

American immigration, Ellis Island, Tammany Hall, sweatshop labor, upward mobility, political jingoism, tenement life, Yiddish theater traditions, genealogy, the invention of the gramophone, the rise of the union movement, ethnic tensions and class struggles in the "melting pot" of NYC's Lower East Side.

Not your traditional topics for Music Theater, where more often than not audiences are treated to crashing chandeliers, dancing cutlery and flying English nannies bearing spoons full of sugar! However, Odyssey Academy's ground-breaking production of "**Rags**" addresses these historic, curricular connections, melding them with vibrant characters and a magnificent, sweeping musical score.

Written by "**Fiddler on the Roof**" author **Joseph Stein**, this show tells the next chapter of life for immigrants leaving Europe seeking the "rags to riches" American dream. It has a beautiful score written by **Charles Strouse** ("**Annie**"), with lyrics by **Stephen Schwartz** ("**Wicked**").

With great passion and humor, "**Rags**" tells the story of Rebecca, a naïve Jewish immigrant from Russia who arrives at Ellis Island with her young son. Searching for her husband who arrived six years earlier, Rebecca begins her struggle to make a life on New York City's Lower East Side in 1910. She goes to work in a sweatshop and becomes politically aware of the inequities of American social and economic life. Once reunited with her husband, she discovers that he is changing, but not entirely for the best. "**Rags**" is a sweeping saga of awakenings and disappointments, of greed and power, of strength and love, truly an inspirational experience.

Teachers and parents connected to the show have remarked how many humanities classroom connections can be made to "**Rags**". They have encouraged their students to experience the show not only to be entertained, but to learn about the experiences of their early immigrant relatives from the past. Attending the show and writing a critique about these connections could even be an effective "extra credit" assignment for motivated students!

Odyssey Academy's production will feature a student cast and crew of 140, supported by a 24 piece professional orchestra. This production is believed to be the upstate New York premiere production of the show by a high school, and it is the final production directed by Artistic Director **Mary Jane Davidson**, who will be retiring from the GSCD this year. Vocal direction is by **Kathryn Dyer**, choreography is by **Michelle Potter** and **Laura Borrelli**, and the musical director is **John C. Klein**.

A very gracious letter of support written by legendary Broadway composer Charles Strouse is attached. For those who enjoy theater history, his website is truly fascinating!

www.charlesstrouse.com

Performances, during the February Winter Break, are at Olympia High School's Auditorium (1139 Maiden Lane). Dates and times are:

Thursday, February 18 at 6:30 p.m.

Friday, February 19 and Saturday, February 20 at 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, February 21 at 1:00 p.m.

Sign language interpretation is available at the February 20 performance.

Tickets are available at ShowTix4U.com and at Wegmans (\$10), and at the door (\$12).

Note that the prime seats are at ShowTix4U.com

The Odyssey Music and Drama Information Line is 966-7947.

John C. Klein
TOSA for Music - Greece Central School District
Director, Odyssey Orchestras
Odyssey Academy
133 Hoover Drive
Rochester, NY 14615-2699
(585) 966-5571