

Disney's *High School Musical* Storyline and Transition to the Stage

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The social order at East High is turned upside down when Troy and Gabriella break from their cliques to audition for the school musical. The Disney Channel Original Movie *High School Musical* became an instant favorite and The Rose Theater's stage production of **Disney's *High School Musical*** will delight Omaha's fans.

The jocks, brainiacs, thespians, skater dudes and other groups are far from integrated at East High. Troy and Gabriella meet singing karaoke on New Year's Eve and when brainy Gabriella enrolls in at her new school to discover that Troy is the varsity basketball star, the drama begins to unfold.

Troy and Gabriella get up the nerve to break from their cliques and audition for the school musical, just as they are told it's too late. It appears that Sharpay and Ryan—the school's top thespians—are shoo-ins for the parts, but, to everyone's surprise, when the drama teacher overhears Troy and Gabriella singing the audition song, she invites them to callbacks.

Sharpay and Ryan do their best to sabotage the duo's chances by scheduling callbacks during the state basketball championship and academic decathlon, but, eventually with the help of the rest of the student body, Troy and Gabriella manage to build a relationship, make it to callbacks and secure the lead roles in the musical. By resisting peer pressure and overlooking rivalry, they end up achieving their dreams and inspiring and uniting the entire school in the process.

Upon release in January 2006, *High School Musical* became the most successful Disney Channel

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Original Movie ever produced. It won an Emmy Award in 2007, and its soundtrack was the best-selling album in the United States in 2006. *High School Musical 2* and *High School Musical 3: Senior Year* have both since been released and very well-received, and *High School Musical 4* is now being written.

The beloved musical is now being produced in theaters across the country, including The Rose. The book to the stage adaptation was written by David Simpatico, based on the screenplay by Peter Barsocchini. Although the sentiments, energy and music from the movie are essential to the stage adaptation, it is not purely a re-creation of the film.

“The goal is not to replicate or re-conceive the movie—but to honor it, and then enhance it,” said Director Rob Urbinati. His goal is to communicate the idea of “individuality vs. conformity” through every component of each performance—from the music and dialogue, to the physical movement in every dance number.

The stage production includes the movie’s fundamental story, energy and original music, but expands on it. New songs replace some of the movie’s dialogue and help develop the characters in a new way. Even the most avid *High School Musical* movie fans will be in for a few exciting surprises.

“Urbinati expects 100% from everyone involved in this production,” said Anthony Abdallah, dance captain and “Ryan.” “It can seem overwhelming at times, but all can trust that in his hands the show will be stunning.”

Urbinati has seen three stage productions of *High School Musical*—ranging from a high school production to a full professional performance with “phenomenal dance numbers,” but he had a clear vision of the show at The Rose before seeing them, and that vision has not changed.

“Because the majority of audience members will have seen the movie, our biggest challenge will be to get ‘cinematic speed’ on stage,” said Urbinati. “There are no ‘close ups’ on stage, so I encourage the actors to let the characters into their bodies.”

Mark Parrott has designed a set that is built to keep up with the stage-play’s cinematic dynamic,

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as well. "Audiences familiar with the movie will be very satisfied that most of what they know is up on stage—and they will be even more pleased that there are a few surprises," said Urbinati. "I like the idea that the audiences familiar with the film can learn something about the differences between screen and stage."

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