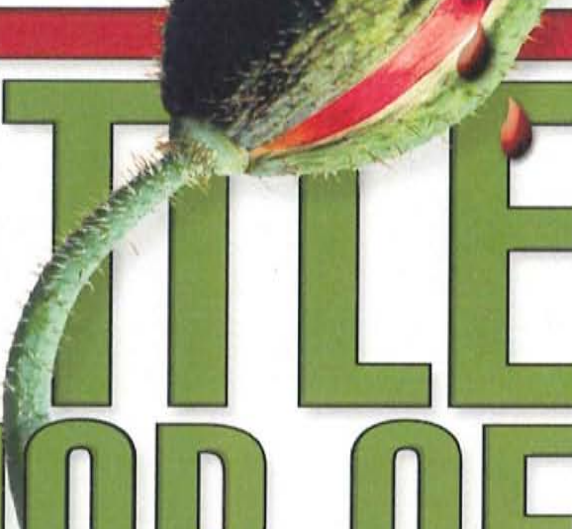


# Study Guide

# LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS



**PAPER MILL**  
PLAYHOUSE

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by

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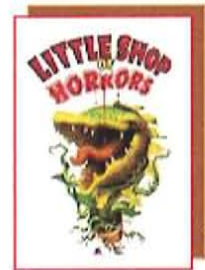
# PRODUCTION HISTORY OF "LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS"

**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 composer 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 hated 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. Today, however, the original ending can be viewed online at YouTube.com.

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. In 2006 a new production, featuring an all-new design for the plant, opened in London's West End, closing in 2007 before a tour of the UK.

According to Educational Theatre Association's annual survey of American high schools, *Little Shop of Horrors* is the most produced musical in high schools today. This production marks *Little Shop's* Paper Mill Playhouse premiere!



## ABOUT THE AUTHORS OF "LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS"

### ALAN MENKEN



was born on July 22, 1949, in New Rochelle, New York. Menken's father was a respected dentist and president of the American Analgesia Society, an organization that promoted the use of nitrous oxide (laughing gas) as a safe anesthetic. Given that, it is clear to see that Menken's father was the inspiration for the dentist in *Little Shop of Horrors*. From an early age, he loved a wide variety of musical styles, including classical, show tunes, rock, and folk. He graduated from NYU as a musicology major and started out as a performer of his own work, as well as writing and singing commercial jingles.

It was around this time that Menken was accepted into the BMI Musical Workshop. Here he met playwright Howard Ashman. In 1979, they collaborated on their first project, a musical version of Kurt Vonnegut's story, *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater*. Menken and Ashman's next musical, *Little Shop of Horrors*, became a worldwide phenomenon.

In 1989, Menken and Ashman were hired by Disney to write new animated musicals. Their first was the smash hit *The Little Mermaid*. Two years later, the duo had another huge hit with *Beauty and the Beast*. For their next project, they started to work on an adaptation of the Aladdin story. After creating a few songs, Ashman passed away. Tim Rice, a British musical librettist, was brought on board to finish the film, which would go on to be a huge hit. In 1994, Menken and Rice adapted *Beauty and the Beast* for the stage, which became the sixth longest running show on Broadway. One of Menken's most successful musicals for the stage was an adaptation of *A Christmas Carol*, a seasonal hit at Madison Square Garden for over a decade. The film *Enchanted* gave Menken three nominations in the Best Song category at the 2008 Academy Awards. Along with the current stage adaptation of *The Little Mermaid* on Broadway (for which he and Glenn Slater wrote 10 new songs), he has two more Broadway-bound musicals: *Leap of Faith* and *Sister Act the Musical*. Menken and his wife Janis reside in upstate New York with their two children, Ana and Nora. On June 19, 2008, Alan Menken will be inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame.

### HOWARD ASHMAN



was a famous director and librettist throughout the 1980s. He was born on May 17, 1950, in Baltimore, Maryland, and was brought up in a typical middle class household. He attended Boston University and received a B.A. from Goddard College, as well as earning his Masters degree from Indiana University in 1974.

After college, Ashman moved to New York City, becoming a book editor at Grosset and Dunlop, where he found time to experiment with his love of playwriting. His first works, *'Cause Maggie's Afraid of the Dark* and *Dreamstuff* (a musical version of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*) were both produced in 1976, the latter at New York's WPA Theater. A year later, Ashman took over as Artistic Director of the WPA, serving in that position until 1982. He first gained critical attention with *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater*, a musical based on a Kurt Vonnegut novel. For the show, he collaborated with a new composer named Alan Menken, who would go on to be his songwriting partner for the rest of his life.

After *Little Shop of Horrors*, Ashman's next musical was *Smile*, an adaptation of a 1975 film which spoofed beauty pageants. Although the show was panned by the critics, it is remembered for what New York Times critic Frank Rich called Ashman's "impressively crafted lyrics." Film producer David Geffen, who had worked on the movie of *Little Shop of Horrors*, recommended Ashman and Menken to Disney and the rest is history. After writing some initial material for their next film, *Aladdin*, Ashman passed away due to complications from AIDS at the age of 40. He is credited as a huge contributor to the renaissance of the animated Disney musical, which continued throughout the 1990s. After his death, a statement from Walt Disney Pictures stated, "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."

## ABOUT ROGER CORMAN & "THE LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS"



*Little Shop* the musical is a loose adaptation of a 1960 cult film *The Little Shop of Horrors* by director / producer Roger Corman. His main achievement is that the whole movie was shot in two days with a \$30,000 budget! Some say that the set for the film was left over from another movie that Corman had just finished. The film is also famous for being one of the first movies to star three time Academy Award winner Jack Nicholson as dental patient Wilbur Force, a role that is not included in the musical, but was re-named Arthur Denton and re-inserted into the musical film in 1986 (played by Bill Murray). Screenwriter Charles B. Griffith not only wrote the story, but appeared as several characters in the film, including the voice of Audrey Junior, the plant.

Corman is considered by most critics as the 'King of the B-Movies' (low budget films). He lived with the mindset that you can create a high quality film with little money. During his career, he produced more than 550 films and directed fifty others, but is also credited as a mentor for hundreds of filmmakers and actors. Some of these include Francis Ford Coppola, Robert DeNiro, Martin Scorsese, Ron Howard and James Cameron.

## "LITTLE VOCABULARY LIST OF HORRORS"

- ✿ **asphyxiate** (verb) to die or become unconscious due to a lack of oxygen or excess of carbon dioxide.
- ✿ "...I cook like **Betty Crocker**" (lyric from "Somewhere That's Green") General Mills created Betty Crocker in 1928 to put a name and face to the thousands of requests for answers to baking questions. She became the name associated with being the perfect homemaker. One opinion poll rated her as the second most famous woman in America after first lady Eleanor Roosevelt.
- ✿ **boychik** (noun) Yiddish slang for boy or young man.
- ✿ **bubeleh** (noun) Hebrew slang for doll, sweetheart, sweetie, honey, sugar.
- ✿ **D.D.S.** (acronym) Doctor of Dental Surgery.
- ✿ "**I'm his December Bride**" (lyric from "Somewhere That's Green") a TV series in the 1950s about Lily Ruskin, a widow who was not in fact a 'December bride,' but desperately wanted to be one, if only the right man would come along. A 'December bride' is a woman who marries later in life.
- ✿ "...I look like **Donna Reed**" (lyric from "Somewhere That's Green") actress (right) best remembered as the wholesome housewife Donna Stone on television's "The Donna Reed Show" and as Mary Bailey in the 1946 film *It's a Wonderful Life*.
- ✿ "...like something out of **Edgar Allan Poe**" (lyric from "Ya Never Know") American poet, short-story writer, editor and literary critic. Best known for his tales of mystery and the macabre. Considered the inventor of the detective-fiction genre.
- ✿ **eighty-six** (verb) To remove, end usage, or take something out or away. Mostly used in restaurants and diners to indicate that a menu item is no longer available. The expression probably originated as rhyming slang for "nix it" but there are a lot of other theories, including one involving a Prohibition-era speakeasy named Chumley's located at 86 Bedford Street in New York City.
- ✿ **epsom salts** (noun) Hydrated magnesium sulfate used to reduce inflammation. Originally extracted from the mineral-rich water of Epsom, England.
- ✿ **F.T.D.** (acronym) a service for out-of-town deliveries of flowers. Originally called the 'Florists Telegraph Delivery', it was later renamed 'Florists Transworld Delivery' to reflect its growing worldwide presence.
- ✿ **genus** (noun) a class, kind, or group marked by common characteristics.
- ✿ **George Washington Carver** (1864-1943) was known as the 'peanut man' and the 'wizard of Tuskegee,' for his agricultural research at the Tuskegee Institute's Department of Agriculture. For over forty years, his research revolutionized the agricultural industry in the South.

- ☀️ *"How about a date with **Hedy Lamarr**?"* (lyric from "Feed Me") Austrian actress known primarily for her great beauty and her successful film career.
- ☀️ **Holy Rollers** (proper noun) Pentecostal Christian churchgoers. Also more commonly used to describe anyone who tries to promote their religion at doorsteps or in public forums. Originally described as people who literally rolled on the floor or spoke in tongues in an uncontrolled manner.
- ☀️ **hopheads** (noun) slang for drug addicts.
- ☀️ *"How about a guest shot on **Jack Paar**?"* (lyric from "Feed Me") American radio and television talk show host who was best known as the host of TV's "The Tonight Show" from 1957 to 1962.
- ☀️ **James Dean** (1931-1955) American film actor (right) who died in an auto accident after performing in only three movies. Dean's status as a cultural icon is best embodied in the title of his most celebrated film, *Rebel Without a Cause*, in which he starred as a troubled student.
- ☀️ **klutz** (noun) Yiddish slang for a clumsy person.
- ☀️ **laissez-faire** - a French phrase meaning 'let it be.'
- ☀️ **Levittown** - a planned community created in the late 1940s in Long Island, New York, that is considered the first suburb and is widely regarded as the blueprint for postwar suburbs throughout the United States. It gets its name from its builder, the firm of Levitt & Sons.
- ☀️ **linoleum** (noun) a type of flooring developed in 1860; made of linseed oil and wood flour.
- ☀️ *"We snuggle watchin' **Lucy**..."* (lyric from "Somewhere That's Green") Lucille Ball played Lucy Ricardo on "I Love Lucy" an enormously popular situation comedy aired on CBS TV during the 1950s.
- ☀️ **Marquis de Sade** (1740-1814) French aristocrat and philosopher who spoke about extreme freedom and the pursuit of personal pleasure. The term 'sadism' (the derivation of pleasure as a result of the suffering of others) comes from his name.
- ☀️ **nitrous oxide** is a colorless non-flammable gas, with a pleasant, slightly sweet odor and taste. It is used in surgery and dentistry for its anesthetic and analgesic effects, where it is commonly known as 'laughing gas' due to the euphoric effects of inhaling it.
- ☀️ **nogoodnik** (noun) slang for a worthless, disreputable, or malicious person.
- ☀️ **nooky** (verb) vulgar slang term for sexual relations.
- ☀️ **Novocain** (noun) a brand name of an anesthetic drug that when injected temporarily numbs the area. From the Latin *novus* (meaning new) and *caine*, a common ending for alkaloids used as anesthetics.
- ☀️ **ragamuffins** (noun) children clothed in shabby, ill-fitting or dirty clothes.
- ☀️ **Rose Bowl** - an annual college football game at the Rose Bowl stadium in Pasadena, California. The Tournament of Roses Parade is held on the morning of the game (usually New Year's Day) in which all the floats are made of flowers or plants.
- ☀️ **schtick** (noun) a comic bit or gimmick. Derived from the Yiddish word 'shtik' meaning piece and the German word 'stück'.
- ☀️ **shiva** (noun) In Judaism, the week-long period of mourning for members of the immediate family. Because most regular activity is interrupted, the process is referred to as 'sitting shiva.' Corman and Ashman use the word to comic effect by referring to a funereal client of the flower shop as 'Mrs. Shiva.'
- ☀️ **skid row** (noun) a run-down or dilapidated urban area where there tends to be a lot of alcohol and drug abuse. The term originally referred to a path along which loggers 'skidded logs' in the Pacific Northwest.
- ☀️ *"Feel the **sturm and drang** in the air"* (lyric from "Little Shop of Horrors") translates in English as 'storm and stress.' Also a German movement in music and literature in the 1800s that focused on lower class characters.
- ☀️ **terrazzo** (noun) a faux-marble flooring or countertop material originally developed in Terrazzo, Italy.
- ☀️ **The Wolfman** - 'Wolfman Jack' was a gravelly-voiced radio DJ who became world famous in the 1960s and 1970s.
- ☀️ **tract house** (noun) a style of home in which multiple identical (or nearly-identical) dwellings are built to create a community.
- ☀️ **urchins** (noun) playful or mischievous children.
- ☀️ **Vitalis** (proper noun) brand name of hair care products for men (right). In the 50s and 60s the product was associated with the 'greaser' look.
- ☀️ **wino** (noun) slang term for someone consuming large amounts of alcohol, usually wine.



## "LITTLE HISTORY OF DENTISTRY"

Oral disease has been a problem for humans from the beginning of history. Skulls of Cro-Magnon peoples, who inhabited the earth

25,000 years ago, show evidence of tooth

decay. The earliest recorded reference to oral disease is from an ancient Sumerian text (5000 BC) that describes 'tooth worms' as a cause of dental decay. There is historical evidence that the Chinese used acupuncture and cocaine around 2700 BC to treat pain associated with tooth decay.

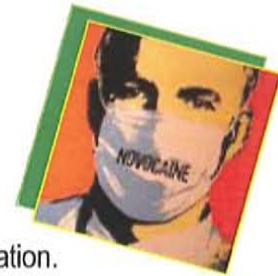
"Your mouth is a mess kid!"



• Dental practitioners migrated to the American colonies in the 1700s and devoted themselves primarily to the removal of diseased teeth and insertion of artificial dentures. Paul Revere, historically noted for his "midnight ride," was by trade a metalworker who constructed dentures from ivory and gold. George Washington had dentures made of metal and carved ivory, or metal and carved cow teeth, but none made of wood.

• In 1844, Dr. Horace Wells, a Connecticut dentist, observed people reacting to inhalation of nitrous oxide (laughing gas). He initiated the use of nitrous oxide inhalation during dental therapy.

• Greene Varian Black 'Father of Modern Dentistry' (1831-1915) was the leading reformer of American dentistry. He devised a foot engine that allowed the dentist to keep both hands free while powering the dental drill. He developed modern techniques for filling teeth based upon biological principles and microscopic evaluation.



### Did You Know...



- **Papyrus** in ancient Egypt contains references to diseases of the teeth, as well as prescriptions for substances to be mixed and applied "against the throbbing of the blisters in the teeth."
- **Aesculapius**, a Greek physician who lived between 1300 and 1200 BC, is credited by many with the concept of extracting diseased teeth.
- **Hippocrates** and **Aristotle** (500-300 BC) wrote of ointments to treat diseases of the teeth and of tooth extraction using wires to stabilize jaw fractures or bind loose teeth.
- A renowned Roman medical writer, **Celsus** (100 BC), wrote extensively of oral diseases, including bleeding gums and ulcers of the oral cavity.
- **Arabian physicians** attached great importance to clean teeth. They described various procedures to 'scrape' the teeth and designed sets of specialized instruments to accomplish that task.
- Throughout the **Middle Ages** in Europe, dentistry was made available to wealthier individuals by physicians or surgeons who would go to the patient's home. Dentistry for poorer people took place in the marketplace, where self-taught vagabonds would extract teeth for a small fee.
- From the Middle Ages to the early 1700s much dental therapy was provided by so called '**barber surgeons.**' These jacks-of-all trades would not only extract teeth and perform minor surgery, but they also cut hair, applied leeches to let blood, and performed embalming.

## "LITTLE HISTORY OF FLORISTRY"

*"Seven thousand boutonnières? Please, I've only got two ears! Hollyhocks are hardier, which ones would your wife prefer? Audrey, it's that new account! Sorry, that's the right amount! Daisies only come in white! Sir, I'm too worn out to fight. Sorry, those are out of stock. Seymour! Look! It's six o'clock!"*

**Floristry, flower arranging, floral arrangement, floral design or floral arts** is the art of creating flower arrangements in vases, bowls and baskets, or making bouquets and compositions from cut flowers, foliage, herbs, ornamental grasses and other botanical materials. Often the terms 'floral design' and 'floristry' are considered synonymous. Florists are people who work with flowers and plants, generally at the retail level.

Floristry is sometimes used as an umbrella term referring to the cultivation of flowers as well as their arrangement, rather than solely to the business of selling them. However, the floral industry is the basic drive behind floristry. Florist shops, along with online stores are the main flower-only outlets, but supermarkets, garden supply stores and many gas stations also sell flowers.



The craft of floristry involves various skills. These include selecting flowers that will look good together (based on principles of design or general instinct), knowing how to cut, treat, and arrange flowers and other stock plants so they will remain fresh as long as possible, and (as explained above) selling them, which involves knowledge of customer requirements and expectations. Knowing how to form wreaths, bouquets, corsages, boutonnières, artificial arrangements and other more complicated arrangements is also important. Wreaths can be made out of many different types of flowers and plants, and often include ribbon and artificial product.



The flowers sold in florist shops typically represent the varieties abundantly available in the season but also include blossoms flown in from around the world. Basic varieties include roses, tulips, irises, orchids and lilies. Fashion sometimes plays a role in floristry; what is considered the flower that everyone needs to have today can change very quickly.

Some shops also stock gift baskets, fruit, and some shops will purchase these things only when seasonal and is heavily influenced by holidays, make up the largest part of the business, with the a smaller, but more constant, part. Flowers for selected to celebrate birthdays, anniversaries, significant portion of a florist's business.



chocolates as well as flowers, where as needed for an order. Floral business is weddings and funerals. These occasions sale of house plants and home decor being personal enjoyment as well as those thank-you's and get well wishes are also a



The floral business has been impacted significantly by the corporate and social event world in as much as flowers play a large part in the decor of special events and meetings. Centerpieces, entryways, reception tables, bridal bouquets, wedding chuppahs and stage sets and only a few examples of how flowers are used in the business and social event arenas.

### ❧ CREDITS ❧

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