

# Sacramento Theatre Company

## Study Guide



# Cinderella

book and lyrics by Kate Hawley  
music by Gregg Coffin

Study Guide Prepared: November 18, 2015 by William Myers

# Sacramento Theatre Company

## Mission Statement

The Sacramento Theatre Company (STC) strives to be the leader in integrating professional theatre with theatre arts education. STC produces engaging professional theatre, provides exceptional theatre training, and uses theatre as a tool for educational engagement.

## Our History

The theatre was originally formed as the Sacramento Civic Repertory Theatre in 1942, an ad hoc troupe formed to entertain locally-stationed troops during World War II. On October 18, 1949, the Sacramento Civic Repertory Theatre acquired a space of its own with the opening of the Eaglet Theatre, named in honor of the Eagle, a Gold Rush-era theatre built largely of canvas that had stood on the city's riverfront in the 1850s. The Eaglet Theatre eventually became the Main Stage of the not-for-profit Sacramento Theatre Company, which evolved from a community theatre to professional theatre company in the 1980s. Now producing shows in three performance spaces, it is the oldest theatre company in Sacramento.

After five decades of use, the Main Stage was renovated as part of the H Street Theatre Complex Project. Features now include an expanded and modernized lobby and a Cabaret Stage for special performances. The facility also added expanded dressing rooms, laundry capabilities, and other equipment allowing the transformation of these performance spaces, used nine months of the year by STC, into backstage and administration places for three months each summer to be used by California Musical Theatre for Music Circus.

Sacramento Theatre Company can accommodate 292 patrons in the proscenium-style auditorium of its Main Stage, while the Pollock Stage offers a more intimate experience with only 87 seats in a black box-style theatre. Both provide good acoustics and sight-lines. This professional, Equity theatre presents seven professional productions per season with a reputation for excellent stage adaptations of classic literature. Three annual productions in the Cabaret Stage, which seats 100, round out the experience with high-quality Broadway musical revues.

The Young Professionals Conservatory, a training program for young theatre artists, was founded in 2003. The program, as well as the entire STC School of the Arts, is directed by Michele Hillen-Noufer.

**For further information about the Sacramento Theatre Company please visit us online:**

<http://www.sactheatre.org>

## Contents

The History of Cinderella	4
The British Pantomime (Panto)	5
The Creative Team	6
Characters	8
A Part of the Show	10
Technical Elements	11
Theatre Etiquette	12
Learning More (Sources/further research)	13

# History of Cinderella

The idea of Cinderella goes back further even than the history of theatre, the seeds of its plot being part of a story told hundreds of years before the Golden age of Greece. The first version that comes out of European writings in the 17th century is so different in its surface elements from the most popular versions today that we might almost not recognize it as the same story without the search for the missing girl using the slipper at its end. A closer examination at the underlying plot, however, reveals key similarities that run through all the Cinderella variants:

- There exists a sweet and innocent girl who works hard and cares deeply for her friends and family, despite her own suffering and losses.
- There is a father who, having lost a good wife, naively takes another wife (either because it is expected of him or because he believes it will help his daughter who is suffering with the loss of her mother).
- The new wife has married the father for money or position, is typically hard or cruel, and has daughters of her own who she holds in higher esteem/status than the father's first child.
- An opportunity arises for a chance at romance / to wed a high ranking figure (most often a Prince) but the stepmother and/or her daughters arrange so that the daughter will not be able to attend.
- Some magic occurs (usually fairy magic) through which a dress and any other relevant items are temporarily created to allow the daughter to attend the event. However, as with all fairy magic; there are rules or limitations in place.
- The daughter does meet the Prince, connections are made, but due to limitations or other events, she must flee before the Prince knows who she is. In fleeing, a slipper is left behind... which will be used to identify the appropriate girl, if she can be found again.
- The girl is found, the slipper fits, and romance begins... and lasts - happily ever after.

Several of the more common elements in the version we are familiar with - the pumpkin, the fairy godmother, and the glass slippers; were first added in a version of the story written in 1697 by Charles Perrault, named Cendrillon. Cendrillon can probably be pointed to as both the most likely variation referenced to create the Disney animated version of Cinderella... and as the version from which this musical version of Cinderella was drawn.

However, there are a number of Panto influences as well as bits from other Cinderella variations that make it into this production. For example, in the Grimm collection; there is a version of the story titled Aschenputtel. In this story, when the Prince tries to find the girl; one of the stepsisters cuts off her toes to try to fit into the slipper before doves appear to warn of the blood. Later the doves carry out some vengeance on the stepsisters, blinding them by tearing out their eyes. Our Cinderella's stepsisters try some tricks to get their feet to fit the slipper... but we draw the line at vengeance driven birds blinding the sisters. Evidently, Disney agreed... they might have had Cinderella make friends and sing with the creatures of the forest... but it never turned into an episode of "When Animals Attack..."

A late nineteenth century study was published comparing 345 variants of Cinderella, Catskin and Cap o'Rushes; for the Folklore Society of Britain. While that suggests the scope of variations even before we entered the modern age, the last hundred years have added numerous more spanning opera, ballet, television, theatre, and film. Wikipedia's article on Cinderella makes a start of listing these, but really only the 'obvious' variants. Many more contemporary stories use all the key elements.

# The British Pantomime (Panto)

The contemporary Panto is derived from a combination of the early Passion festival performances (the first style of performance in Medieval England since the Roman period) and 16th century Italian Commedia dell' arte. In these styles, there was little focus on script or plot; but rather, actors spent the majority of their time studying and develop specific character types. Each character had its own way of speaking, personality, and way of interacting with the other standard characters. This made it possible to put any combination of characters together for virtually any story without having a script in advance. The actors knew the personality of the character so well that anything that they hadn't said in every other show would still be just as obvious. While the style is half a millennium old, even today, most people would recognize these common standard characters... if not by name, by the names of every sit com and soap opera character who follows their archetype.

The Panto most commonly is built on:

- The principle boy (hero) - in Panto the romantic male lead is played by a young woman often in tight fitting male garments to make her figure obvious. Her romantic partner is then, the -
- The principle girl (ingénue) - also played by a young woman.
- The pantomime Dame - the hero's mother. Typically played by a man in drag
- An animal - often a horse or cow with two people making up the whole (allowing for coordination jokes where the halves of the animal go in opposite directions)
- A Fairy - who represents the good magic, hope, and change.
- The Villain - No redeeming qualities. As with melodramas, the Panto doesn't have shades of gray, the good characters are always good, even while being beaten down. The bad guys are always going to do the wrong thing, even when they see what it'll result in.
- A Ghost or Monster – a terrifying character. Though ultimately, when it challenges the Dame, the Dame is scarier.
  
- A Chorus - onstage extras who sing, dance, and generally participate in most everything.

Aside from characters, a Panto also typically includes:

- A huge amount of audience participation. Everyone is encouraged throughout the performance to be involved. To boo and hiss the villain. To warn people of the monster. To argue and heckle.
- Music. Often lyrics written to common tunes to encourage people to sing along.
- Slapstick or harlequinade
- Double entendre (jokes that have meaning on multiple level... at least one of which is typically naughty)
- Guest cameos

Cinderella is a commonly used plot for a Panto, but almost any simple folklore or children's story does just as well. The key being that it be popular and well known... one thing people don't go to a Panto for is a complicated plot that they've never seen before: Jack and the Beanstalk, Aladdin, Sleeping Beauty, Beauty and the Beast, and so forth.

Of course, straight retellings... in which the story turns out the way it normally does... are rare. It's quite common for the Panto version to end in some unexpected fashion.

## The Creative Team

### **Kate Hawley :: Book and Lyrics**

Kate is an award winning writer and actress who received her theatrical training at UC Berkeley, ACT, UCLA and UCSC. Since 1982, she has performed in many productions at many theatres including Shakespeare Santa Cruz, Cabrillo Stage, The Actors Theater, and the San Jose Civic Light Opera. She was instrumental in the creation of The Dickens Players, a touring troupe, in which she participated as actress, director, and writer. Her original plays, Messages, Simply the Thing She Is, and Diva Days have all won or placed in play writing competitions in Michigan, North Carolina, Virginia, and California. In 1997 her adaptation of Ostrovsky's *The Forest* was premiered at Shakespeare Santa Cruz. Her screenplay *Who Would You Rather Sleep With?* took first prize at the Austin Film Festival in 1998. *Fall Back* was a finalist in 2001. She has written four pantomimes: *Cinderella* (with composer Gregg Coffin), *Gretel & Hansel* (with composer Craig Bohmler), *Princess and the Pea*, and *Sleeping Beauty*. These premiered at Shakespeare Santa Cruz and are regular season offerings at that company.

### **Gregg Coffin :: Composer**

Gregg Coffin has composed, directed, arranged, or orchestrated the music for productions in theatres throughout the U.S., Canada, China, and South Korea; including the Minetta Lane Theatre, the Duke on 42nd Street, the John Houseman Theatre (NYC), ChungMu Art Hall (Seoul), The Stratford Festival of Canada, The Canadian Stage, The Tarragon Theatre, The National Arts Centre, Manitoba Theater Center, Theatre New Brunswick (Canada), Alley Theatre, American Players Theatre, Arena Stage, Asolo Repertory Theatre, Berkeley Repertory Theatre, Dallas Theatre Center, Denver Center Attractions, Denver Center Theatre Company, Geva Theatre Center, The Guthrie Theatre, The Human Race Theatre, Indiana Repertory Theatre, PCPA Theatrefest, Pioneer Theatre Company, the Unicorn Theatre, and the Oregon, Utah, Santa Cruz, California, Alabama, Santa Fe, Georgia, Great River, and St. Louis Shakespeare Festivals. He is a member of Actors Equity Association, the American Federation of Musicians, the Dramatists Guild of America, the Game Network Audio Guild, and the American Society of Composers and Lyricists.

## A Brief Interview with Kate and Gregg

**William:** When working on the songs, did you work together? Was the music first or the lyrics?

**Kate:** When I write, I write from first page to last and compose songs as they come to me in the scene. They are rarely written separately and then fit into the story. When Gregg and I work together, he gets the lyrics and composes the music. Then, with the director; we start adjusting to come up with something that pleases us all. Gregg's music has been hugely responsible for the success of *Cinderella*. It is gorgeous.

**William:** Are there any obscure bits and fairytale elements in the script that people miss?

**Kate:** I don't think there is anything hidden in my plays. There should be topical and local jokes so that the audience feels that the production is tied to their time and community. I wouldn't mind a bit of Mrs. Baden-Rotten had a Trump-style comb over this year.

**William:** What do you consider your best success? What was it about that accomplishment that makes you consider it your best?

**Kate:** I can't say what my "best" is. I know that the hours I spent watching the Pantos with an audience packed with kids and their families all responding to the play have been some of the happiest of my life. When the Prince and Dandini look out into the house and wonder if the slipper will fit anyone in the audience and a hundred little feet shoot up to try, that's pretty rewarding. Panto gives the audience a wonderful opportunity to connect with the play, to respond (out loud!), to help bring about the happy ending.

**Gregg:** "Someone" is my favorite ballad from the show. I love Kate's lyrics here - the simplicity of Cinderella's wish for that special someone who will love her for who she truly is. "Presto" is my favorite upbeat song from the show. There's such a wonderfully supportive energy that comes from the audience as they shout together along with the Fairy Godmother to make Cinderella's dream come true.

**William:** If someone were aspiring to do you sort of work; what would you recommend to them (what should they do, read and/or study)?

**Kate:** I would say that the best way to prepare for writing a musical is to listen to lots of good ones. I grew up listening to Oklahoma, My Fair Lady, Guys and Dolls, Kiss Me Kate, South Pacific, Cabaret--and Cinderella. We didn't have a television. Listening to the music and lyrics without actually knowing what the story was, was a wonderful way of concentrating on what made a song work. Some musicals actually turn out to be pretty light on character development--letting the music and lyrics do the heavy lifting. I think both are important and the aim should be to get a good balance between the two.

**Gregg:** I'd ask young composers to listen to all kinds of music and discover what interests them: is it the melody? the rhythm? the chord progressions? the lyrics? the rhyme scheme? the alliteration? Listen carefully to what you hear. And then as you start to develop your own voice, become an expert at sharing that voice. Learn as much music theory as you need to convey your songs to other people - learning to write sheet music, or simple chord charts with lyrics, or learning how to record your work. Develop your ears to listen, and then develop the skills to share.

**William:** What new show do you wish you had written (because it accomplishes the things you think are important in a show)?

**Gregg:** I wish I'd written HAMILTON. But more than that, I'm so glad that Lin-Manuel Miranda did. He's a genius, and Hamilton is a game-changer for musical theatre. Every once in a while, a show challenges and advances the medium in new and dynamic ways. Showboat, Of Thee I Sing, Oklahoma, Company, and A Chorus Line all broke the mold when they arrived on the scene. Hamilton is our next game-changer in musical theatre.

# Characters

## Fairy Godmother

The Fairy in the Cinderella stories represents the external source of hope, magic, and change that is necessary to push the status quo of balance and begin the chain of events that will result in the happy ever after. That actual amount of magic necessary to do this varies across variations, but our Fairy Godmother is a bit rusty and out of practice... and she's going to need a lot of magic to make things right. At the very least, she needs a gown and a way to the ball. If that's going to happen, the Fairy Godmother may need to get some help from the audience.

## The King and Queen

The Royal couple, Prince Charming's mother and father, are a quirky duo. Mom is decidedly the more aggressive of the two and besides running things in the castle; she tends to flirt with the men. The Queen is also big on entrances and always has bugle wielding guards handy to play a fanfare. The King and Queen decide to push their son into behaving more like a proper Prince by setting up the Ball and inviting all the eligible women in the Kingdom.

## Prince Charming

The handsome young prince is a bit more of the sensitive thinking type that his family or his valet and good friend, Dandini, think he should be. When you'd rather eat a healthy salad and then find a good place to read a book instead of going out hunting or brawling, you are straying a bit far from the stereotype. Fortunately, he trades his crown for his valet's simple cap for an afternoon of pretending to be anything but royalty.

## Dandini

The young Dandini is the Prince's valet and stolid friend. He enjoys everything that a stereotypical Prince should: hunting and carousing. The fits and melancholy that grips his master worry him... but not so much that he hasn't noticed that the new Shepherdess is quite lovely. Maybe if he helps her find her lost sheep, she'll reward him with a kiss? Especially if he's wearing a crown at the time?

## Buttons

Buttons is a common boy who is good friends with Cinderella. Unfortunately for Buttons, he has a crush on Cinderella... but can she possibly see him the same way? Buttons is going to need some help from the audience if he's going to get through the show.

## Cinderella

Cinders is the daughter of a Baron. Her sweet and caring mother was well loved by the Baron and they are both somewhat lost following her death. When her father remarries and brings two stepsisters into the household, the girl is treated badly... worse even than a servant might be treated. She does all the work while the sisters get the rewards of shopping trips and so forth. While she takes comfort in her friendship with Buttons and the good deeds that she achieves; she dreams of romance and happy days that she doesn't quite believe she can ever have again.

## **Baron Hardup**

The baron is a good man who has lost his way (along with his sobriety) with the loss of his beloved wife. He believes Mrs Baden-Rotten to be incredibly attractive (testament to just how drunk he stays) and a good replacement mother for his daughter.

## **Mrs. Baden-Rotten**

She's mean. She's ugly. She makes Mr Grinch look like a cuddly furry animal. Mrs. Baden-Rotten is everything that defines the wicked stepmother... and a few things that you couldn't mention because they're too mean for print. She spends every cent her Baron husband has available and will move the moment he ceases to be able to treat her to the very finest as she expects.

## **Goneril and Regan**

The two girls are Mrs. Baden-Rotten's daughters to her two prior husbands. While not yet up to their mother's level of pure evil, the stepsisters are vicious, manipulative, and more than capable of making Cinderella's life miserable purely on their own. Perhaps the only thing that keeps them from being worse is that they don't have their mother's cruel cunning.

## **Bo Peep**

The young shepherdess is an anti-establishment intellectual type with some naughty straying sheep. She spends most of the play trying to find the sheep; but in the process, she does manage to find herself a mate.

## **Knickers**

One of the chief palace servants, Knickers shows up in a number of scenes, mostly running errands for the Queen.



*Cinderella* - A watercolor of Cinderella created in 1863 by Edward Burne-Jones. It currently resides in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

## A Part of the Show

Your experience in attending Cinderella will be very different from what you may have seen attending one of our Shakespeare productions or the adaptations of classical literature from your reading lists. While the audience is always a 'part' of a live performance, few types of theatre involve the audience to the same degree as a Panto.

Our actors will encourage you to call out to them in warning if something is dangerous. They may ask the audience to guard something or someone. You might be asked to vote on something, to boo and hiss at a villain, to scream in fear, or cheer on a hero who is finally about to fall in love. We hope you will let yourself play along the way.

Because the basic storyline is one you probably already know (does anyone not know at least one version of Cinderella from somewhere - story, television, or movies?), it should be easy to follow. This leaves you free to watch for the little tricks that arise during the play. We'll sneak in characters from lots of other fairytales and play a few 'sight gags' (sleight of hand tricks that the character doesn't even realize are happening, which are funny to watch - such as when one character is pulling things from a basket to put on the table, while other people are taking things off the table to put in the basket, creating an endless stream of objects coming out of the basket, but nothing on the table).

On top of all of this, Cinderella is a rock musical. We'll have a four musician orchestra playing keyboards, drums, violin, stand-up bass, and trumpet (yes, that's five instruments for four musicians... you'll have to watch to see how that works out). The band will be in a 'pit' area down center, right between the audience and the front edge of the stage. There will be fog and gas special effects... and more than a little stage magic.

And just in case it isn't obvious... there's nothing stopping the characters up on stage from coming out in the audience. That could be good - if it's the Prince who thinks your dainty little feet might be just the right size to fit into the left behind glass slipper. But it also could be very bad... we're not entirely sure what the stepsisters did to their last boyfriends, who haven't been seen since Spring. And you could catch the eye of Mrs. Baden-Rotten. Or the bear. If you have your choice, take the bear.

## **The Setting**

The script calls for three fairly specific locations. There is the Palace, which houses the King and Queen, the Prince, Dandini, and numerous guards and servants. Outside the Palace, and most everywhere else, is the Forest. Finally, there is the small but cozy home of the Baron and his daughter... as cozy as any place might be when infested by Mrs. Baden-Rotten and her two daughters.

Because events need to move smoothly between these locations without hindering the flow of the show, most of the set pieces are somewhat impressionist. They imply the whole without actually full three dimensional details. Each element, whether tree, cottage or palace wall, stair unit, or doorway is capable of moving on and off stage quickly and easily on rolling wagons. The specific combination of elements designed defines the location.

## **The Costumes**

The costumes run the gambit of fantasy or a variety of historical periods most suited to emphasize the comedic elements of each character. The costumes least appropriate to any one time period are the two stepsisters' selections. The choices for those two throughout the play reflect their internal ugliness. They don't match, and they use horrible colors in unfashionable ways.

Even Mrs. Baden-Rotten's outfits are meant to be more fashionable than those of her daughters. Not that they will make her attractive... but more coordinated than those of her daughters, that much is true.

## **Lighting and Special Effects**

It is quite rare to do a show with magic and rock and roll without some special lighting and effects. Cinderella is no exception. We have moving lights, color scrollers, dry ice fog and CO<sub>2</sub> jets. There is a remote control pumpkin, flying birds and slippers, and a 20 foot long braid of hair. Add in trap doors and a dancing bear and you have a lot of elements to watch for.

## **Sound and Music**

Our Sound department is taking the easy route for this production: there are no recorded sound effects or music tracks. Where many of our musicals use pre-recorded tracks that are played through the sound system, Cinderella is completely live. Of course, at any one time there might be upwards of fifteen microphones supporting the vocal performance of the cast and five or six additional channels enhancing the performance of the live orchestra. All of those microphones and instruments are manually mixed live and sent to ten different speaker locations throughout the room and offstage, to ensure that every actor, musician and audience member hears the show at just the right volume and balance of parts.

# Theatre Etiquette

- Arrive at the theater on time.
- Visit the restroom before the performance begins.
- Turn off your cell phone. Do not speak on the phone or text during the performance.
- Pay attention to announcements that are made prior to the show about the rules of the theater you are attending and the location of the fire exits.
- Don't speak during the performance unless you are encouraged by the performers to participate. Remember that the Overture (introductory music) in musical theater is part of the performance, so be quiet when it begins.
- Do not take pictures during the performance. It can be very distracting to the actors and can cause a mishap. It can also be a violation of an actor's contract.
- Remain in your seat for the entire performance. If you must leave, exit during intermission. In an emergency, wait for an appropriate break in the show. It is rude to get up in the middle of a quiet moment.
- Do not eat or drink in the theater.
- Do not put your feet up on the seats or balcony and do not kick the seat in front of you.
- Don't put or throw anything on the stage.
- Do laugh when the performance is funny.
- Do applaud when it is appropriate during the performance.
- Do applaud when the performance is over... this tells the performers and crew that you appreciate their work.
- Stand and applaud if you really thought the show was great (a standing ovation).
- Do not whistle, stomp your feet, or scream out to the performers except for a Bravo or Brava.

## Using What You've Learned to Learn More

While there are companies in the United States that perform Pantos regularly during the holiday seasons, to get the full experience; you really need to visit or research them in London/England. The Internet can be of some use, much of the information found in this study guide was based on online resources. Finding information about Cinderella and American Musical theatre, on the other hand, is a simple task. Cinderella and the folk and fairytales that provide the source material for the story are in public domain (they are more than 75 years old) and are popular topics with enthusiastic fan support.

### About Cinderella and British Panto - Wikipedia

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cinderella>      <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pantomime>

As usual, Wikipedia makes for an extremely useful starting point to begin research into a subject. The entry for Cinderella is especially well prepared with plenty of directions to go for further research.

### NPR - A Girl, A Shoe, A Prince: The Endlessly Evolving Cinderella

<http://www.npr.org/sections/monkeysee/2015/03/13/392358854/a-girl-a-shoe-a-prince-the-endlessly-evolving-cinderella>

A really good article discussing the origin and continued evolution of the Cinderella story, both from the perspective of the 'nice kid making it big' and persecuted heroine. These two devices are central to so many stories, that it is easy to see why there are so many renditions and remakes of a 'Cinderella' story and why even when unintentional; so many modern stories are still compared to this old folk tale.

### The British Players

<http://www.britishplayers.org/aboutpantomime.html>

A theatre company in Maryland dedicated to the presentation of British style performances that includes farce and Panto as part of their regular performance season each year.

### Theatre Britain

<http://www.theatre-britain.com/About> Panto.html

A similar company in Plano Texas, also dedicated to British theatre.