

**From Hamlet! The Ultra-Dramatic Musical Comedy Thrill-Mageddon
(as presented by numerous corporations that refuse to be named)**

By Don Zolidis

Act One

(A banner unfurls proclaiming the school musical, “Little Shop of Horrors.”)
Feel free to make this specific to your school and your most recent or upcoming musical.

(Lights up on CHIP and JESSIE, the narrators.)

CHIP *(talking to the audience)*

Are you ready to see the musical?!

(Audience gives muted and confused reaction.)

JESSIE

I don't think they're ready.

CHIP

I SAID: ARE YOU READY TO SEE THE MUSICAL?!

(Audience gives slightly less muted and slightly more confused reaction.)

JESSIE

Well – funny story, we were all set to bring you Little Shop of Horrors.

CHIP

Awesome, amazing show, so much better than the show we're actually going to show you.

JESSIE

Shut up, Chip. But...

CHIP

You would have loved it: There's this plant, and it's like evil, and it's eating people – aaaah!
People die all over the place. Great for the kids.

JESSIE

Chip. Seriously. Stop it. We totally wanted to do that show – but it turns out –

CHIP

It's really expensive.

JESSIE

Right. Which is normally not a problem for the drama club, but...

BIG BUT –

CHIP

Was that directed at me, Chip?

JESSIE

No! I meant big exception.

CHIP

As some of you might know, we're a little financially strapped at the moment –

JESSIE

A little –

CHIP

A lot, actually. Let's call it a financial crisis.

JESSIE

That's what your parents called it.

CHIP

So the school has been forced to trim –

JESSIE

Or hatchet –

CHIP

The budget of various extracurricular groups.

JESSIE

We now have a budget of eight dollars.

CHIP

They were going to give us ten, but apparently one of us egged the superintendent's dog.

JESSIE

Why are you looking at me? By the way, if you want to see a great YouTube video of a dog being egged, check out –

CHIP

Keep digging that hole, Chip.

JESSIE

Anyway, the plant for this show costs three thousand bucks to rent.

CHIP

JESSIE

So we'll be saving our budget for the next four hundred years, and then we'll have enough to do that show. When the world is a steaming, blasted ruin.

CHIP

Yay!

JESSIE

But I don't want to sound like we're the only part of the school that's having a budget crisis.

CHIP

I've heard the offense and defense on the football team have to share pants. They switch them in between plays.

JESSIE

I can't even go to the games anymore. It's too sad to watch.

CHIP

And the building is doing cost-saving measures as well:

JESSIE

For instance, who needs heat when you can wear sweaters?

CHIP

And do we really need all those lightbulbs? Those just spoil the eyes.

JESSIE

And why splurge on all that fancy cafeteria food when there are mice readily available?

CHIP

Tastes like chicken! Mmm.

JESSIE

So we here at the drama club put our heads together to come up with a low-cost alternative to that big, expensive show. And what we came up with was:

(Two ACTORS run out, one carrying a cardboard box, and the other with a basket of sock puppets.)

CHIP

The Tony-nominated Broadway Smash: WICKED!

(short pause)

As performed by sock puppets.

(ACTOR 1 puts up a GLINDA sock puppet)

GLINDA SOCK PUPPET *(singing)*

Popular

We're gonna make you popular

So it's very very shrewd to be

Very very pop-u-lar

Like me!

(ACTOR 1 puts up a second hand as the ELPHABA SOCK PUPPET)

ELPHABA SOCK PUPPET

You mean it?

GLINDA SOCK PUPPET

I do! Let's hug.

ELPHABA SOCK PUPPET

But I'm still green.

(launches into song for no reason)

I'LL TRY

DEFYING GRAVITY

(ACTOR 2 produces two FLYING MONKEY SOCK PUPPETS)

FLYING MONKEY SOCK PUPPETS

Flying monkeys attack! Flying Monkeys attack!

(The FLYING MONKEYS ATTACK, rip the GLINDA SOCK PUPPET off ACTOR 1's hand and toss it over the wall.)

JESSIE

But then we decided that idea was stupid.

(ACTOR 1 and 2 run off with puppet theatre.)

So we kept putting our heads together, which wasn't helpful. It went like this:

(Other ACTORS emerge.)

ACTOR 3

Let's do *Miss Saigon*!

CHIP

That show has a helicopter.

ACTOR 3

My uncle used to be in the air force and now he's a criminal. He could steal us a helicopter for free.

JESSIE

No.

ACTOR 4

Peter Pan.

CHIP

That involves people flying.

ACTOR 4

Oh but there's this horror version called *Peter Pain*, there's these spikes –

CHIP

Also no.

SUPER-ENTHUSIASTIC ACTOR 5

I know! We'll do the greatest play every written! HIGH SCHOOL MUSICAL.

EVERYONE

NO.

SUPER-ENTHUSIASTIC ACTOR 5

YOU'LL REGRET THIS!

JESSIE

Guys, you don't understand the –

ACTOR 6

The Lion King.

JESSIE

We don't have any money to –

ACTOR 6

The Little Mermaid.

JESSIE

There's no money to -

ACTOR 6

Spiderman!

CHIP

All right you're all stupid! We have eight dollars. We need a play we can put on for eight dollars.

ACTOR 3

Wait! I have another uncle who's a criminal!

JESSIE

How many criminal uncles do you have?

ACTOR 3

Four. But I only talk to three of them. But this uncle – he’s a white-collar criminal so he’s okay –

JESSIE (*back to the audience*)

So, luckily for us, helping us counted as community service –

CHIP

So we used our eight dollars to hire...

JESSIE

A consultant!

(*BROOKS CHARLIE, wearing a suit and an ankle monitor, enters.*)

BROOKS

How ya doin? How ya doin? Brooks Charlie. Consultant. I hear you got a cash flow problem.

CHIP

We have no cash.

BROOKS

That’s a problem.

JESSIE

So we were wondering if you could help us raise some money. Maybe organize a bake sale, or babysitting night –

CHIP

Car wash –

JESSIE

We could sell candy bars.

(*Pause. BROOKS looks at them with contempt.*)

BROOKS

What are you, children?

CHIP

...yes.

BROOKS

We ain’t gonna do any of that namby-pamby hoo-ha. You are sitting on a gold mine here: It’s called youth. You wanna do a show? We’re gonna do the biggest money-maker this school’s ever seen.

CHIP

Bigger than Beauty and the Beast?

JESSIE

Cause we made lots of money with that one.

BROOKS

With the amount of money I'm going to make you, you'll be able to buy nuclear material on the black market, lock a kid in a room with it, and mutate him into the beast. Then do the show again, and hire actual Swedish models to be the beauties.

JESSIE

There's only one.

BROOKS

In my version, there are five. Beauty, Beauty, Beauty, Beauty, Beauty, and the Beast. That's what the audience wants to see.

JESSIE

I don't know. There's something about your ankle bracelet that tells me you're untrustworthy.

BROOKS

Two things: Is Lindsay Lohan untrustworthy? And two: This school has been here for forty-seven* years and it has never turned a profit. If I ran a business that way, I would be in prison.

**or however long your school has been around*

CHIP

He makes a good point about Lindsay Lohan.

JESSIE

Maybe we could just ask the school for more money.

BROOKS

The school doesn't have any money, all right? The taxpayers are saving it to pay for the prisons that they're going to need to build for all the kids that drop outta school. Priorities. No, you need me if you're gonna be rich.

JESSIE

That's not why I'm doing theatre.

CHIP

But that is why I'm doing theatre.

BROOKS

Do we have a deal?

JESSIE

I guess.

(BROOKS steps back as JESSIE and CHIP talk to the audience)

Now some of his ideas took some getting used to:

BROOKS:

What's the first word that comes into your mind when I say this:

(pause)

William.

(pause)

Shakespeare.

CHIP

Kill me.

JESSIE

Genius.

CHIP

Genius who kills me from boredom.

BROOKS

Nope, nope, and that was a lot more than one word. Here's the word you shoulda been thinking:
Dead.

CHIP

I was gonna get to that.

BROOKS

Which means it's free, it's famous, and you can do anything you want to it and no one can sue you because he's dead. You want vampires in the show for the middle school chicks? Done. You want zombie battles? Done. You want Dancing numbers with Lady Whats-Her-Face?

JESSIE

Gaga.

BROOKS

Is she like a baby or something?

JESSIE

SHE IS A BEAUTIFUL ARIST WHO IS MISUNDERSTOOD!

BROOKS

Whatever. My point is: You will make money.

CHIP

Yeah, but the language is hard to understand.

BROOKS

Are you an idiot?

(short pause)

You didn't answer my question, are you an idiot?

CHIP

Do you seriously want me to answer that?

BROOKS

Yes.

CHIP

Sometimes.

BROOKS

Were you not listening when I said no one can sue? You don't like the language? Change it. Is it too tough to understand? How about this? Somebody gets hit in the groin. Babies laugh at that.

JESSIE

So which play should we do?

BROOKS

Hamlet. Go all in.

CHIP

I was supposed to read that in one of my classes but I didn't cause it was long and there was a movie with Mel Gibson.

JESSIE

But it's such a downer. Everyone dies in the end.

CHIP

That's what happens? I didn't watch the whole movie cause I got bored.

BROOKS

You don't like the ending? Change it. Hamlet gets the girl.

JESSIE

The girl kills herself halfway through.

CHIP

Really?

BROOKS

She was just pretending. Tack on a happy ending. Boom.

JESSIE

I'm sorry, this was a bad idea, I'm all for doing a cheap show, but we're not going to pervert the greatest play in the history of the English language just to make a little money.

CHIP

Yeah. And no one's going to come any way.

JESSIE

We have standards.

CHIP

When it comes to theatre. Not when it comes to girls.

JESSIE

I have standards when it comes to boys too.

CHIP

Dang it.

BROOKS

All right, go back to sock puppets.

CHIP

We will! And they will be awesome! But can we have that eight bucks back so we can buy socks?

BROOKS

Nope.

(He starts to leave.)

JESSIE

Can you believe that guy? Thinking we had no standards?

CHIP

Thinking we'd do Shakespeare?

BROOKS

Hey um... I've been running the numbers for a bit here – You wanna know how much profit we can make on Hamlet?

JESSIE

No.

CHIP

Double no.

BROOKS

All right. Fair enough.

CHIP

How much?

BROOKS

Four hundred thousand dollars.

CHIP

Let's do it!

JESSIE

Wait a minute, what? Are you kidding? What are we going to charge for tickets, a thousand dollars? We don't have that many seats? We can't possibly make that much.

(BROOKS saunters back over.)

BROOKS

You—have the brain of a child.

CHIP

Ha!

BROOKS

You have the brain of a monkey child.

CHIP

Dang it!

BROOKS

Who cares about tickets? We'll charge `em five bucks*, somebody's grandma will show up and we'll still ride home in gold-plated Hummers.

**(or whatever your tickets cost)*

CHIP

I like the way you think. But can I have a Monster Truck instead?

BROOKS

Yes.

CHIP

Awesome.

BROOKS

Two words: Corporate Sponsorship.

JESSIE

Okay, all right, that might bring in a little bit of money, but even if one company sponsors us, there's still no way –

BROOKS

One company? No, my friend, not one company.

JESSIE

How many companies are you talking about?

BROOKS

You ever watch NASCAR?
(They step out again.)

JESSIE

So...

BROOKS

I'm talking product placement, I'm talking commercials in the show, I'm talking different sponsors for each act – sell, sell, sell. Of course, the sponsors are going to want to change the play to fit their product, but who cares as long as they're paying?

JESSIE

Well, we'll think about it –
(BROOKS exits.)

So we spent some time searching our souls – do we sell out, or do we not sell out? Do we take our beautiful high school theatre program and subvert its ideals?
(Short pause)

(CHIP and JESSIE put on expensive sunglasses and jewelry.)

CHIP

Of course we do!
(He claps his hands, and banners unfurl around the theatre proclaiming various ridiculous corporate sponsors.)

This play will be published very soon, in the meantime, you may contact me at donzolidis@yahoo.com if you are interested in reading more.