



# CHILDSPLAY

## THEATRE ON TOUR

### Things to Know Before You See... *Rock the Presidents*

Book and Lyrics by Dwayne Hartford; Music by Sarah Roberts  
Approximate Run Time: 55 minutes

#### What the Play is About...

Are you ready to rock out with Millard Fillmore? With a new president about to take office, Childsplay presents *Rock the Presidents*, a high-octane, multi-media-filled musical revue spanning 223 years of the American presidency - from George Washington to Barack Obama. With rock concert music and a super fun history lesson, this non-partisan musical explores what it really takes to be our nation's president. You'll be clapping and cheering as you ponder the question, "Are you a president-to-be?" Audiences young and old alike will learn something new about our presidents, while perhaps seeing something of themselves reflected in the stories on stage.

#### About Childsplay...

Childsplay is a professional non-profit theatre company of adult actors, performing for young audiences and families.

**Our Mission** is to create theatre so strikingly original in form, content or both, that it instills in young people an enduring awe, love and respect for the medium, thus preserving imagination and wonder, those hallmarks of childhood that are the keys to the future.

#### Connections to National Standards

##### LITERACY

Literacy in Science and Technical Subjects (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RST.6-8.9): *Compare and contrast the information gained from experiments, simulations, video or multimedia sources with that gained from reading a text on the same topic.*

##### 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY LEARNING

Creativity and Innovation (K-12): *Work Creatively with Others - View failure as an opportunity to learn; understand that creativity and innovation is a long-term, cyclical process of small successes and frequent mistakes.*

##### SOCIAL STUDIES

Civics/Government (NCSS Themes 6 & 10 K-12):

6) Power, Authority, and Governance. 10) Civic Ideals and Practices.



#### Visit Our Online Resource Center...

[www.childsplayaz.org/resources](http://www.childsplayaz.org/resources)

If you need more information, please contact our School Engagement Coordinator at [schools@childsplayaz.org](mailto:schools@childsplayaz.org) or (480)921-5760.

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WHERE EDUCATION AND IMAGINATION  
TAKE FLIGHT

# Talk About Theatre Etiquette...

It's helpful to review the rules of theater etiquette before seeing a show, especially since this may be the first live theater experience for some of your students. Please take a moment to discuss the following pointers prior to seeing the performance:

- Use the restroom before seeing the show as we do not have intermission during our performances.
- Stay seated during the performance.
- Be respectful to the performers and other people in the audience by not talking during the performance.
- Appropriate responses such as applause or laughter are always welcome.
- Food, candy, gum and beverages will not be allowed during the performance.
- Use of cell phones (including text messaging), cameras or any other recording device is not allowed during the performance at any time.



## Good to Know:

Following the performance there will be a brief question/answer session where actors and audience members will have an opportunity to ask each other questions about the production.

# Behind the Scenes of a Tour...

## ➤ *What is a touring school show?*

Childsplay creates a play with professional actors, a full set, costumes, props, and sound, then packs everything in a van and brings the show to venues across the nation.

## ➤ *How does it all come together?*

The design team and production staff have many challenges when creating a tour. They have to consider how many months the production will be on the road, how to fit all the elements (including the actors) into a van, and how to make the load-in, assembly of the set, pre-set of props and costumes, sound check and load-out as easy for the actors as possible. This is accomplished by countless meetings and planning sessions that occur as much as a year before the first performance.

## ➤ *Where do you go and how do you get there?*

We travel to cities across the United States in a large van. In a week's time, a touring company may perform in up to three different cities (most of the time in different states)! Tours can be on the road anywhere from 6 to 12 months, sometimes even longer. By the end of the tour, the actors may have performed as many as 200 performances.

## ➤ *How do you put everything in just one van?*

All of the scenery, props, and costumes that you see in a Childsplay performance must fit into a van. The scenery usually comes apart into several pieces and then stacks, folds or nests together in the van. There is also room in the van for the sound system, toolbox and the cast - which could be as many as 5 actors. If the cast is lucky there is usually room to squeeze in a few suitcases!

## ➤ *What happens when you arrive in a new city?*

Once the cast arrives at a new venue in the tour van, they have to set everything up in just four to five hours. The cast is assisted in their efforts by employees from the venue, but often the set-up happens with less than ten people total! They have to unpack the van, put the set together, pre-set costumes and props, and organize video, lighting, and sound elements (including a test run for each). The Childsplay scene shop uses what they like to call "tool-less technology" to create tour shows. This means tour sets get assembled with as few tools as possible, sometimes none! Pieces are held in place by screwing in knobs; pieces interlock or rest on posts and sometimes fabric appliqués are Velcroed on to hard scenery frames. After everything is set, our cast performs for local audiences (sometimes multiple shows in one day), and then they pack everything up and travel to their next venue.

## Questions to ask before seeing the production...

- What have you done to pick yourself up after a failure?
- What would be hard about being president? What would be awesome?
- What does it mean to be a leader?
- Throughout history, there have been many political parties. What political parties are you familiar with? Why do we have different political parties?
- First ladies always choose a cause or platform when they are in the White House (Michelle Obama's is fighting childhood obesity). If you were the First Lady or the First Gentleman, what would your cause or platform be?

## Close Reading:

When a playwright writes a play, sometimes they just want to entertain their audience and sometimes there's a deeper message. The same is true of musicals, except that the story, themes, and messages are also communicated through lyrics and music. The audience must listen carefully to lyrics and music to understand the story and to find clues about the theme and/or message of the musical.

### Activity:

Listen to the two songs, *First Ladies* and *I am More Than Four Years*, from *Rock the Presidents* (YouTube links below, printed lyrics on last page). Based on the lyrics you hear in the song, what do you think the song is about? What do you think the playwright's message is? What might be one of the themes in the play? What knowledge did you gain from listening to the songs?

**First Ladies:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oOE9ZJ4OIF4>

**More Than Four Years:** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bnoC9Eth\\_uY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bnoC9Eth_uY)

(if you are unable to access YouTube from the classroom, these songs are available on iTunes and CD Baby)

## Selected Resources for Further Reading and Learning...

### Books to Check Out:

*The Kid Who Ran for President* by Dan Gutman  
*Liberty Porter, First Daughter* by Julia deVilliers  
*The Ghost, The White House and Me* by Judith St. George  
*Capitol Mysteries Series* by Ron Roy  
*The Congress of the United States* by Christine Taylor-Butler  
*How Do We Elect Our Leaders?* by William Thomas  
*What Are the Parts of Government?* by William Thomas

### On the Web:

[www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents](http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents)

➤The White House's history of the presidents

[www.history.com/topics/us-presidents](http://www.history.com/topics/us-presidents)

➤History with video links

[www.whitehouse.gov/our-government](http://www.whitehouse.gov/our-government)

➤About the branches of US government

<http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/kids/stories/animalsnature/uspresidentialpets>

➤Facts about White House pets

<http://www.cdbaby.com/cd/childsplay12>

➤Link to the songs from the show (also available on iTunes & Amazon)



*First Ladies*  
from *Rock the Presidents*  
Book and Lyrics by Dwayne Hartford  
Music by Sarah Roberts

James and Dolley were quite a pair.  
Him with his intellect, her with her flair.  
He was pretty small when it came to height,  
But with his brains and his wife, he was full of might.

Dolley was popular, the belle of the ball.  
She saved our history when Washington did fall.  
The British they invaded, burned the White House down.  
Dolley took all she could as she got out of town.

The Presidents may have been all men,  
But their wives have proven, time and again,  
Women sang their share of history's song.  
Men have led the way so far, but that lead won't last for long.

Woodrow Wilson led us through a World War,  
Then had a stroke, so his wife took the floor,  
Edith saw what was needed, stepped up to the plate.  
Ran the country with him, she was truly his mate.

Franklin and Eleanor saw the Depression through.  
For him, she traveled the world, and spoke for him, too.  
Eleanor ignored the polls, pushed Franklin to do what's right.  
He pushed his New Deal, for the common man they'd fight.

The Presidents may have been all men,  
But their wives have proven, time and again,  
Women sang their share of history's song.  
Men have led the way so far, but that lead won't last for long.

It's just a matter of time 'til that day arrives,  
When a woman, to the Oval Office drives.  
And on that day we'll celebrate that starting then,

With our First Ladies, we'll have our First Gentlemen.

*I am More Than Four Years*  
from *Rock the Presidents*  
Book and Lyrics by Dwayne Hartford  
Music by Sarah Roberts

My name is Jimmy Carter,  
And one term is all I had.  
I didn't get re-elected,  
But don't think that I feel bad.  
I founded the Carter Center  
To build hope for humanity.

I work to end all fighting.  
And bring a mad world sanity.

And I'm more than four years, more than four years.  
A lost election does not define me.  
I do not mourn. No. And I shed no tears.  
Loser's not a tag you assign me.

William Howard Taft was my name,  
Had one term then I was through.  
My wife wanted me President,  
But I knew there was more that I could do.  
Later on I got my dream,  
I led the nation's highest court.  
And I was very good judge,  
Who cares if my White House time was short?

And I'm more than four years, more than four years.  
A lost election does not define me.  
I do not mourn. No. And I shed no tears.  
Loser's not a tag you assign me.

I'm John Quincy Adams,  
And my dad was President, too.  
My name is George Bush senior,  
My son was president. Yes, it's true.  
I fought for human rights for all,  
And I loved to write poetry.  
I served my country in war and peace,  
And I am good with diplomacy.

And I'm more than four years, more than four years.  
A lost election does not define me.  
I do not mourn. No. And I shed no tears.  
Loser's not a tag you assign me.