**School of Rock: The Musical**
The National Theatre
January 16-27, 2019

Music by Andrew Lloyd Webber
Book by Julian Fellowes
Lyrics by Glenn Slater
Based on the Paramount Film Written by Mike White

Featuring 14 new songs from Andrew Lloyd Webber and all the original songs from the movie

Packet prepared by Dramaturg Linda Lombardi
Sources: *School of Rock: The Musical, The Washington Post*

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**ABOUT THE SHOW**
Based on the hit film, this hilarious new musical follows Dewey Finn, a failed, wannabe rock star who poses as a substitute teacher at a prestigious prep school to earn a few extra bucks. To live out his dream of winning the Battle of the Bands, he turns a class of straight-A students into a guitar-shredding, bass-slapping, mind-blowing rock band. While teaching the students what it means to truly rock, something happens Dewey didn't expect... they teach him what it means to care about something other than yourself.

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For almost 200 years, The National Theatre has occupied a prominent position on Pennsylvania Avenue – “America's Main Street” – and played a central role in the cultural and civic life of Washington, DC. Located a stone’s throw from the White House and having the Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site as it’s “front yard,” The National Theatre is a historic, cultural presence in our Nation’s Capital and the oldest continuously operating enterprise on Pennsylvania Avenue.

The non-profit National Theatre Corporation oversees the historic theatre and serves the DC community through three free outreach programs, *Saturday Morning at The National, Community Stage Connections,* and the *High School Ticket Program*. These programs provide the greater Washington area with access to high quality performance arts experiences while promoting and employing local and regional artists.

Stephen Richard, Interim Executive Director
Stacy Shaw, Director of Institutional Advancement
Olivia Kosciusko Tritschler, Assistant Manager
Nicole Geldart, Graphic Design
For those about to rock, we salute you.

Rock and roll is equal parts rebellion, boldness, fun, and youth. It has always been (and will always be) the music of the younger generation. But the power of rock and roll is that it transports you back to your younger days and gives you that same feeling of limitless possibility. The music you listen to as a teenager is the music you will always come back to. Other artists will come and go. Some will make your playlist. Some will be one-hit wonders. But rock and roll is here to stay.

Born out of R&B music, rock and roll is greatly indebted to that genre. Without Chuck Berry, Buddy Holly, and Elvis Presley, we would never have Jimi Hendrix, the British Invasion, Joan Jett, or Lady Gaga. In 1942, Billboard magazine started to use the phrase “rock and roll” in print, but it was 1950s DJ Alan Freed who is most credited with the term’s popularity. Over half a century later, rock is still going strong.

Rock and roll breaks down barriers and upends social norms. In the 1950s, African American musicians experienced mainstream popularity (although still confronted with racism on the road where they were often refused hotel rooms in towns where they performed sold-out concerts). In the 1960s, rock and roll joined forces with civil rights. In the 1970s it became the soundtrack of protest, revolution, and change. The ’80s celebrated heavy metal and the ’90s countered with grunge. While women have always been a powerful force in rock and roll, the turn of the century has seen them take center stage as artists and producers in charge of their labels and images. The future is indeed female.

Great musicians inspire us. Rock and roll musicians move us. That’s why we play air guitar, drum on our desks, or sing along with the radio. At heart, we all want to be rock stars. In School of Rock, Dewey shows us we can. Because rock isn’t about what instrument you play. It’s about who you are. It’s about living your life to the fullest and never giving up on a dream. And, of course, rock and roll is about sticking it to The Man!

DEWEY FINN has only one passion: rock and roll. He can’t pay his rent, he’s a slob, and his dream of becoming a rock god is looking grim. After being ousted from his band, No Vacancy, Dewey pretends to be his roommate Ned and poses as a substitute teacher at Horace Green Preparatory School. He teaches his students how to make music, and learns that responsibility and rock and roll can go hand in hand.

NED SCHNEEBLY is Dewey’s roommate and best friend who’s given up his former rocker days for life as a substitute teacher.

PATTY, Ned’s girlfriend and other roommate, works for the Mayor and lets everyone know it. She vocally advocates for kicking Dewey out.

ROSALIE MULLINS serves as Horace Green Preparatory School’s principal. A consummate professional, her buttoned up reputation masks the heart of a rocker.
ACT I

DEWEY FINN, guitarist for the band No Vacancy lives and breathes rock and roll. The only thing missing from his rock star lifestyle is fame and glory. During a set at the club, Dewey improvises a solo and upstages the lead singer. While Dewey sleeps in the next morning, PATTY pressures NED, her boyfriend and Dewey’s longtime friend, to demand the rent from their roommate. Dewey reassures Ned that he’ll get his share of the rent after No Vacancy wins the Battle of the Bands. But when he gets to rehearsal he learns he’s been replaced. Adding to his troubles, Dewey is fired from his job at the record store. When ROSALIE MULLINS, the principal of the prestigious Horace Green Prep School, calls to offer Ned a substitute teaching job, Dewey takes the call instead. Desperate to earn the rent money, Dewey poses as Ned and accepts the job.

It’s Dewey’s first day at school...and he’s late. Rosalie welcomes him to campus and informs him of their elite expectations before introducing him to his class. Left alone with his students, Dewey calls recess—for the rest of the day. Upon returning home, Dewey catches Ned secretly playing Guitar Hero while Patty’s out. While they play, Dewey tries to convince Ned to join Battle of Bands with him just like the good old days. Their daydream is interrupted when Patty returns home and tells Dewey he has thirty days to pay his rent, or he’s out.

Dewey returns to Horace Green the next day and hatches a brilliant plan when he overhears his students singing Queen of the Night. He can still win Battle of the Bands. He just needs to turn these classical-music-playing misfits into a rock and roll band. First step...assign instruments to each of the students. He puts ZACK on electric guitar, KATIE on bass, LAWRENCE on keyboard, FREDDY on drums, and MARCY and SHONELLE as backup singers. To round it all out, SOPHIE becomes a roadie, MASON handles the tech, JAMES heads up security, BILLY styles the band, and SUMMER takes charge as manager. The band is complete... almost. TOMIKA doesn’t speak so Dewey has no idea where to put her. That night at home, each student faces their own set of problems with parents who just don’t understand.

The next day, Dewey teaches the students a song he wrote while the teachers speculate where he came from and why he’s so popular with the kids. Dewey asks permission from Rosalie to take the students on a field trip, but the prospects look grim. He returns to practice and encourages the band to let their inner rebel rock out. Rosalie confirms that the school administration denied permission for the field trip, but Dewey and the kids head for the first round of competition anyway. They qualify for Battle of the Bands and ‘School of Rock’ is born.
The band is in full rehearsal mode, but there’s one problem: Parents’ Night falls on the same night as the competition. In the midst of chaos as the group tries to think of a new plan, Tomika stuns everyone with a soulful rendition of Amazing Grace. The band has a new front woman! When Rosalie drops in to observe their work, Dewey pretends he’s only using rock and roll as his “sing-song” teaching method with the students.

The other teachers let slip that Rosalie is a rocker at heart with a weakness for Stevie Nicks. Dewey uses this information to try and get his class trip approved. On their date at the Roadhouse, Rosalie opens up about wanting to be free in spite of her position. There’s a loneliness that comes with her job because she always has to be in control. Free from the constraints of school, she strikes a bargain with Dewey. Make the parents happy at Parents’ Night and he can have his field trip. Dewey seals the deal with a kiss. The next day, Patty excitedly relays a letter to Ned from Horace Green, which turns out to be a payment from the school. Dewey tries to intercept the check, but eventually confesses his deception to his friend. Only don’t tell Patty!

At school, Dewey overhears a song Zack wrote. Excited by how good it is, Dewey gets the band to learn the chords. Their parents arrive for Parents’ Night just as the kids find their groove, and are shocked that their kids have traded in their books for music. Dewey makes his case to the parents by telling them what they’ve forgotten—how incredible their kids are. Just as the parents are coming around, Patty breaks through the door to reveal Dewey’s true identity. Seems she got the secret out of Ned after all. Dewey confesses, the parents are furious, and the kids sneak off to compete at Battle of the Bands. They just need to make one stop first. The students show up at Dewey’s apartment and convince him that he’s changed their lives and has to come with them to the contest.

At the last minute, Dewey decides that they should play Zack’s song instead of his own, and reminds them that, “We’re not here to win. We’re here to rock!” The parents arrive, but without passes, they can’t get backstage and are forced to watch the concert with everyone else. The stage is set, the volume is cranked up high, and the kids are ready. With every bit of heart and soul, the School of Rock delivers a performance that wins over the crowd.

And the winner of Battle of the Bands is...
PRODUCTION HISTORY—FROM SCREEN TO STAGE

THE MOVIE

Screenwriter Mike White got the idea for the movie from the Langley Schools Music Project, where Canadian music teacher Hans Fenger recorded two LPs (1966 and 1967) with grade school students singing hits by The Beach Boys, Paul McCartney, David Bowie, and more. Over twenty years later, the LPs were combined into the album “Innocence & Despair” (2001) and gained much attention—even inspiring a VH1 documentary reuniting the students in 2002. Produced by Scott Rudin and Paramount Pictures, written by Mike White, and directed by Richard Linklater, the film featured breakout star Jack Black as the good-intentioned, die-hard rock-and-roller Dewey Finn. The film’s music included iconic rock songs from The Doors, The Clash, and several other classic bands. Even Led Zeppelin, known for not distributing rights for their music, granted them permission to include “Immigrant Song” after the production team filmed Jack Black on set begging the band to use the song. The production team sent the video to the band, and the plan worked. The movie was released in 2003, opened at number one, and was nominated and won several awards.

Watch Jack Black on the set of School of Rock beg Led Zeppelin for “Immigrant Song”

https://youtu.be/SFDMyiUjoWU

THE MUSICAL

A decade later, in 2013, the legendary Andrew Lloyd Webber (Cats, Jesus Christ Superstar, The Phantom of the Opera) secured the stage rights to the show, and producers put plans into motion for a Broadway takeover. Casting directors held open auditions at the beginning of 2015 to find the most talented rock and roll kids in town. Broadway stars Alex Brightman (seen earlier this year at The National as Beetlejuice) and Sierra Boggess would lead the show as Dewey and Rosalie. Laurence Connor would direct, with lyrics by Glenn Slater, a book by Julian Fellowes, and new music by Andrew Lloyd Webber. Development concerts were presented in June 2015 at the Grammercy Theatre, and the show finally opened on December 6, 2015, at the Winter Garden Theatre. It just closed its Broadway run on January 20, 2019. But rock never dies. The School of Rock tour will play nationwide in 2019.

Long Live Rock!
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How does the ‘School of Rock’ musical cast the kids?  
‘There are some 10-year-olds who can really shred’

Andrew Lloyd Webber’s stage version of “School of Rock” calls for kids who can play instruments. But how good can a 9-year-old really be?

“You’d be surprised,” says casting director Claire Burke, who has been with the musical since before it hit Broadway in 2015. “Usually at 8 or 9, they have only played for a couple years, obviously. But there are some 10-year-olds who can really shred on guitar. I guess some people just have that innate talent.”

The musical is an adaptation of the 2003 movie with Jack Black as an obnoxious die-hard rocker named Dewey who takes on substitute teaching to make ends meet. Through the alchemy of rock-and-roll, Dewey bonds with his fifth-graders — and, of course, forms a band with the students.

When the touring company arrives at the National Theatre for two weeks starting Wednesday, the kids in the cast will range from ages 9 to 12. The four main young characters are a classic rock combo — guitar, keys, bass and drums. That casting challenge, Burke says, “is what makes the show unique. It’s not just that they just sing and dance. They need to be incredible instrumentalists.”

It’s an unusual niche that Burke says is “very fun, but it’s a lot more work than your typical Broadway show. There is a lot more research you need to do. You can’t just call agents to send people in. Often these are kids who never thought about acting before, so we look into music schools and music camps.”

Whether the movie took its idea from the schools created by Paul Green was a bone of contention when the picture came out, but that issue has cooled; the show has partnered with actual School of Rock branches to help get the word out about auditions. There are several Washington-area locations, including the Ashburn, Vienna and Silver Spring schools owned by Laura Bollettino. That cluster will offer a student concert Jan. 19 at the Fillmore in Silver Spring.

“Kids don’t know what they don’t know,” Bollettino said, meaning many are too young and curious to be intimidated. “They’ll push themselves.”

How does the ‘School of Rock’ musical cast the kids?  
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A School of Rock is how current cast member Leanne Parks got involved: Parks started piano at 5, and then two years ago signed up at a School of Rock near her family’s home in Long Island, only to find the place awash in girls like her: wanting to sing and play piano. Her dad noticed that bass players were scarce, so Leanne took it up.

“I never wanted to put it down,” Leanne, now 11, says by phone from the show’s tour stop in Toronto. Very quickly, she felt, “this is my calling. I’m very comfortable now putting my fingers on it. I like how it’s the glue of the band, with the beat of the drums.”

The guitarist has typically been the hardest part to cast. “Zach does a lot of shredding and showing off,” Burke says, referring to the character’s name in the show. And bass players are getting easier to find.

“It seems like a million girls have taken up electric bass,” says Burke, 30, who was a casting assistant when she latched onto the show in 2014. “A lot of them know it will benefit them for ‘School of Rock.’ And there are kids who see the show and get interested in picking up an instrument.”

Even when Burke unearths kids with a knack for playing, and whose families are ready to have a parent or chaperone commit to several months on the road (where tutors and online assignments help young cast members keep up with school), they may not be ready to sing or act. One youngster
“You have to practice a lot. But in the end, it’s awesome.”

Theo Mitchell-Penner in the touring company of “School of Rock.” Casting director Claire Burke sees hopefuls who aren’t quite ready at 8 or 9 but who come back and get cast after another year or two of work. (Matt Murphy)

Performers can rapidly age out of their roles if they grow fast or if their voices change. On the other hand, they can also age in: Burke sees hopefuls who aren’t quite ready at 8 or 9 but who come back and get cast after another year or two of work. Unsurprisingly, some auditioners just aren’t ready.

“Generally when a kid comes in and hasn’t memorized all the material or prepared, that’s a good indication that maybe he’s not that interested,” Burke says. “And that maybe the parents are behind it.”

Lloyd Webber’s rock score isn’t as complex as his early experimental rock concert “Jesus Christ Superstar,” yet its fancy flourishes range from vintage rock riffs to a serious helping of Mozart. It’s challenging enough that Burke calls it “a very hard sing for the adults.” But Leanne sounds undaunted.

“It’s not hard,” the Metallica fan says. “I just listen to it a lot, and I practice my bass with the music. And even when I’m not onstage, I try to listen to other people onstage, because that will help me in the future — how they breathe when they’re singing, and how they accent their lines. You have to practice a lot. But in the end, it’s awesome.”

Cameron Trueblood in the touring company of “School of Rock.” The cast has to be able to act, play and sing, and has to fit the age range of the young characters. (Evan Zimmerman)
Merritt David Janes studied to be a music teacher. In ‘School of Rock,’ he provides an onstage education.

Merritt David Janes graduated from the University of Maine in 2004 with a bachelor’s degree in music education. But becoming a teacher was never his intent. “To be very honest, I wanted to be a performer,” Janes says. “If I was going to college, I wanted something that I could do and use along the way and draw from, and, perhaps later in life, have to go back to. And teaching seemed like a really great thing.”

Today, the 37-year-old finds himself strumming along to both beats while playing the lead role of Dewey Finn—a garage band slacker turned impromptu music teacher—in the touring production of “School of Rock.”

“I didn’t realize I was going to be the best music teacher at the best music school in the world,” Janes says. “But here I am.”

The musical, which begins a run at the National Theatre on Wednesday, opened on Broadway in 2015 as an adaptation of the Jack Black film. Featuring music from the 2003 movie in addition to new songs written by Andrew Lloyd Webber, “School of Rock” follows Dewey as he stumbles his way into a job as a substitute teacher at a hoity-toity prep school and comes to unearth his students’ dormant musical talents.

As the story builds toward the class’s participation in a Battle of the Bands contest, Janes and the preteen actors rock out live onstage while performing with real instruments.

“I can’t think of many other shows that have put as many musical instruments into kids’ hands as our show,” Janes says. “I think everyone should be a songwriter, everyone should play an instrument, and the world would be a better place if everyone did.”

Janes’ musical roots run deep. His mother is a longtime co-concertmaster of the Vermont Philharmonic, his father has “a hell of a country singing voice” and his grandfather was a gifted pianist. Himself a trumpet, guitar and piano player, Janes rode his talents to Europe for a series of concert tours during his college days, then relocated to New York City and studied at the Circle in the Square Theatre School from 2005 to 2007.

From there, the Vermont native landed roles in touring productions including “Sweeney Todd,” “Beauty and the Beast,” “Shrek” and “Phantom of the Opera.” When Laurence Connor, the director of “Phantom’s” 25th anniversary tour, took the helm of “School of Rock” on Broadway, he brought on Janes as a member of the original ensemble and understudy for the role of Dewey.

After nearly two years on Broadway, Janes joined “School of Rock’s” touring production in 2017 as the official Dewey alternate before moving up to top billing this past fall. Every time Janes steps onstage, he’s asked to meet the considerable vocal, physical and emotional requirements that come with capturing the character’s high-octane persona and carrying the bulk of the musical numbers.

“It’s a very, very demanding role — some might say the hardest role out there,” Janes says. “It’s like running the vocal Olympics.”

Since moving into his current New York City apartment nearly 14 years ago, Janes has spent nine years on the road, he estimates. In pursuing his passion, he’s put off a family life. “Sometimes it gets a little lonely out here,” he says. “I’m not married, I don’t have kids — it’s because I dedicated my life to my great affection.”

It’s a life Janes envisioned during his high school days, when he was a budding performer not unlike the students in “School of Rock.” He vividly remembers telling a guidance counselor back then of his aspirations for a life of acting, singing, playing instruments, traveling and teaching.

This counselor, it’s safe to say, was no Dewey Finn. “That’s very nice, but that’s not going to happen,” Janes recalls hearing. “Choose one thing — don’t spread yourself so thin.”

“Every single one of those things on my list came true,” Janes says. “And I don’t take for granted one second the fact that I’m on a glorious, fantastic adventure.”
DISCUSSION PROMPTS

1) What does rock and roll mean to you?
2) Create the soundtrack to your life. What would your Top 10 songs be? Create a Spotify playlist to share with your classmates.
3) Using the tune of Teacher’s Pet from School of Rock, write your own verse to Zack’s song (see Spotify link, song #16).
4) Like all good teacher-student relationships, there’s learning and growth on both sides. Dewey discovers the benefits of putting someone else’s needs before his own, and the students learn to believe in themselves. What have you learned from your favorite teacher? (Teachers, what have you learned from your students?)
5) Many of the artists Dewey mentions in School of Rock are influences from the 1970s golden age of classic rock. Who are the most influential musicians performing today?

COSTUME INSPIRATION

Dewey’s finale costume is an homage to Angus Young from AC/DC

ROCK & ROLL IQ ANSWER KEY

Jimi Hendrix --- Foxy Lady
Eric Clapton --- Bell Bottom Blues
Jimmy Page --- Ramble On
Elvis Presley --- Love Me Tender
Janis Joplin --- Ball and Chain
Kurt Cobain --- Smells Like Teen Spirit
Freddie Mercury --- Somebody to Love
The Who --- My Generation
Earth, Wind & Fire --- September
Lou Reed --- Walk on the Wild Side
Les Claypool --- Tommy the Cat
Emerson, Lake & Palmer --- Karn Evil 9
Rush --- YYY
David Bowie --- Suffragette City
The Supremes --- Where Did Our Love Go
Aretha Franklin --- Respect

Taylor Swift --- Shake It Off
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Whitney Houston --- I Wanna Dance With Somebody
(Who Loves Me)
The Animals --- We Gotta Get Out Of This Place
Mama Cass --- Dream a Little Dream of Me
Fleetwood Mac --- Dreams
Stevie Nicks --- Seventeen