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 Choreographer
 Music Director
 Stage Manager
 Scenic Design
 Costume Design
 Lighting Design
 Sound Design
 Production Mgr
 Production Photos

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Village Theatre
 KIDSTAGE



Overview

How to Succeed in Business was produced by Village Theatre's KIDSTAGE program on the mainstage of Village's Everett location in the summer of 2015. Though this was a youth production, the standards and commitment of the KIDSTAGE program towards giving kids a professional experience are outstanding. Every inch of the production was designed from the ground up. The sets were constructed by union carpenters and the production mounted in a union theatre. This production featured nearly 50 performers and a 20 piece orchestra, luxuries rarely afforded in the professional world. Both the size and the age of the cast delivered unique, fresh perspective on a classic musical.

Below are some of the highlights of and concepts behind the production.

Visual Design

"Reality Vs. Fantasy." One of the themes I wanted to explore in the show was the contrast between everyday life in the office and the dreams that people conceal within. Finch charges into World Wide Wickets with an ambition that kicks the plot into action, but all of the other principals hold substantial dreams of their own.

Staging

To follow the idea of reality vs. fantasy the staging took some of the familiar production numbers to exaggerated heights in songs that could support a detour from real life and expound on the dreams of the characters. When J.B. Biggley sang with Finch about his love of football, they entered a football fantasy sequence in a stadium fashioned out of our multi-level stage. When Rosemary and Finch sang at the end of Act One, their romantic dreams were played out by ballet dancers and a huge wedding fantasy brought to life by the cast. Bud Frump's reprise of "The Company Way" was changed to a dream sequence where Bud imagined himself as everyone's favorite in the office, being carried around by a parade and celebrated with pennants and banners.

Scenic

From the scenic designer I asked for "*Mad Men* meets James Bond". I wanted an authentic-feeling, period workplace that also had the ability to become something grander. The "James Bond" idea called for grandeur in the design, but in lines, angles, and colors that still called out to 1961/62 when the Bond franchise began.

Lighting

From lighting, I asked to light the interiors with harsh, florescent-style lighting when we were in the day-to-day of the office, with realistic sky colors on the cyclorama. When we entered big production numbers, all bets were off in terms of color, often using strong, saturate colors to evoke the films and visual styles of the 60's.

Overview (Cont.)

Costumes

We ran a colorful yet muted, period palette wherever possible. I was trying to avoid overly bright, comic book colors. I wanted it to feel like an authentic workplace of the time and let lighting, choreo, and other elements elevate the visuals to a fantasy level when needed.

Epic Scope

A cast of 50 allows for some pretty epic production numbers. We were judicious where we used that power and were careful to let those big numbers build. There was another benefit to the cast size. It allowed us to truly populate the office with a wide variety of workers. Beyond the usual execs and secretaries we had delivery people, cleaning women, accountants, and other support staff who each had their own small stories. This brought a stronger sense of the workplace's diversity to life.

Non-Traditional Casting

We leveraged our limited casting pool to our advantage and reaped the comic benefits. Short on men to fill the executive roles, we found an outstanding young actress to play the role of Bratt and embraced the idea of how others would respond to a woman with authority in the office in the early 1960's. Short on young men who could play age, we went the opposite direction with Womper, the chairman of the board, and had the smallest kid be the "big boss" as a surprise at the end of the show. We gathered some young performers together who didn't quite fit elsewhere into a new group of "minions" who followed J.B. Biggley everywhere he went.

Silhouette

One of my favorite features of the show visually was the ability to use silhouette. We had beautiful shapes in our office building windows to use in visuals, but we also created little silhouette crossover vignettes on the upper deck of our set to have fun with scene changes. Those were inspired by the credits sequence from *Catch Me If You Can* and from Hitchcock film posters of the era.

Tap Dance

How to Succeed is not typically a tap show, but we took a risk to see how it could enhance the storytelling. Tap dance helped accent the angst and turmoil of the office place in "Coffee Break". It helped portray the typing pool and precision of the secretaries in "Secretary is Not a Toy", and it helped augment the celebration of "Brotherhood of Man" in the finale.

What's a Wicket?

I've rarely seen a production deal with what a "World Wide Wicket" really is. After going back and forth, we decided to go all in on the idea of what it really is – a little gate you set up in the yard to play croquet. Executive offices were adorned with the finest of croquet equipment, and croquet props were woven all through the production. We also designed a new logo for the World Wide Wicket company and adorned every file folder, box, and scenic element we could with 1960's corporate zeal.

Reality Vs. Fantasy



“Coffee Break” in everyday office lighting.



“Coffee Break” during the song.

Staging – Fantasy Sequences



Bud's "Company Way" Fantasy



Above - J.B. Biggley's Football Fantasy.



Down Left – Biggley finally gets revenge on the "Chipmunk" from the rival team.

Staging – Fantasy Sequences



“Rosemary” fantasy builds through a Zeigfeld inspired moment to an epic wedding below.



Staging – Epic Scope



“Brotherhood of Man” with 50 performers. Cleaning women, delivery men, accountants, secretaries, and executives all come together for the first time.



At the rooftop party, “Paris Original” builds to an army of 25 jilted office women wearing the same dress.

Non-Traditional Casting



Executive Bratt played by a woman, bringing a fun perspective when she kicks off
“A Secretary is Not a Toy”



The “Big Boss” played by the littlest guy – Chairman of the Board Wally Womper

Silhouettes



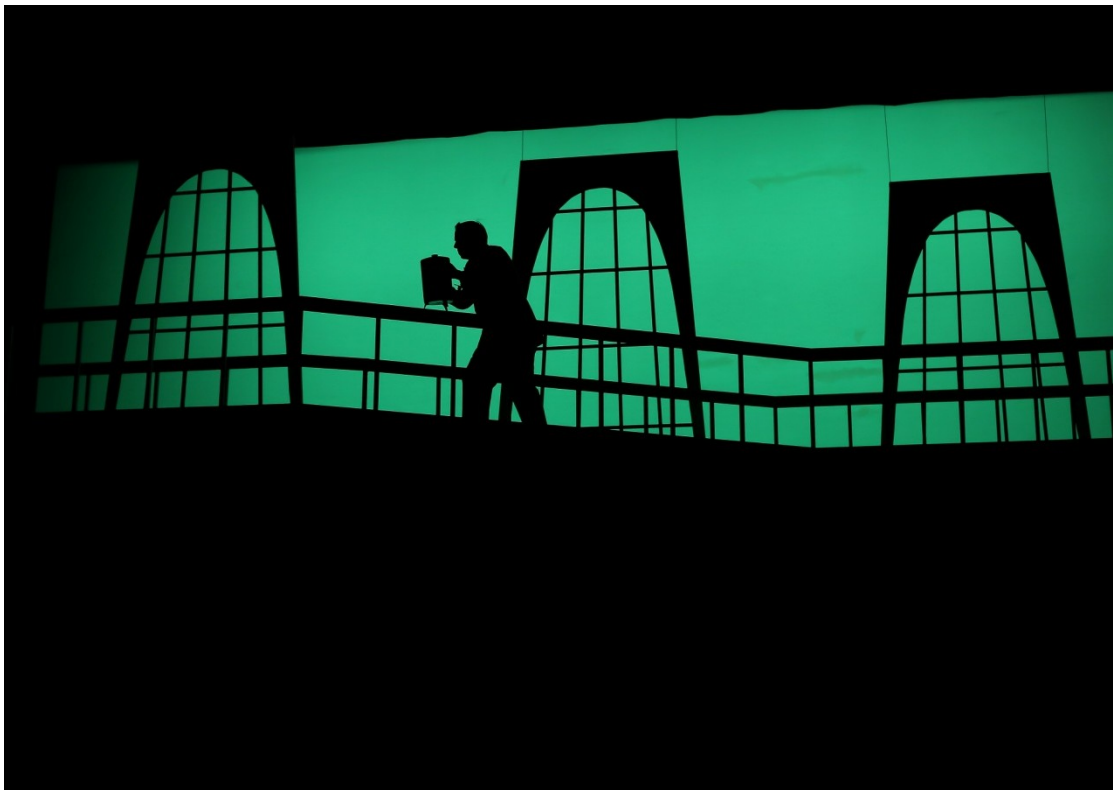
A “happy home-maker” ballet plays out in silhouette behind Rosemary during
“Happy to Keep His Dinner Warm”



Silhouettes



Scene transition vignette where jealous executives hunt down Finch with official World Wide Wickets croquet gear.



Scene transition vignette to “Coffee Break”. Office worker steals the entire coffee urn.

Tap Dance



Secretaries tapping as they type. Later the percussion helped them to assert themselves against a rude bunch of office workers.



Tap break led by Finch while building to the big finale of “Brotherhood of Man”.

Gallery



Elevator for “Been a Long Day” flew in as a 2D object then merged with the set to create a 3D illusion of the elevator coming and going with different passengers from the office.

Shameless sight gags were the theme with “Tiny Womper” on the scene.



Gallery



Gallery



Above: Biggley's therapeutic knitting.
Below: Busy accountants cross the stage.



Gallery



J.B. Biggley and his “minions”.



Gallery



Above: Ms. Bratt invades the men's room and joins the conspiracy against Finch.
Below: Finch's mirror detached from the bathroom unit so that he could "dance" with himself like Fred Astaire as he built his courage, ending here with his enemies looming overhead.



Gallery



After a 60's variety show pirate dance, Hedy emerges from a treasure map as the World Wide Wickets "spokes-mermaid".



Gallery



A cleaning woman who has been working silently in the background throughout the show nearly has a heart attack when she sees the office wrecked in the aftermath of Finch's contest. In the foreground, papers fly into the audience, dropped from the catwalk during the reveal of the scene.

Gallery



Above: During “Coffee Break” the workers worship a “sacred coffee urn”.
Below: Secretaries assist Finch with his presentation to Biggley.



Gallery

