about working together?

MM: I feel so lucky to get to play opposite one of my favorite actors. I just hope I do a good job, and she still wants to be married to me.

DC: Michael and I have gotten to work together quite a bit, actually. We've done three *It's a Wonderful Life* productions together and this is the second musical he and I will have gotten to do with Jonathan Berry (he directed us in *They're Playing Our Song* at Fox Valley Repertory Theatre in St. Charles several years ago)! Getting to sing onstage with Mike is one of my very favorite things to do. He's my favorite duet partner. Plus, it's very easy to run lines together. And it makes for a very convenient carpool situation! Now, if only we could have gotten our little dog in on the deal... he would have made a ferocious Audrey Two :)

We're celebrating 30 years of American Blues this season!

What does being an Ensemble member at Blues mean to you?

MM: I am extremely proud to be a part of a true ensemble of actors who are dedicated to telling American stories with guts, passion, grit, and integrity. It's the kind of work that defines Chicago theatre: in your face and uncompromisingly honest.

DC: I am so grateful that American Blues found us and we found them. For me, having an artistic home in Blues is kind of what being a Chicago actor is all about. The pride in my ensemble and the incredible work that gets done is something I do not take for granted. And specifically, the holidays for me mean getting to do *It's a Wonderful Life* with the loveliest group of people around. If I try to pin it down to a single feeling or experience—getting to share that story and sing “Auld Lang Syne” with hundreds of Chicago theatre goers every year kind of encapsulates being an American Blues ensemble member for me.

What will you be working on next?

MM: I'm heading to the Old Globe in San Francisco where they're producing my musical *October Sky* this fall.

DC: I'll be playing “Cinderella” up at the Marriott Theatre in the mornings in their world premiere Theatre for Young Audiences production of *Cinderella: After the Ball* while doing *Little Shop* this spring! After that, I'm not sure! But I'll definitely be back this winter for *It's a Wonderful Life!* ●



Michael Mahler



Dara Cameron

HISTORY OF *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS*

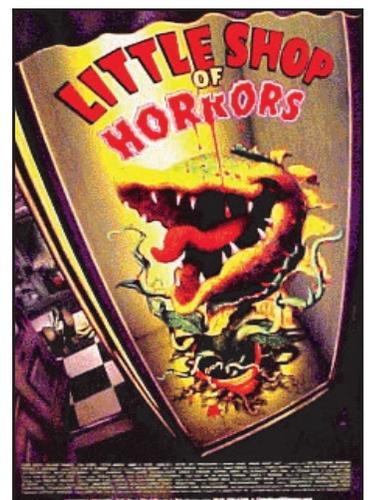
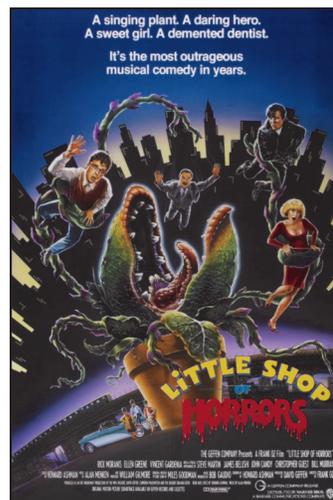
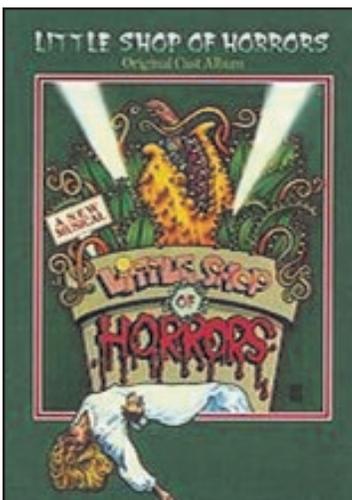
Little Shop of Horrors has become one of the most produced musicals in the United States and around the world. The story is based on a 1960 low-budget film directed by Roger Corman. The musical opened at the WPA Theater in 1982, where Howard Ashman was the Artistic Director. After receiving rave reviews, the show quickly transferred to the Orpheum Theater. Although many people thought the show should have transferred to a Broadway theater, Ashman felt the show belonged in a smaller venue. This decision allowed the production to run for 5 years and more than 2,000 performances. The show won a Drama Desk Award for Best Lyrics, Outer Critics Circle Awards for Best Lyrics and Best Off-Broadway Musical, and a New York Drama Critics Circle Award for Best Musical. It also received the 1983 London Evening Standard Award and a 1983 Grammy nomination for Best Cast Album.

In 1986, *Little Shop of Horrors* was adapted into a hit film directed by Frank Oz. The cast featured Rick Moranis, Ellen Greene (who originated the role of “Audrey” on stage), John Candy, and Steve Martin. The film originally had the same ending as the stage musical, but a test audience responded poorly to it so Ashman wrote a “happier ending” for the movie. A new song sung during this re-written scene, “Mean Green Mother from Outer Space,” was nominated for an Academy Award. A soundtrack recording was released by Geffen Records. When the film was eventually issued on DVD, producers mistakenly added the original ending as a bonus feature. Copies of the DVD were quickly recalled and these were highly sought after items on Ebay. In 2012, a “Director’s Cut” of the movie featuring the original ending was released.

Twenty years after *Little Shop* premiered off-Broadway, producers decided to produce a Broadway revival of the show. When the trustees of the late Howard Ashman’s estate finally agreed to release the performance rights, their one condition was that Ashman’s original assistant, Connie Grappo, would direct the show. The producers had wanted Jerry Zaks to direct, but finally allowed Grappo to stage the piece. The production, which opened out of town at the Actors’ Playhouse in Coral Gables, Florida, needed a lot of work. The producers turned to Zaks, asking him to see the show and offer his impressions. Grappo knew her time as director was coming to an end. Zaks was asked to take over and agreed under the condition that he was allowed to start from scratch. He replaced every member of the cast except Hunter Foster (Seymour) and kept some of the creative team. With an additional \$2.1 million added to the production’s original \$8 million budget, the new production opened at the Virginia Theater on October 2, 2003. It played for 372 performances. Hunter Foster was nominated for a Tony and Drama Desk Award. Martin P. Robinson, a member of the 1982 off-Broadway cast, reprised his role as the main Audrey Two puppeteer. A cast album of the Broadway revival was released by DRG. It includes several bonus tracks of songs that were written for the show, but never used. The closing Broadway cast included former *NSYNC member Joey Fatone as Seymour. In 2006 a new production, featuring an all-new design, opened in London’s West End, closing in 2007 before a tour of the UK.

Most recently, *Little Shop* was revived in a three-performance Encores! concert staging at New York City Center in July 2015. Directed by Dick Scanlan, the production starred Jake Gyllenhaal as Seymour; Ellen Greene as Audrey; and *Saturday Night Live* cast member, Taran Killam, as Orin. Reviewers praised Greene, Gyllenhaal, and the cast in general. Ben Brantley wrote in *The New York Times*: “A confluence of alchemical elements was at work, converging in ways that made a perfectly charming but small musical feel like a major event.” ●

(from Wikipedia.org and Papermill.org)



"11 BLOODTHIRSTY FACTS ABOUT *LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS*"

BY MARK MANCINI

At first, the horrifically hilarious musical remake wasn't a huge hit. Since then, you might say it has grown on people.

1. IT CAN BE TRACED BACK TO A BET.

"The Little Shop of Horrors" (1960) has been called "the best film that was ever shot in two days." Strictly speaking, this isn't entirely true. According to some accounts, the project was born when director Roger Corman—who had a knack for making cult classics on the cheap—bet his brother, Gene, that he could rehearse and shoot an entire film during the last week of 1959.

Using leftover sets from an earlier movie, Corman spent Monday through Wednesday going through the motions with his actors before shooting on Thursday and Friday. Most sources end the story right here. What generally goes unreported is the fact that Corman called his cast back for re-shoots and new sequences over the next two weekends.

"The Little Shop of Horrors" was also one Jack Nicholson's earliest roles (he plays a masochistic dental patient). This future star later reminisced about the film's tight budget, saying that Corman wouldn't even pay to make copies of the script.

After its release, the picture became a popular title on late-night telecasts. It also inspired a hit off-Broadway show. Premiering on May 6, 1982, the original production ran for a month, until it got picked up by a producer and began an impressive 2,209 performance run over the next five years, making it, at the time, the highest-grossing off-Broadway production ever. The \$25 million film adaptation of the musical hit theaters in 1986.

2. THE BIGGEST PLANT PUPPET REQUIRED UP TO 60 TECHNICIANS TO OPERATE.

If *Little Shop of Horrors* was green-lit today, its leafy, extraterrestrial villain would probably be computer-animated. Back in the mid 1980s, though, this technology hadn't yet come of age. Fortunately, the movie's director, Frank Oz, knew puppetry inside and out. A key collaborator of Jim Henson's, Oz had spent 10 years voicing "Fozzie Bear", "Miss Piggy", and others before he was hired to helm *Little Shop of Horrors*.

Oz's biggest challenge was creating the plant itself. Named Audrey Two, it not only grows from a sapling to a giant over the course of the film, but it also sings, shimmies, and eats people alive. Technicians built six animatronic flytraps of varying sizes for the film. The smallest was a mere 4 inches tall and the largest stood over 12 feet in height. Used toward the climax of the movie, it required as many as 60 human operators.

3. ONE SONG FORESHADOWED ARIEL'S BIG SHOWSTOPPER IN *THE LITTLE MERMAID*.

Though several musical numbers that had appeared in *Little Shop of Horrors'* off-Broadway score were cut from the film, "Somewhere That's Green" survived the transition. In the song, Audrey—a downtrodden slum-dweller—yearns for the greener pastures of suburbia. No doubt a certain sea princess could relate. Lyricist Howard Ashman and composer Alan Menken also collaborated on Disney's *The Little Mermaid*. Described as an "I Want" song, *Little Mermaid's* "Part of Your World" was heavily influenced by "Somewhere That's Green." In fact, Menken says that they "used to jokingly call this one 'Somewhere That's Wet.'"

4. TWO OF JIM HENSON'S KIDS WERE INVOLVED.

Before Audrey Two reaches its full size, the plant sings for some supper in "Feed Me." On the film's DVD commentary, Oz notes that Brian Henson—who currently chairs the Jim Henson Company—was the puppet's main operator throughout this scene. A few minutes later, viewers see his little sister Heather Henson doing a cameo as an abused dental patient.

5. STEVE MARTIN SUSTAINED A MINOR INJURY DURING "FEED ME."

When Orin Scrivello, D.D.S. (Martin) and his long-suffering girlfriend Audrey (Ellen Greene) walk up to her apartment, the deranged



Rick Moranis in 1986 film

dentist kicks open the building's door. On the DVD commentary, Oz mentions that Martin had previously tried opening it by hand only to have the glass unexpectedly shatter, cutting his palm.

6. AUDREY TWO MADE THE ACTORS TAKE THINGS SLOW.

The foam rubber lips on Audrey Two couldn't move fast enough to synch up with the audio during any of his songs. The team responded by filming the puppets at a slower-than-average rate of 12 or 16 frames per second, then speeding up the footage to the standard 24 frames per second. Whenever Rick Moranis (who played "Seymour" or one of the other actors sang side-by-side with the monster, he or she was really lip-syncing in slow motion. "It was a b*tch," says Oz.

7. BILL MURRAY'S DIALOGUE WAS IMPROVISED.

No script? No problem. Murray was invited to portray a giddy, Nicholson-esque masochist opposite Martin's sadistic character in *Little Shop of Horrors*. The former *SNL* cast member took the gig, but asked if he could go off-script. "Look," Oz told him, "as long as you're the masochist and Steve's the sadist, I don't care." Murray proceeded to ad-lib his way through the scene, using different lines in every take.

8. A TV-FRIENDLY VERSION OF "MEAN GREEN MOTHER FROM OUTER SPACE" ROCKED THE 1987 ACADEMY AWARDS.

Written specifically for the film by Ashman and Menken, this brassy number has power-crazed Audrey Two drop a few expletives. "Mean Green Mother from Outer Space" netted an Oscar nomination for Best Song, and the plant's voice actor—R&B legend Levi Stubbs (lead singer of the Four Tops)—was invited to sing it at the ceremony. Obviously, some editing was needed. In the end, *Top Gun*'s "Take My Breath Away" took home the prize, despite Stubbs's inspired performance.

9. A SURREAL DREAM SEQUENCE WAS AXED.

In the original edit of "The Meek Shall Inherit" segment, Seymour battles his inner demons through a Dalí-esque nightmare that involves bodily transformation, Greek columns, and a bleeding painting. The odd sequence ultimately landed on the cutting room floor.

10. THE ORIGINAL ENDING WAS CUT, TOO.

Spoiler alert: in Corman's "The Little Shop of Horrors", Seymour grabs a knife and leaps into the open maw of his dastardly plant, killing them both. The stage musical wraps up on an even grimmer note: not only does Audrey Two eat all of the principal characters, but the finale reveals that an army of the plant's ravenous offspring has laid waste to cities all across the nation.

Oz spent roughly a fifth of his movie's budget bringing a version of this apocalyptic conclusion to the silver screen. Completing the elaborate sequence—which referenced "Godzilla", "War of the Worlds", and countless other sci-fi classics—took just under one year.

When Oz's "Little Shop of Horrors" ran its first preview in San Jose, test audiences could barely contain their enthusiasm—at first. "For every musical number," recalls Oz, "there was applause, they loved it, it was just fantastic ... until we killed our two leads. And then the theater became a refrigerator, an ice box. It was awful." Another screening in Los Angeles provoked a similar reaction.

The ending needed a complete overhaul. As Oz told *Entertainment Weekly*, "We had to cut that ending and make it a happy ending, or a satisfying ending. We didn't want to, but we understood they couldn't release it with that kind of a reaction." Reluctantly, Ashman cooked up a merrier resolution. The discarded ending has since been restored on a 2012 "Director's Cut" DVD.

11. LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS SPAWNED A SHORT-LIVED CARTOON SERIES.

Simply titled *Little Shop*, the show ran on Fox Kids in 1991. Starring a young Seymour and "Junior," his rapping prehistoric flytrap, it only lasted for 13 episodes. ●

(from *MentalFloss.com*)



Fox Kids' 1991 *Little Shop* cartoon

ABOUT THE REAL "SKID ROW"

In New York, "Skid Row" was a nickname given to the Bowery during much of the 20th century.



The Bowery in 1980, Photo by Brian Rose

The Bowery is a street and neighborhood in the southern portion of the New York City borough of Manhattan. The street runs from Chatham Square in the south to Cooper Square at 4th Street in the north. The neighborhood's boundaries are roughly East 4th Street and the East Village to the north, Canal Street and Chinatown to the south, Allen Street and the Lower East Side to the east, and Little Italy to the west.

In the 1890s, the Bowery was a center for prostitution and for bars catering to gay men and some lesbians, from The Slide at 157 Bleecker Street—New York's "worst dive"—to Columbia Hall at 5th Street, called Paresis Hall. One investigator in 1899 found six saloons and dance halls, the resorts of "degenerates" and "fairies," on the Bowery alone. Gay subculture was more highly visible there and more integrated into working-class male culture than it was to become in the following generations, according to George Chauncey, a historian of gay New York.

From 1878 to 1955 the Third Avenue elevated train ran above the Bowery, further darkening its streets, populated largely by men. "It is filled with employment agencies, cheap clothing and knickknack stores, cheap moving-picture shows, cheap lodging-houses, cheap eating-houses, cheap saloons", writers in *The Century Magazine* observed in 1919. "Here, too, by the thousands come sailors on shore leave—notice the 'studios' of the tattoo artists—and here most in evidence are the down-and-outs." Prohibition eliminated the Bowery's numerous saloons. One Mile House, the "stately old tavern... replaced by a cheap saloon" at the southeast corner of Rivington Street, where the politicians of the East Side had made informal arrangements for

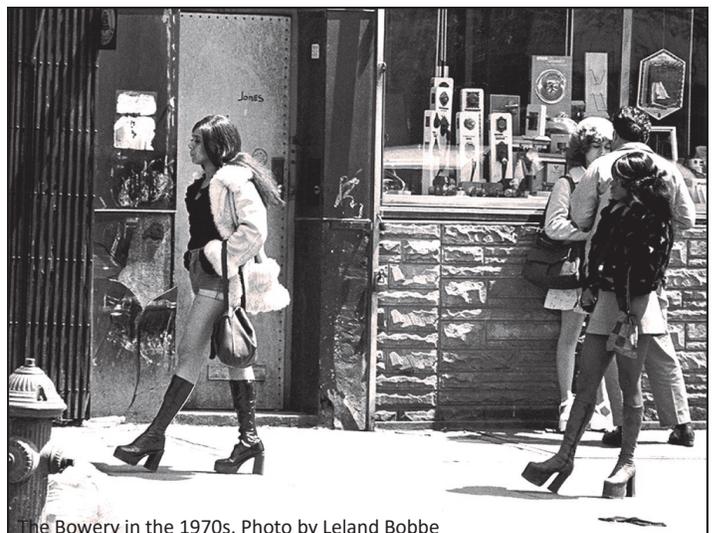
the city's governance, was renovated for retail space in 1921, "obliterating all vestiges of its former appearance," *The New York Times* reported. Restaurant supply stores were among the businesses that had come to the Bowery at this time, and many remain to this day.

Pressure for a new name after World War I came to naught and in the 1920s and 1930s, it was an impoverished area. From the 1940s through the 1970s, the Bowery was New York City's "Skid Row," notable for "Bowery Bums" (disaffiliated alcoholics and homeless persons). Among those who wrote about Bowery personalities was *New Yorker* staff member Joseph Mitchell (1908–1996). Aside from cheap clothing stores that catered to the derelict and down-and-out population of men, commercial activity along the Bowery became specialized in used restaurant supplies and lighting fixtures.

The vagrant population of the Bowery declined after the 1970s, in part because of the city's effort to disperse it. Since the 1990s the entire Lower East Side has been reviving. As of July 2005, gentrification is contributing to ongoing change along the Bowery. In particular, the number of high-rise condominiums is growing. In 2006, AvalonBay Communities opened its first luxury apartment complex on the Bowery, which included an upscale Whole Foods Market. Avalon Bowery Place was quickly followed with the development of Avalon Bowery Place II in 2007. That same year, the SANAA-designed facility for the New Museum of Contemporary Art opened between Stanton and Prince Street.

The new development has not come without a social cost. Michael Dominic's documentary *Sunshine Hotel* followed the lives of residents of one of the few remaining flophouses.

(from Wikipedia.org)



The Bowery in the 1970s, Photo by Leland Bobbe

"SOMEWHERE THAT'S GREEN" A BRIEF HISTORY OF SUBURBAN AMERICA

Prior to the 19th century, the term "suburb" often referred to the outlying areas of cities where work was most inaccessible—implicitly, where the poorest people had to live. The modern American usage of the term came about during the course of the 19th century, as improvements in transportation and sanitation made it possible for wealthy developments to exist on the outskirts of cities, such as Brooklyn Heights.

The growth of suburbs was facilitated by the development of zoning laws, redlining, and numerous innovations in transport. After World War II availability of FHA loans stimulated a housing boom in American suburbs. In the older cities of the northeast U.S., streetcar suburbs originally developed along train or trolley lines that could shuttle workers into and out of city centers where the jobs were located.

This practice gave rise to the term "bedroom community," meaning that most daytime business activity took place in the city, with the working population leaving the city at night for the purpose of going home to sleep in the suburbs.

Economic growth in the United States encouraged the suburbanization of American cities that required massive investments for the new infrastructure and homes. Consumer patterns were also shifting at this time, as purchasing power was becoming stronger and more accessible to a wider range of families. Suburban houses also brought about needs for products that were not needed in urban neighborhoods, such as lawnmowers and automobiles. During this time commercial shopping malls were being developed near suburbs to satisfy consumers' needs and their car-dependent lifestyles.

Long Island, New York in the United States became the first large-scale suburban area in the world to develop, thanks to William Levitt's Levittown, New York, which is widely considered to be the archetype of post-World War II suburbia. Long Island's significance as a suburb derived mostly from the upper-middle-class development of entire communities in the late 19th century, and the rapid population growth that occurred as a result. As car ownership rose and wider roads were built, the commuting trend



accelerated in North America. This trend toward living away from cities has been termed the "urban exodus."

Zoning laws also contributed to the location of residential areas outside of the city center by creating wide areas or "zones" where only residential buildings were permitted. These suburban residences are built on larger lots of land than in the central city. For example, the lot size for a residence in Chicago is usually 125 feet (38 m) deep, while the width can vary from 14 feet (4.3 m) wide for a row house to 45 feet (14 m) wide for a large stand-alone house. In the suburbs, where stand-alone houses are the rule, lots may be 85 feet (26 m) wide by 115 feet (35 m) deep, as in the Chicago suburb of Naperville. Manufacturing and commercial buildings were segregated in other areas of the city.

In April 2012, the U.S. Census Bureau documented the first indication that the growth of American suburbs had ceased, a trend attributed to rising gasoline prices and a change in living preferences among members of Generation Y. ●



Rick Moranis & Ellen Greene in 1986 film

(from Boundless.com)

"SCARED OF THE DENTIST? THIS IS WHY, SAY NEUROSCIENTISTS"

BY IAN SAMPLE

10 November 2013

The whir of a dentist's drill might bring on the shakes and a racing heart, but what happens in the brain has long been a mystery.

Now researchers in Japan believe they are closer to an answer after scanning people's brains while playing them sounds of dental drills and suction instruments.

People who were terrified of visits to the dentist showed marked differences in their brain responses compared with those who were more relaxed at the prospect, according to work reported at the 2013 Society for Neuroscience meeting in San Diego.

Unravelling how the brain reacts to the sounds, particularly in the most anxious dental patients, could help scientists assess different ways to make patients more at ease, by seeing how they alter neural activity, said Hiroyuki Karibe at Nippon Dental University in Tokyo.

"As a pediatric dentist, I've seen many patients since 1987, and from my clinical experience, I found that the sound of drilling can evoke anxiety in dental patients," Karibe told *The Guardian*. But he said no one had ever directly investigated how the sounds of dental instruments affected people's brain activity.

Working with psychiatrists, Karibe asked 21 women and 13 men, aged 19 to 49, to complete a survey that measured how much they feared a trip to the dentist. The survey posed 20 questions, such as "Do you get tense during dental treatment?" and "Do you feel anxious when you hear the dental drill?" The volunteers answered on a scale from one to five, with one being "not at all" and five being "very much."

Karibe divided the volunteers into high- and low-fear groups according to their scores on the survey. He then scanned the participants in a functional magnetic resonance imaging machine (fMRI) while playing them a series of sounds, including screeching dental drills and rasping suction tools.

"All of the participants were isolated in the fMRI room when they listened to the dental sounds, so we couldn't see if they responded visibly or audibly to the dental sounds, but we could recognize their responses from their brain activity," Karibe said.

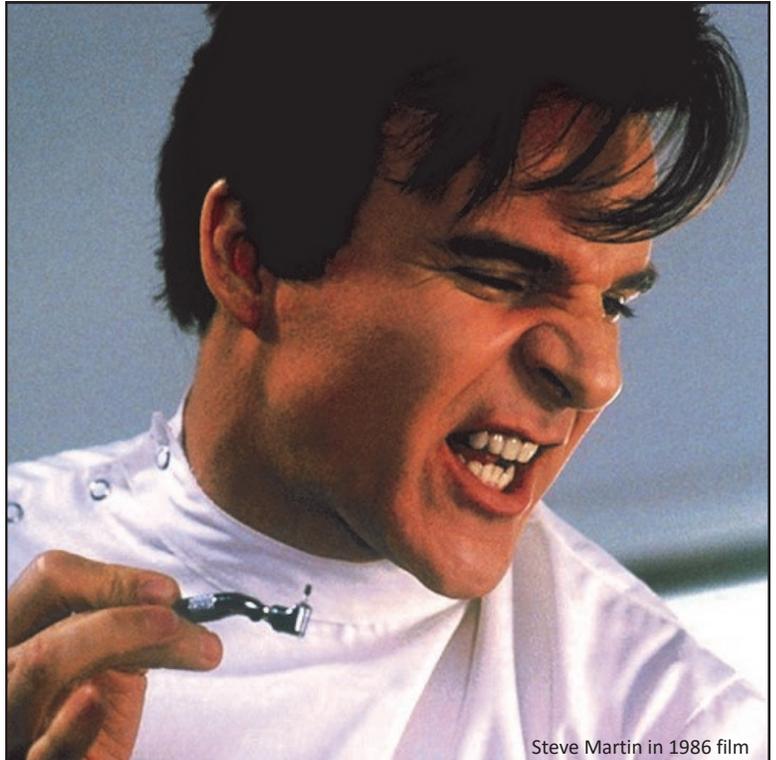
People in the low-fear group were not overly anxious about going to the dentist. When they heard dental sounds, parts of the brain called the left and right superior temporal gyri responded more than when they heard neutral sounds. This, Karibe said, means that dental sounds triggered more activity in the primary auditory areas of the brain.

Anxious people responded differently. Instead of a surge of activity in the auditory areas of their brain, Karibe said he saw a more intense response in a region called the left caudate nucleus, which may play a role in learning and remembering the sounds of the dental instruments.

"We believe the findings can be applied to assess the effectiveness of interventions such as cognitive behavior therapy for patients who have a strong fear of dental treatment," Karibe said.

About 10% of the population have severe anxiety about trips to the dentist, and many put off their visits until they have toothache or another emergency, such as a dental abscess. The behavior can lead to a negative cycle of events, with patients becoming ever more afraid because emergency treatment can be more traumatic.

Martin Tickle, professor of dental public health at Manchester University, said dental anxiety was more common in children whose



Steve Martin in 1986 film

parents feared the dentist, and who had a history of having teeth extracted.

But a recent survey by Tickle found that pain is actually quite rare in dental surgeries. He compiled reports from 451 adults visiting dentists in the north-west of England and found that 75% of patients reported no pain at all during their visits. Those having the most invasive procedures, such as tooth extractions and root canal treatment reported some of the higher pain scores, but even many of these claimed to experience no pain at all.

"The strongest predictor of pain during dental procedures was dental anxiety. Anxious patients were four times more likely to experience pain than non-anxious patients after controlling for other factors," Tickle said.

"I don't think the answer for the National Health Service lies with giving dentally anxious patients brain scans. The first thing we need to do is prevent dental cavities in young children to stop them having to have extractions, as the most common reason why children have a general anesthetic is to have decayed teeth extracted," he said.

"We also need to improve the amount and quality of research looking at how to effectively manage children and adults who are dentally anxious and provide guidelines for dentists on how to use research-proven interventions."

"For more severe phobic cases we again need to develop the evidence base for how best to manage these patients in more specialised services for example through talking therapies," he said. ●

(from TheGuardian.com)

8 TIPS TO EASE DENTAL FEAR

- 1) Find an understanding dentist. Ask friends and family if they can recommend one or look for someone who advertises him or herself as an expert with anxious patients.
- 2) Once you've found someone you think may be suitable, visit the surgery to have a look around, meet the receptionist and dentist, and see the environment. Tell the dentist that you're anxious so they know beforehand.
- 3) Pick an appointment time early in the morning so you have less time to dwell on it.



Taran Killam & Jake Gyllenhaal in 2015 Encores! production

4) The first appointment will simply be a check-up so don't worry that you'll be launched into having a filling, the drill, or a needle. See this first visit as your chance to get to know the dentist.

5) Take a friend with you to your appointment. The dentist won't mind if they accompany you throughout the check-up or treatment.

6) Agree a sign with the dentist to signal that you need a break and want them to stop. It can be as simple as pointing your finger, and will help you feel more in control.

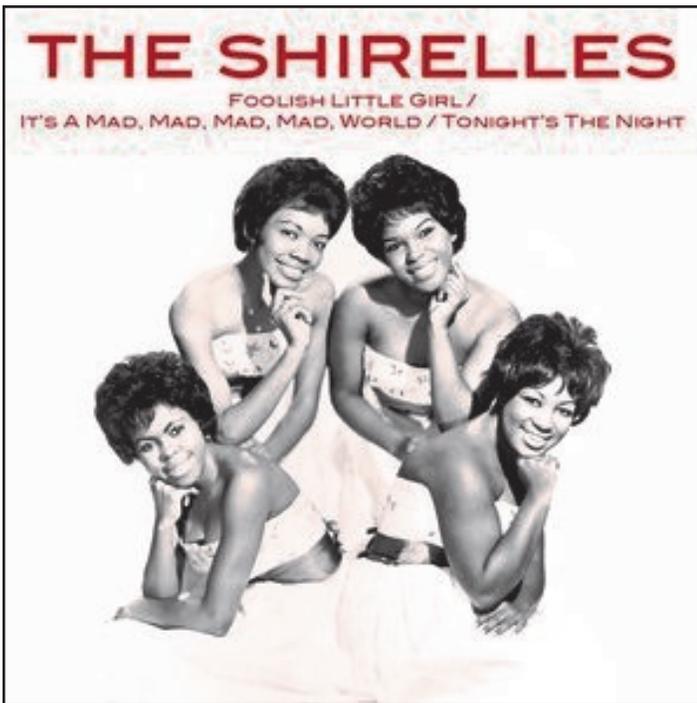
7) If you think it will help, start gradually with a clean and polish then work up to more extensive treatment once you've built up trust and rapport with your dentist.

8) Take a personal stereo with you to listen to music during your visit. It will help you relax.

(from NHS.uk)

HISTORY OF DOO-WOP MUSIC

Alan Menken's score for *Little Shop of Horrors* is in the style of early 1960s rock and roll, doo-wop, and early Motown.



Doo-wop is a style of R&B and rock and roll vocal music that was popular in the 1950s and '60s. The structure of doo-wop music generally featured a tenor lead vocalist singing the melody of the song with a trio or quartet singing background harmony. The term “doo-wop” is derived from the sounds made by the group as they provided harmonic background for the lead singer.

The roots of the doo-wop style can be found as early as the records of the Mills Brothers and the Ink Spots in the 1930s and '40s. The Mills Brothers turned small-group harmony into an art form when, in many of their recordings, they used their vocal harmony to simulate the sound of string or reed sections. The Ink Spots established the preeminence of the tenor and bass singer as members of the pop vocal ensemble, and their influence can be heard in rhythm-and-blues music beginning in the 1940s (in records by the Ravens), throughout the '50s, and well into the '70s. In fact, Motown's premier male group of the 1960s and '70s, the Temptations, had a vocal sound that was based in this classic doo-wop style, with the Ink Spots' tenor lead singer, Bill Kenny, and bass singer, Hoppy Jones, serving as inspiration for the Temptations' lead singers, Eddie Kendricks and David Ruffin, and their bass singer, Melvin Franklin. There also was a school of female doo-wop, best exemplified by The Chantels, The Shirelles, and Patti LaBelle and The Bluebelles.

The popularity of doo-wop music among young singers in urban American communities of the 1950s such as New York City, Chicago, and Baltimore was due in large part to the fact that the music could be performed effectively a cappella. Many young enthusiasts in these communities had little access to musical instruments, so the vocal ensemble was the most popular musical performing unit. Doo-wop groups tended to rehearse in locations that provided echoes—where their harmonies could best be heard. They often rehearsed in hallways, high school bathrooms, and under bridges; when they were ready for public performance, they sang on stoops and street corners, in community center talent shows, and in the hallways of the Brill Building. As a result many doo-wop records had such remarkably rich vocal harmonies that they virtually overwhelmed their minimalist instrumental accompaniment. Doo-wop's appeal for much of the public lay in its artistically powerful simplicity, but this “uncomplicated” type of record also was an ideal, low-budget investment for a small record company to produce. The absence of strings and horns (“sweetening”) in their production gave many of the doo-wop records of the early 1950s an almost haunting sparseness. The Orioles' “What Are You Doing New Years Eve?” (1949), The Harptones' “A Sunday Kind of Love” (1953), and The Penguins' “Earth Angel” (1954) are excellent examples of this effect.

An unfortunate by-product of the poetic simplicity of doo-wop records was that it was relatively easy for major labels to cover (re-record) those records with greater production values (including the addition of strings and horns) and with a different vocal group. Consistent with the racial segregation of much of American society in the 1950s, the practice of major record labels producing cover records usually involved doo-wop records that were originally performed by African-American artists being re-created by white artists, the objective being to sell these covers to a broader, “pop” (white) audience. A number of white singing groups adopted the doo-wop style—particularly Italian-American ensembles who shared the same urban environment with the African Americans who originated doo-wop. Like the phenomenon of cover records, the advent of the “clean-cut” teen idols who prospered on *American Bandstand*, and the popularity of blue-eyed soul, this version of doo-wop further exemplified how black music was co-opted by the white recording industry.

Ultimately, the musical power of doo-wop has flowed from the original groups through the Motown music of the 1960s and the Philly Sound of the '70s and continued into the urban contemporary music of the 1990s. ●

(from *Britannica.com*)

At its heart, *Little Shop of Horrors* is a Greek moral tragedy in which a young and fallible hero seeks to improve his life by exploiting a higher power. In typical Greek fashion, the angry Gods don't just punish the hero, but extend their wrath to everyone the hero touches, including those he loves.

A trio of girls named Ronnette, Crystal, and Chiffon replaces the Greek Chorus in *Little Shop of Horrors*, and they sing in the style of the '60s girl groups for which they're named. Just like the Chorus in Greek tragedies, the trio serves as narrator and moves the action along through musical interludes meant to help the audience keep up with the story. In the beginning, they offer the audience a musical warning to avoid the dangers they are about to see, in the title song "Little Shop of Horrors". And at the end, when everything has gone terribly wrong, the Chorus and the characters offer the audience a moral to the story, in the song, "Don't Feed the Plants".

-Don Leavitt, "Love, and a Desire to be Than We Are" (from *Bard.org*)

The Chorus in Ancient Greek Theatre

The Greeks, often considered to be the pioneers of Western theatre, were the first to introduce the chorus as a dramatic element. At the beginning of the fifth century B.C.E., choruses were made up of approximately fifty actors confined to a space we now call the orchestra pit. Through song and movement, the chorus helped to tell the story of the theatrical piece of which they were a part. Despite the large size of these early choruses, they represented a collective consciousness, or a single body, often wearing masks to create a sense of unification and anonymity. As time passed, the chorus was reduced to twelve by the Greek playwright Aeschylus, then raised to fifteen by his successor Sophocles. These smaller choruses took a more active role in storytelling, either by taking on a role in the narrative, or by representing a collective character such as a group of towns folk or an army.

Throughout Greek plays such as *Oedipus Rex*, *Antigone*, and *Lysistrata*, the chorus functions as a storytelling device by serving as a link between the audience and the piece itself, highlighting important aspects of the scene, and projecting and emphasizing the current emotional state of the piece. The chorus achieves this either through direct narration and explanation, or through analytical commentary or conversation about the events and characters of the play. In some instances, the chorus is in direct conversation with characters and actively moves and participates in the events of the story. However, many times the chorus speaks through songs called odes that are separate from the action of the play.

This dichotomy between directly plunging into the play versus watching and commenting on it creates an interesting dynamic, catching the audience between two opposing forces. Sometimes the imagery, rhythm, and music of the chorus pull the audience into the piece on a sensory level. At other times, the thought and rhetoric of the chorus alienates the audience, causing them to view events and characters from an outside perspective. ●

(from *Sonoma.edu*)



A production of Aeschylus' *The Oresteia*



Tichina Arnold, Tisha Campbell, and Michelle Weeks in 1986 film

A LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS GUIDE TO PLANT CARE & MAINTENANCE



Perhaps the most famous plant of all time is Audrey Two, the man-eating plant from the musical comedy *Little Shop of Horrors*. In the musical, the bizarre Audrey Two falls to earth from outer space and is cared for by Seymour at a florist's shop. Seymour discovers that Audrey Two is not like other plants: instead of fertilizer, it requires human flesh and blood to thrive. Most of us watch *Little Shop of Horrors* for its entertainment value; however, beneath the laughter, singing, and gore, you can learn the basics of indoor plant care and maintenance.

If you recall, Seymour was sure to water Audrey Two. Proper watering is important for plants, and they all have different needs. Some plants, like club moss, need consistently moist soil; others, like cacti and succulents, need to stay on the dry side. If you are buying a plant, read the label to find out the water requirements. If there is no label, ask garden center staff. Check the soil with your finger every few days to make sure it is moist

for water-loving plants. Watering cacti and succulents is quite easy, as you can forget about them for days or even weeks and they will still survive, since they don't need much water (although I do not recommend this); make sure the soil is dry before watering. For any plant, you want to water deeply and preferably regularly to establish a good, healthy root system. Most plants do best in pots with holes to ensure that they have adequate drainage, which will prevent roots from rotting.

Do you remember the scene in the 1986 film where Seymour misted Audrey Two in his basement? Some plants, like ferns and baby's tears, need high humidity. The air in most homes is dry, so special measures must be taken to raise humidity levels. One way to do this is through misting a few times a day, but let's be honest: how many of us have time for that? A better way is to place plant pots on a tray of pebbles soaked in water. They will release humidity throughout the day. You could also put a humidifier near the plants that need humidity.

Seymour placed Audrey Two in a big, sunny window in the front of the store. Light is extremely important for plants, since they use photosynthesis to create food. Plants have different light needs, but most do well in a window or a window with light filtered by a thin curtain or blinds. Plants with low light requirements can survive with less light. Some plants that require a lot of light may need special grow lights to thrive. If you have a plant that fails to bloom, there is a good chance that it isn't getting enough light.

Finally, who can forget how Seymour fed Audrey Two? Hopefully, you don't have any plants at home that require human blood and body parts! Plants do benefit greatly from fertilizers, though, especially blooming plants. There are a variety of fertilizers on the market specifically for certain plants, like African violet and orchid fertilizers. There are slow-release fertilizers that come in pellet form, plant spikes, and fertilizers that you add to water. There are natural and chemical fertilizers; there are so many to choose from that it can be overwhelming. My advice is to pick a fertilizer that is easy for you to use and use it as directed. If the fertilizer is inconvenient to use, chances are good that you won't do it. I actually use more diluted amounts of fertilizer than called for, since too much can burn plants. Only fertilize plants when they are actively growing. Also, remember that most potting soils already contain fertilizers that will last six months, so if you just repotted a plant, you won't need additional fertilizers for months.

Maybe you have felt like Seymour at times: you have a plant and you are not sure of its identity, so you do not know how to care for it. Fortunately, today, we have the Internet, and it is fairly easy to identify what a plant is by searching through photos of plants online or by asking experts on plant forums. Local



university extension offices usually have a gardening department that can answer your plant questions. Gardener friends are another great resource. Poor Seymour had to find out how to care for his plant the hard way!

Audrey Two brought Seymour fame, money, and love in exchange for human sacrifices. I can't say that your plants will reward you in the same way, but then again, you don't have to murder people for them! If you are fascinated by Audrey Two, though, you may be interested in trying carnivorous plants. Some species of nepenthes have pitchers large enough to digest rats, and it is rumored that baby monkeys have been found in some. No matter what kind of houseplant you choose, they all provide certain benefits. They clean the air indoors, especially fast-growing ones. They provide beauty and a bit of nature indoors, which can be especially valuable in the winter. Finally, some of them are just fascinating. The next time you are at the garden center, choose your next plant carefully: you could be getting a mean green mother from outer space! ●



(from blog.AvasFlowers.net)

CARNIVOROUS PLANTS

Carnivorous plants are plants that derive some or most of their nutrients (but not energy) from trapping and consuming animals or protozoans, typically insects and other arthropods. Carnivorous plants have adapted to grow in places with high light where the soil is thin or poor in nutrients, especially nitrogen, such as acidic bogs and rock outcroppings. Charles Darwin wrote *Insectivorous Plants*, the first well-known treatise on carnivorous plants, in 1875.



True carnivory is thought to have evolved independently nine times in five different orders of flowering plants, and is represented by more than a dozen genera. This classification includes at least 583 species that attract, trap, and kill prey, absorbing the resulting available nutrients. Additionally, over 300 protocarnivorous plant species in several genera show some but not all of these characteristics.

Five basic trapping mechanisms are found in carnivorous plants:

- **Pitfall traps** (pitcher plants) trap prey in a rolled leaf that contains a pool of digestive enzymes or bacteria.
- **Flypaper traps** use a sticky mucilage.
- **Snap traps** utilize rapid leaf movements.
- **Bladder traps** suck in prey with a bladder that generates an internal vacuum.
- **Lobster-pots**, also known as eel traps, force prey to move towards a digestive organ with inward-pointing hairs.

(from Wikipedia.org)

SKETCHES FROM DESIGNERS



Left: Puppet Designer and American Blues Theater Ensemble member Sarah E. Ross' rendering of the largest "Audrey Two". This puppet stands 7 feet tall.



Right: Looking down into Scenic Designer and American Blues Theater Artistic Affiliate Grant Sabin's model of the set.

SKETCHES FROM DESIGNERS



Left: Costume Designer and American Blues Theater Artistic Affiliate Izumi Inaba's rendering of Crystal, Chiffon, and Ronette's Act One, Scene One costumes.



Right: Costume Designer and American Blues Theater Artistic Affiliate Izumi Inaba's rendering of Orin's first costume.

ABOUT AMERICAN BLUES THEATER

AMERICAN BLUES THEATER—30TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON

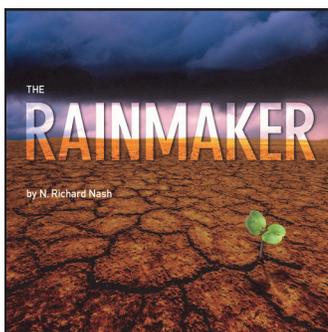
American Blues Theater is the premier American theater producing visceral theatrical works while engaging its audience in missions of local service agencies. American Blues Theater illuminates the American ideas of freedom, equality, and opportunity in the plays produced and communities served.

The multi-generational and interdisciplined artists have established the second-oldest professional Equity Ensemble theater in Chicago. The 34-member Ensemble has over 500 combined years of collaboration on stage. As of 2016, the theater and artists received 172 Joseph Jefferson Awards and nominations that celebrate excellence in Chicago theater and over 28 Black Theatre Alliance Awards. The artists are honored with Pulitzer Prize nominations, Academy Awards, Golden Globe Awards, Emmy Awards and numerous other accolades.

For over thirty years, American Blues has created essential productions and live theatrical experiences for Chicagoland. Their best known production is Chicago's holiday tradition *It's a Wonderful Life: Live in Chicago!* that has entertained over 50,000 patrons since 2002! Terry Teachout of *The Wall Street Journal* wrote American Blues is "exceptional" and the company "feels like home." Chris Jones of *Chicago Tribune* claimed Blues is "strikingly honest [with] deep emotional souls."

In addition to first-class theater, American Blues Theater believes it is an honor and duty to serve the community. They provide an integrated arts education program to Chicago Public Schools that serves over 1,500 students annually. They hold "Pink Previews" which donates a portion of box office sales to breast cancer research. They donate thousands of complimentary tickets to underserved communities. They provide community engagement events called "Town Halls" for patrons following Sunday matinee performance, including curated discussions with Northwestern University psychologists. As a Blue Star Theater, they honor military service and first-responders through various initiatives. Former President of Illinois Labor History Society, Larry Spivak wrote, "American Blues is a dynamic force in Chicago – connecting culture, art, history, and politics into a holistic, aesthetic experience." ●

SEASON 30 "Seeing is Believing"



by N. Richard Nash

Directed by
Edward Blatchford*

Aug 28—Sept 27, 2015

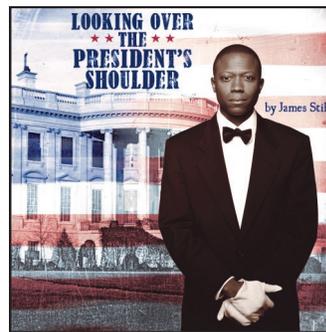


from Frank Capra's film

Directed by
Gwendolyn Whiteside*

Music direction by
Michael Mahler*

Nov 20—Dec 27, 2015



by James Still*

Directed by
Timothy Douglas

Featuring Manny Buckley*

Feb 5—Mar 6, 2016



Book & lyrics by Howard Ashman
Music by Alan Menken

Directed by
Jonathan Berry

Music direction by
Austin Cook*

Apr 29—June 26, 2016

*Ensemble member or Artistic Affiliate of American Blues Theater

ABOUT **AMERICAN BLUES THEATER**

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT THE THEATER

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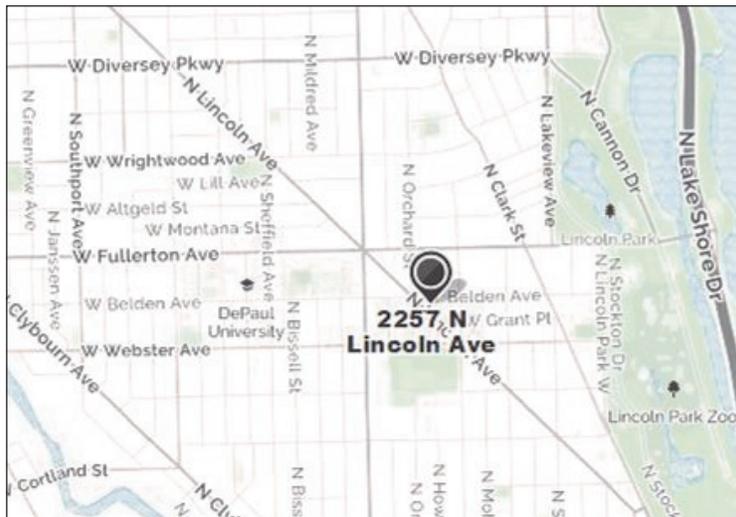
Greenhouse Theater Center
2257 N. Lincoln Avenue
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FOR MORE INFORMATION

AmericanBluesTheater.com



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