Bring It On: The Musical explores the hard work needed to achieve mastery of a cheer routine, a dance movie, a friendship. The work ethic shown by the fictional characters onstage is a direct reflection of the hard work and dedication needed to create this musical.

It still makes me mad when a culture makes people hate themselves for being different—I love eccentricity and people who don’t try to be like everyone else. I look at high school bullies (and adult bullies, frankly) and think “What kind of risks have you ever taken?” Because all bullies want is for people to stop being truly alive and expressive. —Jeff Whitby, Librettist—Bring It On: The Musical

What are you willing to work hard at? Why?
Do you enjoy competing? Or do you prefer to collaborate? Can competition and collaboration co-exist?
How do you find the balance between expressing yourself and supporting the team? If you could only do one—which would you choose?

Welcome to Center Theatre Group and Bring It On: The Musical.

Welcome to Center Theatre Group and Bring It On: The Musical—the explosive new musical comedy that raises the stakes on over-the-top high school rivalries. Set against the world of competitive cheerleading with music and gravity-defying choreography, this new show proves that winning isn’t everything when it means losing something—or someone—you really care about.

Cheerleading: Cheerleader. What images, impressions or assumptions come to mind when you hear these words? Are these assumptions positive or negative? When you visit a school that is different from your own, what assumptions do you make or do you think are made about you? What assumptions are made about teenagers in general? Do these images reflect the reality of you and your friends?

The teenagers we meet in Bring It On: The Musical have things they want to do and things they want to say. Whether through cheer, dance, music, sports, friendship, fashion, art—they work hard and are searching for the words to express who they are and what they care about.

While Bring It On: The Musical is set specifically in the world of competitive cheerleading, the word cheerleader has other meanings as well.

To cheer is to encourage, comfort and congratulate. Who in your life is a “cheerleader” for you? Who believes in you and encourages you to do your very best? Is there a friend or family member that you cheer on and want only the best for them?

To lead is to go before and show the way. What makes someone a good leader? What qualities are needed? Is there an area in your life where you lead? Is there someone who inspires you to follow in their footsteps?

Theatre raises questions and challenges audience members to discover their own answers. See what questions this information raises for you and what questions and answers the performance provides. Thank you so much for joining us for Bring It On: The Musical. We look forward to seeing you at the theatre!
Bring It On: The Musical

The setting of Bring It On: The Musical is two very different high schools. We meet characters who are trying to make their high school years count and find themselves and their passions within the high school hierarchy.

Why High School?

What makes high school such a pivotal time?

If you are in high school yet, what do you value most in your high school years?

The setting of Bring It On: The Musical is two very different high schools. We meet characters who are trying to make their high school years count and find themselves and their passions within the high school hierarchy.

Why High School?

What makes high school such a pivotal time?

If you are in high school yet, is it what you imagined? What was surprising to you?

If you are not in high school yet, what do you long for it to be like?

Campbell Davis’ destiny is to become captain of the cheerleading squad at Truman High School and lead her team to Nationals. Her world is turned upside down when she is transferred to Jackson High. Her new school doesn’t even have a cheer squad, but rather a successful high-hop crew led by “Queen Bee” Danielle. As Campbell tries desperately to fit in, she begins to suspect that her transfer may not have happened by accident. It is a diabolical plot to thwart her destiny. Spurred by revenge, Campbell is determined to reclaim what is rightfully hers—The National Championship.

On her way to victory, Campbell must decide what kind of leader she will be. When she is time to collaborate versus when it’s time to bring it on and compete. And what is most valuable: a trophy, friendship or being true to yourself?

High School Memories

Bring It On: The Musical

We gave the creative team of Bring It On: The Musical an assignment:

Imagine that we’ve traveled back in time to visit your real high school and we found you standing by your locker. If we took a look inside your locker, what would we find? What would you talk to us about? Who were you in high school?

Here are some of their thoughts:

Bring It On: The Musical

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Andy Blankenbuehler
Director and Choreographer

St. Xavier High School, in Cincinnati, Ohio.

I turned 16—things, but I don’t know what they were or how to get them.

I have always felt things very deeply. That Parent charged.

I think that I dreamed of and studied the things that I admired but didn’t have in life, and found a way to make them happen.

I read being fast I was great at something; I found the feeling of being recognized for my work. I guess that’s what every young person wants.

I read High School (that everyone else) I think that I was trying to find my own thing.

I haven’t discovered that product yet.

When I was in high school we didn’t have iPods. We didn’t even have the Walkman until I was almost out of high school. So music was all cheese pop music.

If you are in high school and looking for your first love, it on and compete. And what is most valuable: a trophy, friendship or being true to yourself?

When I was in high school, I was very shy. I was trying to find my way.

If you are in high school, is it what you imagined? What was surprising to you?

If you are not in high school yet, what do you long for it to be like?

Tom Kitt

High School Memories

What made me happiest in high school was hanging out with my friends. Being in a band was fun. I enjoyed doing the work, but I did all of the excitement out of making a pop song. I really did find my way. I was happiest performing in a high level, whether as a student, athlete, or performer.

My biggest fear was new situations. I always got nervous of the unknown.

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Spirit Stick

Created by Lawrence “Herkie” Herkimer in 1957. The Spirit Stick got its start at a camp at the University of Redlands in California. We had a group out there who were real characters. They had lots of spirit, but almost no talent. So I decided they had to have some recognition. I broke a little stick off a tree and awarded them the ‘spirit stick’ for their spirit each day, and whoever won it at the end of the week got to take it home with them. The spirit stick is the most outstanding award you can get. It’s the symbol for spirit.
—Lawrence “Herkie” Herkimer

Cheer

a shout of encouragement, approval, congratulations; acclaim

a set or traditional form of chant used by spectators to encourage or show enthusiasm for an athletic team, contest, etc.; an oral or musical gesture

something that gives joy or gladness; encouragement; comfort.

Title IX

Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 is the landmark legislation that bans sex discrimination in schools, whether it is in academics or athletics. Title IX states: “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, or denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any educational program or activity receiving federal aid.”

Competitive Cheer

Cheerleading has become an alternative expression of the form. Relatively young within the history of cheer, competitive cheerleading has emerged in the late 1960s. A typical competitive cheer squad, as sanctioned by the USAF (U.S. All Star Federation) consists of 5-6 male and female members. The squads perform a test and a half minute routine. In that time cheerleaders are tossed in the air, performing breathtaking twists and acrobatics, they complete a dizzying series of tumbling moves and synchronized dance sequences. Judges award points for execution, creativity, difficulty, synchronization, and showmanship. Deductions are given for dropped stunts, stepping outside the lines (routines are performed on a 30x30 yard board mat), and touch-outs of tumbling. As the routines and competitive tournaments grow more complex, people within and outside the world of competitive cheer are using fundamental questions about its nature: Is it a sport? Are competitive cheerleaders athletes?

Jeff Webb

Jeff Webb is the Founder, Chairman and CEO of Varsity, the world’s leading provider of cheerleader training, apparel and competitive events. As a 25-year fixture at the University of Oklahoma, Webb founded Universal Cheerleaders Association in 1974 with a vision to blend traditions and crowd leadership with a higher level of athleticism and entertainment value. The result was a radical transformation in cheerleading itself. He later founded Varsity Spirit Fashions to develop the uniforms modeled for the new style of cheerleading he had created. Webb eventually partnered with ESPN as a way to showcase this new brand of cheerleading to the world. In doing so, Jeff Webb has become the creative and strategic force behind the development of modern cheerleading.

As the Varsity family of brands has grown alongside the spirit community, Jeff has been instrumental in promoting cheerleading to the world as a positive and beneficial activity for young athletes. Webb later founded the USAF, an organization that provided structure, safety guidelines and community to the All Star industry. More recently, Webb was instrumental in founding the International Cheer Union which fosters the growth of the cheerleading and dance community on all continents. In 2011, the trade organization ASP (Association of Spirit Industry Professionals) presented Webb with their prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award for his vast contributions to the development of the spirit industry.

We don’t throw balls, we throw people. And we catch them.
—Warren Hedges, Head Coach, Cheer Squad, Adams State College, Colorado

Let’s take this mess to Nationals!
—Bring It On, The Musical
How districts are formed is not arbitrary. They are created by people with political and social agendas; the way the lines are drawn can keep a community together or split it apart, changing whether it has representatives who feel responsible for its concerns. The way the lines are drawn can impact who wins an election. Ultimately, the way the lines are drawn can change who controls the governing body, and can change which policies get passed into law.\(^6\)

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**Crossing the Line**

In Bring It On: The Musical, the re-drawing of a line changes Campbell’s life; where she goes to school, who she spends time with, what options she has for how to spend her time. Each person’s life has different sides of the line. Who do you see in each side of her life? Who do you want to see? Who are you? Do you know where you fit? How do you identify yourself? What do you want to be?

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**Crossing the Line**

As part of the creative team of Bring It On: The Musical, André Blankenbuehler (Director and Choreographer), Lin-Manuel Miranda (Composer-Co-Lyricist), Jeff Whitty (Librettist), Amanda Green (Co-Lyricist), Alex Lacamoire (Musical Supervisor) and Tom Kitt (Composer-Co-Lyricist), know something about crossing lines, each of them are innovators in the world of American Musical Theatre. Miranda and Blankenbuehler, opened up the musical theatre community to new melodic and movement vocabularies with their hip-hop and spoken word infused and inspired in the Heights. Green crafted the clever and iconic lyrics for High Fidelity. Whitty best the expectations surrounding both the children’s television puppet programs and the musical with his theme-based, raunchy and heartfelt Avenue Q. Lacamoire led the orchestra in the stunning and inventive Broadway adaptation of Wicked. And Kitt loosened the constraints on subject matter with his hauntingly beautiful musical about Bipolar Disorder, Next to Normal? They continue to break boundaries and cross lines as they explore and expand what is possible for American Musical Theatre.

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**Crossing the Line**

In Bring It On: The Musical, the idea of lines—the lines that form a district, the boundaries of a cheer routine and what it means to “cross the line” in life. We see characters cross ethical lines, cross the lines of friendship, characters who step across limitations imposed by outside forces and still others who learn that sometimes it is necessary to cross the line to learn about yourself.

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**Crossing the Line**

What’s your job Jeff, what would you say you do?

JEFF: What do I do? I write the libretto for musicals, pretty much anyone someone is speaking, it’s almost always what I have written. As well as the structure, in the case of Bring It On: The Musical, largely the story of the show. I’ve worked with the composers a lot on finding the ways that music can blend in组装ly with the show. That’s what pays the bills. Although I was an actor for six years before I sort of accidentally fell into this career.

MARCONS: How did you fall into the career of writing librettists?

JEFF: Well, you know, I was always a writer; I’ve been a writer since I was little. I’ve always enjoyed writing and I started writing plays. And then one of my plays led to an interview to write for a musical with puppets. That turned out to be Avenue Q and I worked on that for two and half to three years before that opened Off Broadway in 2000. And that moved to Broadway and then moved off Broadway a couple years ago. Avenue Q was discovering a skill set that I had, but I didn’t know had any real application. Because honestly, it was one of the first things that was really observed by them all. I think that it’s actually been a gift along the way, because I think that little clear-eyed about what it takes to make them. But yeah, my knowledge of musical theatre is really poor and I have too little.

MARCONS: Are you able to connect the dots for us between Avenue Q and Bring It On: The Musical? What led you from that fantastical new way to use puppetry on stage to a story about high school and cheerleading?

JEFF: Avenue Q was originally created to be a TV series that didn’t really have a plot. And there were all these really wonderful, really funny songs written by Jeff Marx and Bobby Lopez. And I liked the idea of making a story with puppets where puppets would have emotional lives and there’s something sort of subversive about putting big adult themes into the mouths of puppets. And then with Bring It On: The Musical I’ve been dying to do a cheerleader musical for years. And kind of for that reason. Cheerleading is so often a punch-line, that to do a musical where the cheerleading is taken seriously and the characters take it very seriously and inside this framework that might seem from the outside to be sort of laughable—you can create a story that has very intense passion. Bring It On: The Musical is full of fun, cheery themes like betrayal and revenge, ambition and disappointment. It’s taken these major themes that have been staples of drama for centuries.

MARCONS: Is there something in your own high school experience that helped inform this journey into the world of Bring It On: The Musical?

JEFF: And subversively for me, that is part of why I know that La Cienega is there, is that now they have and they’ve seen her in sort of an ideal setting of what it could be like to just be friends with a transgender person. And she’s fierce and funny and she’s kind of like everyone else.

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**Crossing the Line**

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**Crossing the Line**

A conversation with Librettist Jeff Whitty and Center Theatre Group Teaching Artist Marcos Najera.

**MARCONS:** What is it like working with the amazing Jeff Whitty and what makes him so special?

**JEFF:** You know, I signed on for this show as a national tour and what excited me is that I could make the tour pure fun. I could do something that was just pure pleasure for the audience. I’m not going to say that you people are going to spin this and then, after the fun you get out of it. Audience members have been wonderfully accepting of the character. You know, there’s about as first and then over the course of the show you really came to embrace her. One of the changes we’ve made since the production in Atlanta is that now La Cienega has a full story arc so that her last moment in the show is really, really beautiful and very, very funny.

**MARCONS:** I’m wondering what the show will be like for students who have never seen or met a transgender person?

**JEFF:** And subversively for me, that is part of why I know that La Cienega is there, is that now they have and they’ve seen her in sort of an ideal setting of what it could be like to just be friends with a transgender person. And she’s fierce and funny and she’s kind of like everyone else.

**MARCONS:** What is it like working with Jeff Whitty and what makes him so special?

**JEFF:** Well, I didn’t want to give too much away, but behind the first national cheerleading competition, you know [the character] Danielle gives this musically inspired speech to the squad that is basically the St. Crissy’s Day Speech for Wendi that I put into Danielle’s voice.

**MARCONS:** Oh, that’s great! That’s a cool, fun little secret we’ll listen for in the show.

**JEFF:** Yes, because you know, there are lessons to be learned in Bring It On: The Musical but I want the main lesson to be that theatre can be a pure blast of just fun!