

Thirteen, Nicole Ruddy

DISCOVERY GUIDE

13
A New Musical
Music and lyrics by
Jason Robert Brown
Book by Dan Elish
Directed by Todd Graff

Dec 22, 2006–Feb 18, 2007
Mark Taper Forum

HOW TO USE THIS DISCOVERY GUIDE?

It won't be easy to stay in your seat during *13*, the rollicking new musical by Tony Award-winning composer/lyricist Jason Robert Brown and playwright Dan Elish. The story is about learning to fit in with other kids and to be yourself. But more than that, it is an opportunity to watch 13-plus talented teens sing, dance, act and make music onstage. In this musical – a story told with music – 13-year-old Evan navigates the social politics at a new school. This Discovery Guide will explain the particular creative problems in crafting a musical comedy and examine the social and cultural implications – as well as the real and perceived personal limitations – of being 13 years old today.

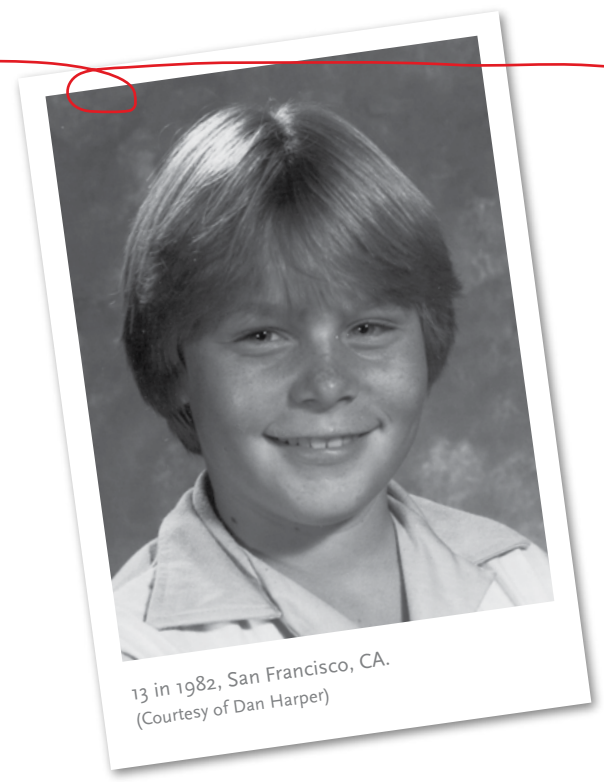
Examine the social & cultural dynamics of contemporary 13-year-olds

Explore your family history and the immediate personal experiences of childhood as useful resource material in creative writing

Create songs based on your own experience

Understand how comedy and songs function in musical theatre

Celebrate the many different types of kids who emerge at 13 years of age



13 in 1982, San Francisco, CA.
(Courtesy of Dan Harper)

VOCABULARY

Vocabulary words are in **bold type**.
Definitions are located within each section.



DISCOVERY GUIDE CREDITS
Doug Cooney, Discovery Guide Writer, is a playwright and novelist for young people. His musical adaptation of George Saunders' *The Very Persistent Gappers of Frip* premiered at the Kirk Douglas Theatre last year. His novel, *Nobody's Perfect*, co-written with Academy Award-winning actress Marlee Matlin, was published by Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers and is being developed for the stage by the Kennedy Center.

Rachel Fain, Managing Editor, Jean Lamborn, Proofreader, Nishita Doshi, Julia Luke, Graphic Designers



Jason Robert Brown at 13.
(Courtesy of Jason Robert Brown)

When "13" composer and lyricist Jason Robert Brown was 13:

I hate to sound like Mr. Pathetic, but if there were boy-girl parties when I was 13, I certainly wasn't going to be invited to them. There were cast parties for the talent shows but I tended to wander around on the periphery or sit at the piano playing minor chords all night.

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Seth Zibalesse and Jenae Burrows, 13 (Photo by Craig Schwartz)

EVERYBODY WAS 13 ONCE

EXERCISE

THIRTEEN THEN Interview an adult friend or relative about what it was like being 13 when he or she was growing up. Here are some questions to get started.

NAME: _____

AND 13 NOW!
Ask yourself the same questions.



13 in 1966, Whittier, CA.
(Courtesy of Kerry Korf)

BEING 13 TODAY is different than it used to be – although maybe sometimes it's not. Adults are likely to respond to 13 differently than young people because they are remembering their own childhoods as they watch the story unfold. What was it like being 13 in the old days? Go ask an adult.

1. Where were you at 13? What year was it?
2. Describe your personality. Did you fit into a category? (e.g. cool kids, freaks, geeks, brainiacs, jocks, cheerleaders, mean girls, nerds) Did your friends fit those categories?
3. Describe your hair and/or clothing style.
4. Were there boy-girl parties? What were they like?
5. What was your favorite band, book and/or movie?
6. How did you stay in touch with friends?
7. Did you have a memorably awkward moment or did something really embarrassing happen?
8. What was the latest technology?
9. What was your greatest accomplishment?
10. What did you want to be when you grew up?
11. What is the biggest secret you kept? Whose secret was it? What would happen if you told someone the secret? Did you tell?
12. Describe a risk you took to get some thing you wanted. Did it work? What were the consequences?
13. Did you do or change anything in order to fit in?

When "13" book writer Dan Elish was 13:

My hair was very long, thick and mop-like. Very much a Beatles Rubber Soul look. In keeping with the times, I owned bell bottoms, wild-colored shirts, and a button that said "Save the Earth." The room I shared with my brother was decorated with Peter Max and assorted black-light posters.

When 13 composer and lyricist Jason Robert Brown was 13:

I was a music geek. Whatever I was, I was certainly not cool. I had been skipped a grade so I was a year younger than everyone ~~else~~ else in my class and I was short and my voice didn't change until I was seventeen. What I really felt like was a human target.

Ellington Ratliff, 13 (Photo by Craig Schwartz)



Jenae Burrows, 13 (Photo by Craig Schwartz)

EXERCISE

COMPARE AND CONTRAST Review the adult's experience of being 13. Compare and contrast your own experience. Do the answers match or are they different? Write an essay comparing the results and draw your own conclusions.



13 in 1970, Baton Rouge, LA.
(Courtesy of Candice Cain)

SYNOPSIS OF 13

THIRTEEN-YEAR-OLD EVAN GOLDMAN is transplanted from New York City to small-town Middle America. Faced with a new school and all new friends, Evan hopes to bridge the cultural divide by inviting all the coolest kids to attend his bar mitzvah. Unfortunately, his new classmates are not familiar with Jewish culture or interested in attending the new kid's party. To complicate matters, Evan has not invited Patrice, the smartest girl in class, who helped him prepare for his bar mitzvah. Even worse, Evan is blackmailed into inviting Archie, the disabled kid who clumps around embarrassingly on crutches.

To ensure cool kids at his party, Evan convinces his mother to sneak the entire under-aged group into an R-rated movie - a gross-out slasher flick called *The Bloodmaster*. Inadvertently, Evan's manipulations get him snagged in a young-love triangle among Brett, the class jock, Kendra, the class hottie, and Lucy, her snotty rival. When a school scandal unexpectedly erupts, the blame-game turns friends into enemies, and it doesn't look like anyone will attend Evan's bar mitzvah at all.

Ricky Ashley, 13 (Photo by Craig Schwartz)

BAR MITZVAH

TODAY, I BECOME A FOUNTAIN PEN

In Jewish culture, a child of 13 becomes a "bar mitzvah," a "son of the commandment," and is considered a responsible adult. "Bat mitzvah" traditionally refers to a daughter's 12th birthday, the age of maturity for girls, although Americans often celebrate when girls turn 13. At this age, Jewish children may participate in all areas of community life and are responsible for upholding Jewish ritual and tradition. The term "bar mitzvah" also refers to the ceremony, in which the 13-year-old reads from the **Torah** and leads parts, or in some **synagogues** all, of the Sabbath service. The ritual is often followed by a huge celebration with family and friends and a much-anticipated barrage of gifts. Traditionally, boys receive religious books, countless pen and pencil sets and cash or savings bonds intended for college education. In

Western society, bar and bat mitzvahs are often celebrated with large, expensive and lavish parties that rival weddings in their excess. Non-Jewish kids might find cultural equivalents to the bar mitzvah in the Sweet Sixteen Party, the **quinceañera** in Latin culture or a Catholic teenager's **confirmation**.



A young man holding the Torah at his bar mitzvah, 1950s.
(Courtesy of the Sol Schulman Collection [s01005], D.H. Ramsey Library Special Collections. University of North Carolina at Asheville)

VOCABULARY

Confirmation: A Roman Catholic sacrament admitting a baptized person to full participation in the Church

Quinceañera: In Hispanic culture, a coming-out party held for a girl's 15th birthday

Synagogue: The place of worship for a Jewish congregation

Torah: The scroll of parchment containing Hebrew Scripture, the first five books of Moses (this text also constitutes the first part of the Bible used by Christians).



Jason Robert Brown at his bar mitzvah.
(Courtesy of Jason Robert Brown)



Jordan Johnson, 13 (Photo by Craig Schwartz)

MAKE 'EM LAUGH

Ryan Ogburn, 13 (Photo by Craig Schwartz)



MUSICAL COMEDIES ENTERTAIN AUDIENCES WITH SONGS, dancing and jokes. The basic components of a musical comedy are the music, the **lyrics** and the **book**. Comedy can be found in a good one-liner, a ridiculous situation or a hysterical reaction. It is no easy trick being funny – partly because humor is completely **subjective**. Some people will not laugh at an offensive joke; others will not laugh because the joke is not offensive enough. **Irony, sarcasm** and political jokes appeal to some people while others prefer **scatological** humor (like fart jokes) or physical **slapstick**. And there always seems to be somebody who simply does not “get” jokes at all. Though comedy is not an exact science, some comedians swear by the following five elements.

EXAGGERATION, LIES AND IMPOSSIBILITY

If someone were to say “your mother is so fat, she got baptized at Sea World,” that is funny because it is an **exaggeration**, a lie and an impossibility.

WORDPLAY

Misused words - saying one word when you mean another - are funny. Ridiculous accents or silly voices can make ordinary words funny. Some words are funny all by themselves. For example, five-year-olds can't say “underwear” without laughing. Other funny words include: Gesundheit, chihuahua, aardvark and kazoo.

PAIN

Pain is funny. If Tweety Bird stomps Sylvester's foot, it's only funny if Sylvester hops in pain. Similarly, jokes about ethnic groups, gays, overweight people or anyone “different” can be interpreted as funny because they are painful to the targeted group or because they ironically mock prejudiced people. (Note: This observation is not intended to encourage inappropriate humor. Being funny does not make it right.)

SURPRISE

When something happens that you do not expect, that is funny. Ashton Kutcher's *Punk'd* is a good example. Slapstick relies on pain and surprise, like a pie in the face or someone slipping on a banana peel.

THE RULE OF THREE

When jokes are assembled in sets of three, they are inherently funnier, more satisfying or more effective than other random numbers. Typically, a joke is set up (one), the setup is reinforced (two) and the punchline breaks the pattern (three.)

When “13” choreographer Michele Lynch was 13:

I was wearing my first training bra and was very self-conscious about it. In class, the boy behind me reached across his desk and gave it a big snap! Everyone was laughing! Ouch and ouch!

bah-da-bing!
bah-da-bang!
bah-da-boom!

EXERCISE

LET'S SEE HOW DIFFICULT HUMOR REALLY IS. Write a caption to make this cartoon funny.

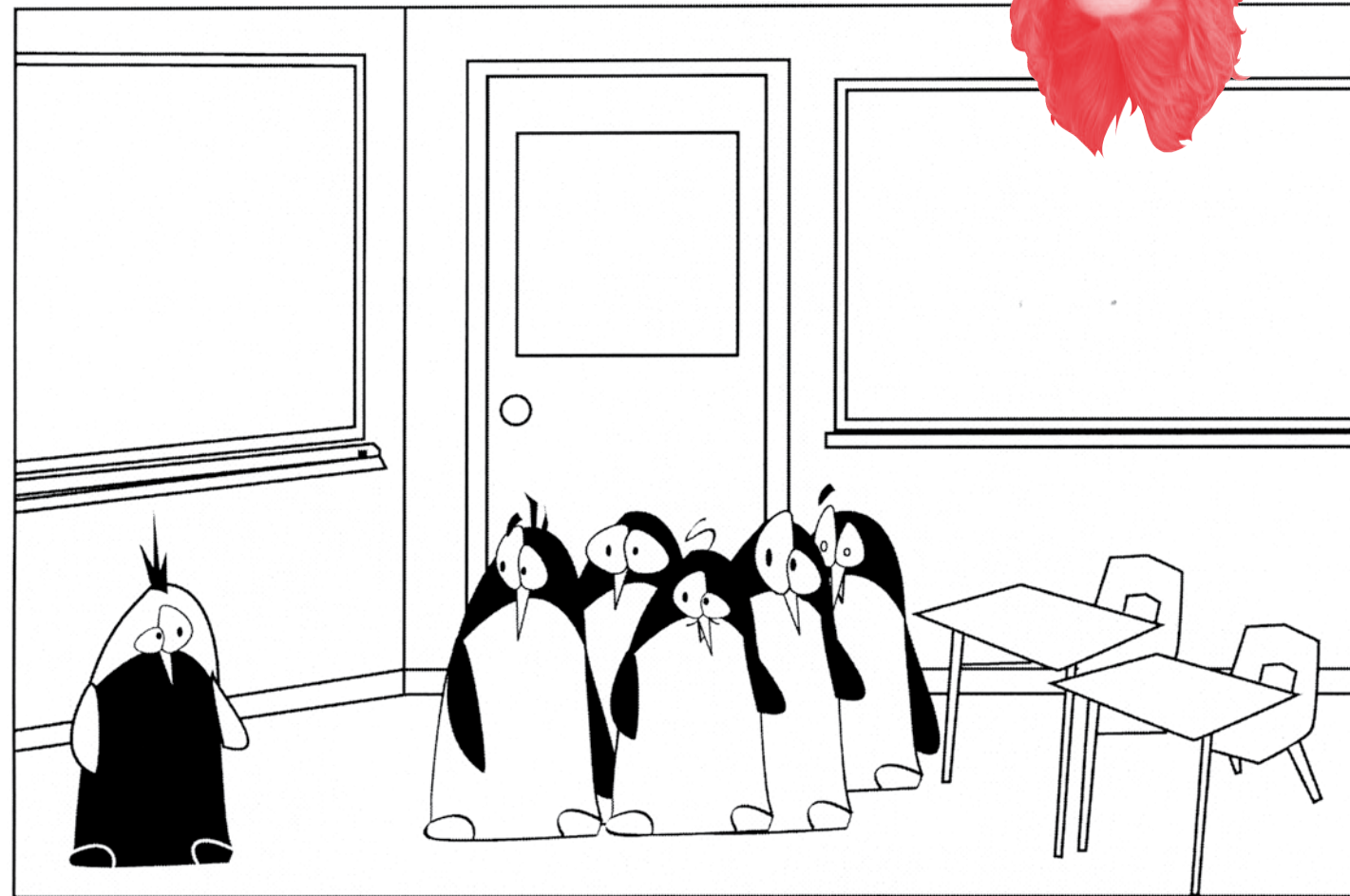


Illustration by Michael Duggan

VOCABULARY

Book: The spoken part of a musical found between the songs

Exaggeration: To represent as greater than is actually the case; to overstate

Irony: The use of words to express something different from and often opposite to one's literal meaning

Lyrics: The words to a song

Sarcasm: A cutting, often ironic remark intended to wound

Scatological: Referring to language or literature that is considered obscene, especially that dealing humorously with excrement and body functions

Slapstick: A boisterous form of comedy marked by chases, collisions and crude practical jokes

Subjective: Particular to a certain person; personal; a perspective or reaction that occurs in a person's mind rather than a belief held in the external world at large

When “13” composer and lyricist Jason Robert Brown was 13:

The list of memorably awkward moments or embarrassing things that happened when I was 13 could fill fourteen study guides. And they all were far worse in my mind than in anyone else's; in fact I don't think I was much on people's radar screens, but my vast need to feel important made me think that everyone was watching me at every moment and completely judging me to be inadequate in every way.

Based upon “How To Be Funny” by David S. Parker and Samuel Stoddard.

Seth Zibales, 13 (Photo by Craig Schwartz)



rites of passage

A "RITE OF PASSAGE" MARKS A TIME when a person enters a new and significant stage of life or passes an important milestone. Almost every society holds ceremonies or festivities to recognize rites of passage among its young people, ranging from a birthday party or graduation to more culturally specific events like a bar mitzvah. Rites of passage can be informal too - like learning to shave, a first kiss or first R-rated movie.

EXERCISE

Other than a bar mitzvah, what rites of passage occur in the play?

What rites of passage have you experienced in your own life?

Lined writing area for the exercise.

When "13" choreographer Michele Lynch was 13:
In 8th grade, my friends and I were mostly geeks, the category of the nice kids; the mean kids were the popular ones. When I got to high school I made a vow to become popular and joined the cheerleading squad.

Christian Vandal, 13 (Photo by Craig Schwartz)



SECRETS & RISKS

"PARENTS CAN ONLY ADVISE THEIR CHILDREN or point them in the right direction," wrote Anne Frank in her diary. "Ultimately, people shape their own characters." Developmentally, 13-year-olds are asserting themselves in an ongoing process of self-discovery that - not unlike learning to ride a bike - requires them to take risks and learn by their mistakes. At the same time, the 13-year-old's new sense of independence is counter-balanced by a strong desire for privacy. It is not uncommon for kids at 13 to hide personal thoughts and keep secrets.

EXERCISE RISKS

List two risks taken by characters in 13. What is the risk and who took it? What is the result? What are the consequences?

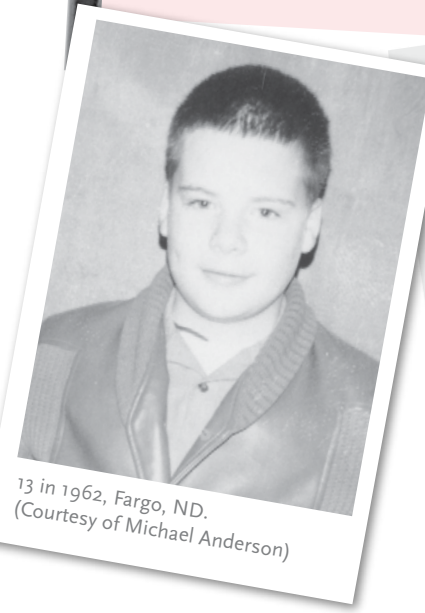
Lined writing area for the exercise.

When "13" composer and lyricist Jason Robert Brown was 13:
I think I had a Commodore C-120 (the richer kids had a C-64), and in school, I got to use an Apple IIe. Microwaves and VCRs were sort of new and hip. I remember right after we got the VCR, the first movie we rented was Annie Hall, which I immediately fell in love with for the rest of my life.



VOCABULARY

Rite: A customary observance or practice



When "13" composer and lyricist Jason Robert Brown was 13:
The list of memorably awkward moments or embarrassing things that happened when I was 13 could fill fourteen study guides. And they all were far worse in my mind than in anyone else's; in fact, I don't think I was much on people's radar screens, but my vast need to feel important made me think that everyone was watching me at every moment and completely judging me to be inadequate in every way.

Chris Raymond, 13 (Photo by Craig Schwartz)



EXERCISE SECRETS

List two secrets kept by characters in 13. What are the consequences of keeping or revealing the secrets?

Lined writing area for the exercise.

What is the worst thing that could happen if someone exposed one of your secrets?

Lined writing area for the exercise.



Chloe Smith, 13 (Photo by Craig Schwartz)

When 13 book writer Dan Elish was 13:

My favorite band was (and is) the Beatles. My favorite books were The Lord of the Rings. My favorite movie was Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid.

SING A SONG

FOR MANY YEARS, MUSICAL THEATRE DIDN'T TELL STORIES. People went to see showgirls dance and comedians tell jokes. The songs – known as “show tunes” – were simply entertaining and “hummable” with no particular connection to the story or characters. After Jerome Kern’s *Showboat*, the musical theatre form was reinvented as the “book musical” in which each song serves to develop a character and/or move the story forward.

Each song in 13 follows this form. It might be a transition song in which a character goes through a change (like “Tell Her” from 13), a realization song in which a character reaches a new understanding (“Being a Geek”), or a decision song in which a character makes up his or her mind (“Tell Her” fits this description, as well). A show tune might also be an “I Am” song (e.g. “This is who I am”) or an “I Wish” song (e.g. “This is what I want”) or an “Uh-oh” song (e.g. “What is happening to me?”). “Thirteen” is both an “I Am” and an “I Wish” song.



Tinashe Kachingwe, 13 (Photo by Craig Schwartz)

When “13” director Todd Graff was 13:
We were just one short year away from 8-tracks, but Pong was very big.

SING YOUR OWN SONG

MOST SONGS follow a strict formula of **verses** alternating with a **chorus**. Typically, verses tell the story – who, what, where, when and why – and the chorus expresses the emotion. For example, the verse in “Jingle Bells” describes the sleigh ride (“Dashing through the snow...”) while the chorus describes what people *feel* (“Oh what fun it is to ride ...”).

Review your responses to the questionnaire on being 13, “Rites of Passage” and “Secrets & Risks.” Assemble the words you have already written into an “I Wish,” “I Am” or “Uh-Oh” song. Each verse should bring a new development to the story. The chorus should describe how the story makes you feel. If you are feeling ambitious, try incorporating one or more humor techniques into your song.

EXERCISE

Verse One: Choose FOUR sentences that tell the beginning of the story.

Chorus: Choose FOUR sentences that describe how the event makes you feel.

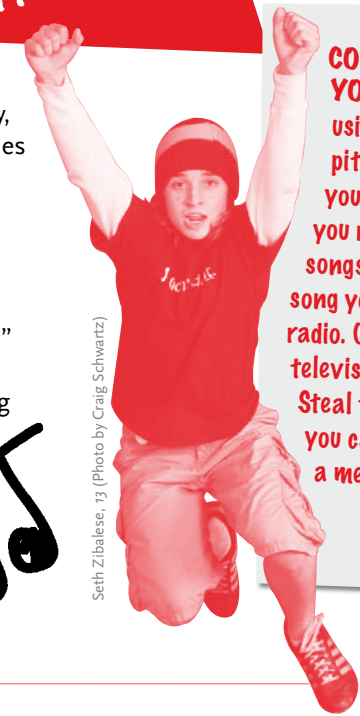
Verse Two: Choose FOUR sentences that tell the middle of the story.

Repeat the Chorus. And – Verse Three: Choose FOUR sentences that describe how the story ended.

Repeat the Chorus.



COME UP WITH YOUR OWN MELODY, using rhythm and pitch – or try singing your lyrics to a melody you remember from the songs in 13. Or use a song you know from the radio. Or your favorite television theme song. Steal from the best! If you can't come up with a melody, try to rap it.



Seth Zibales, 13 (Photo by Craig Schwartz)



13 in 1923, Chicago, IL. (Courtesy of Kimiko Broder)

CONCLUDING REMARKS

WE HOPE THIS GUIDE HAS ENHANCED your experience of 13 by exploring the dynamics of today's 13-year-olds and by tapping personal stories to demonstrate how seemingly ordinary events can make for big dramas on stage. Just as musical theatre incorporates story-telling, comedy and songs to create entertainment, we can review our own lives and find memorable stories, good laughs and great songs.

When "13" director Todd Graff was 13:

I had no style.
I was a dirty clueless boy.
Honestly I still have not style.
And now I have no hair either.

Websites:

www.jewfaq.org/barmitz.htm
Everything you ever wanted to know about bar mitzvahs

www.rinkworks.com/funny

www.encyclopedia.org/wiki/How_To_Be_Funny_And_Not_Just_Stupid
Advice on being funny

www.musicals101.com/history1.htm
A detailed how-to guide and history of American musical theatre in stage, film and television

www.myhero.com
Excellent resource for notable 13-year-olds and other distinguished individuals

Books:

Thirteen and a Day: The Bar and Bat Mitzvah across America by Mark Oppenheimer (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2005)
An excellent overview of the bar and bat mitzvahs in America

Bar Mitzvah Disco by Roger Bennett, Nick Kroll and Jules Schell (Crown Publishing, 2005)
A photographic chronicle of some pretty goofy and outrageous Bar Mitzvahs from the 70s and 80s

MitzvahChic: A New Approach to Hosting a Bar or Bat Mitzvah That is Meaningful, Hip, Relevant, Fun & Drop-Dead Gorgeous by Gail Anthony Greenburg (MitzvahChic, LLC, 2003)
A guide to throwing the best party possible without sacrificing tradition

Film & Television:

High School Musical directed by Kenny Ortega (Buena Vista Home Entertainment/Disney, 2006)

The Cheetah Girls directed by Oz Scott (Walt Disney Home Entertainment, 2003)

The Cheetah Girls 2 directed by Kenny Ortega (Walt Disney Home Entertainment, 2006)
Huge mega-hit Disney Channel musicals that cover similar high school turf

Freaks and Geeks created by Paul Feig (Apatow Productions/DreamWorks SKG, 1999)

Malcolm in the Middle created by Linwood Boomer (Regency Television, 20th Century Fox, 2002)

Saved by the Bell created by Sam Bobrick (Lions Gate, 2003, 2004, 2005)
Successful television comedy/dramas that were also inspired by teenaged angst



13 in 1974, Elizabethtown, KY.
(Courtesy of Patrick Owen)

RESOURCES



Jende Burrows, 13 (Photo by Craig Schwartz)

PLAY.

NOW IN ITS 36th YEAR, Performing for Los Angeles Youth (P.L.A.Y.) is Center Theatre Group's award-winning youth theatre and theatre education program. P.L.A.Y. serves more than 35,000 young people, teachers and families annually through a variety of performances, residencies, discount ticket programs and innovative educational experiences. P.L.A.Y. offers programs that allow young people, teachers and families to attend productions at the Mark Taper Forum, Ahmanson and Kirk Douglas Theatres for low or no cost. P.L.A.Y. is dedicated to artistic excellence and innovation in its theatrical productions and to the development of young people's skills and creativity through the exploration of theatre, its literature, art and imagination.

ANNENBERG MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAM

Now in its third year, the Annenberg Middle School Program is an enrollment-based educational partnership that provides exemplary long-term theatre arts education over a three-year period. It is aligned with state standards and is a model of student and teacher participation and theatre education innovation. Participating students see theatre performances accompanied by a sequential curriculum in theatre arts and English-language arts. This year, Annenberg Program schools are attending *13* and *Sleeping Beauty Wakes*.

FUNDER CREDITS

Performing for Los Angeles Youth receives generous support from the Center Theatre Group Affiliates, a volunteer organization dedicated to bringing innovative theatre and creative education to the young people of Los Angeles.

Major support is also provided by the Annenberg Foundation.

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The Poster Competition is made possible in part by a grant from the Walter Lantz Foundation.



PERFORMING FOR LOS ANGELES YOUTH

Corey Madden
Producing Director

Celeste Thompson
Department Manager

Kimiko Broder
Educational Programs Manager

Rachel Fain
Editorial Manager

Dan Harper
Educational Programs Associate and Annenberg Middle School Program Manager

Emily Weisberg
Educational Programs Associate

Jennifer Hartmann
Education Services Agent

Kate Coltun
Production Supervisor

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We would also like to acknowledge the Center Theatre Group staff who generously shared their personal photographs.



13 in 1997 Gilroy, CA.
(Courtesy of Christine Mantilla)

J.D. Phillips, 13 (Photo by Craig Schwartz)

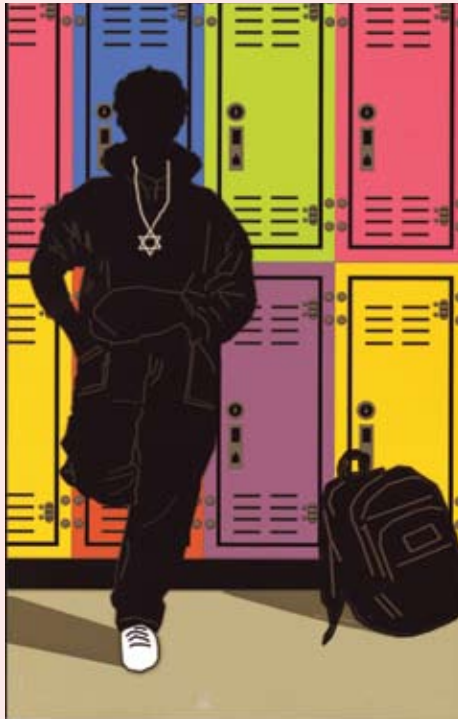
P.L.A.Y.

PERFORMING FOR LOS ANGELES YOUTH

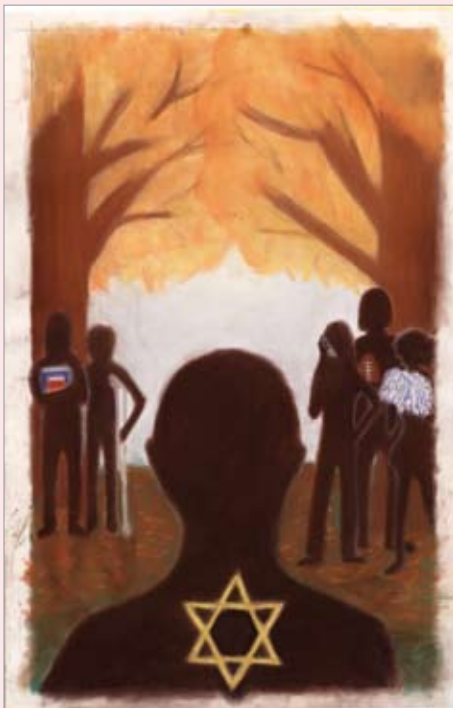
CENTER THEATRE GROUP'S P.L.A.Y.

sponsors an annual competition for high school students to design the poster art for a play. The cover image by Nicole Ruddy, Newbury Park High School, was the winning illustration of this year's 13 competition. Louise Franchesca Co of Louisville High School received the second place award and third went to Suvu Utermohlen, Newbury Park High School.

Student artwork can be viewed at the Downtown Central Library and in the upstairs lobby of the Mark Taper Forum.



In Da Kool, Louise Franchesca Co



13 Poster Entry, Suvu Utermohlen



Target Family Performances

LIVE THEATRE BRINGS a particular joy and excitement unmatched anywhere. With a wide range of stories and styles, there's a play for everyone this season at the Mark Taper Forum, Ahmanson and Kirk Douglas Theatres. Center Theatre Group's P.L.A.Y. has chosen these special shows for your family to enjoy together. Three new musicals and a classic drama! In addition to the plays, take advantage of online Discovery Guides and post-show activities.

13

The junior high-schoolers of this musical comedy are trying to understand the barrage of contradictory messages thrown their way. This is their story, performed by teenage actors and an all-teen band.

Saturday, Feb. 17, 2007, 2:30pm

Sunday, Feb 18, 2007, 2:30pm

Mark Taper Forum

Appropriate for all audiences

Twelve Angry Men

A lone dissenter holds up the jury in the case of a boy accused of killing his father.

Sunday, April 1, 2007, 2pm, Ahmanson Theatre

Parental discretion advised

Sleeping Beauty Wakes

You think your parents are overprotective? A 21st century spin on the fairytale set to music by GrooveLily.

Saturday, April 21, 2007, 2pm, Kirk Douglas Theatre

Strong Language. Parental discretion advised

A Waitress in Yellowstone

A contemporary musical fable about the hazards of doing the right thing.

Saturday, June 30, 2007, 2pm, Kirk Douglas Theatre

Complex themes. Parental discretion advised

Have questions? Call audience services at 213.628.2772 or check out the parent guide on our website, CenterTheatreGroup.org/education



L.A.'s Theatre Company

213.972.7589 CenterTheatreGroup.org/education