

THE UNIVERSE AND OTHER STUFF

(A Brief and Inaccurate History of Everything)

Script, Music, and Lyrics by Stephen Murray

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STORY OF THE PLAY

This musical is a hip-hop, happenin', history lesson presenting a fresh perspective as to who, what, where, when and how this crazy planet and its people came to be. From dinosaur extinction to Columbus, from the wheel to space exploration, they're all rediscovered in this clever, chaotic, comical cataclysm of creativity. From the rockin' "Big Bang" opening number and careening toward a stirring big finale anthem, "Circle of Friends," this upbeat, tuneful score also includes numbers like "It Stinks to Be Extinct," "Me and My Wheel," "You Better Avoid the Asteroids," and "Cave, Sweet Cave."

AUTHOR'S NOTES

The Universe and Other Stuff is designed to be flexible. Cast size can range from 12 to 60 and most roles are gender neutral. If working with a large cast, it can be helpful to split up into "scene teams." For instance: Team A prepares scenes 2 and 5, Team B prepares scenes 3 and 6, team C prepares scenes 4 and 7. A small cast can easily perform this as an ensemble piece with each cast member playing a variety of roles. The entire cast should participate in scenes 1 and 8.

SETTING

Sets for each scene are not recommended. A bare stage and a backdrop with an outer space design works quite nicely.

SCENE SYNOPSIS

Scene 1: In The Beginning... In this scene, several versions of the creation of the universe are fragmented and scrambled. The tales come from Native American legends; African, Asian, and European mythology; and the Judeo/Christian story of creation from the book of Genesis. Song: "Big Bang."

Scene 2: The Solar System The Planets wander aimlessly until the Sun arrives with the great power of gravity and decides to take charge. After the Planets and Asteroids are in place, the scene then shifts to the Earth, where life is first beginning to form. Songs: "Avoid the Asteroids," "I Am the Sun," and "Nice Place You've Got Here."

Scene 3: Dinosaurs As the Carnivores are about to have the Herbivores for lunch, Comet arrives to smash into the Earth and cause the extinction of the species. The "dead" Dinosaurs then speak to the audience, lamenting their extinction with the song "It Stinks to be Extinct."

Scene 4: The First Humans The earliest Humans had much to learn about living on Earth. Tales are told of the accidental invention of applesauce, the origin of the bath, and the first human homes in caves. Songs: "Cave, Sweet Cave" and "Me and my Wheel."

Scene 5: Humans Seek Shelter This new myth tells the tale of migrating Humans in search of shelter and how they came to build the first house.

Scene 6: Inventions A tree branch is discovered by various Humans. They find various uses for the stick and hurry off to tell others of their clever inventions. A Firewood Seller comes along and collects the stick for her stockpile. Humans approach the firewood seller and a bidding war to buy the sticks starts.

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Scene 7: Explorers The Narrator tells the audience of human curiosity and the need to discover the unknown. Space travelers, Christopher Columbus and Vikings take the stage to relate the stories of their explorations. Songs: "Round, Round" and "Lief Eriksson."

Scene 8: War and Peace The entire cast splits into three armies. Each army wants to rule a piece of land. As the violence escalates from sticks and rocks to bombs, the Peace Child arrives and stops the fighting. The armies are convinced that violence is not the way to solve problems. Song: "March to War." The mysterious voices from Scene 1 return to tell us that human history is far from over. New things are happening every day. The cast joins together in the final song, "Circle of Friends."

Scene 1

IN THE BEGINNING...

CAST OF CHARACTERS

MYSTERIOUS VOICES: Flexible number.

SCIENTIST 1: A standard academic type.

SCIENTIST 2: Another.

SCIENTIST 3: Another.

SCIENTIST 4: A nutty professor type. The four disagree about the state of the universe.

(AT RISE: The cast appears on a bare stage. The lines do not belong to specific characters, they should come randomly from all parts of the stage. The scene should be mysterious and full of chaotic energy.)

ALL: In the beginning...

VOICE 1: ...there was light.

ALL: In the beginning..

VOICE 2: ...there was darkness.

ALL: In the beginning...

VOICE 3: ...there was nothing.

VOICE 4: Chaos, void...

VOICE 5: ...there was only water and the creatures that live in it.

VOICE 6: The universe was the shape of a hen's egg...

VOICE 7: ...the great god Ulgen saw mud floating on the waters.

VOICE 8: Karora lay asleep...

VOICE 9: ...Wulbari was heaven spread five feet above the Earth.

VOICE 10: In the beginning, Elohim...

VOICE 1: In the beginning, Yahweh...

VOICE 12: In the beginning, God created heaven and earth...

VOICE 13: Old Man traveled and made things...

VOICE 14: Ulgen gave the mud a spirit...

VOICE 15: The raven created the first man who lay within a pea

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pod...

VOICE 16: ...under the light was a huge stone named Quat goro...

VOICE 17: ...Sa lived in the darkness with his wife and daughter...

VOICE 18: ...God said, "Let there be Light!"

VOICE 19: ...inside the egg was a great nothing...

VOICE 20: ...the man who lived on earth kept bumping his head into Wulbari...

VOICE 21: ...then a woman fell from a torn piece of the sky...

VOICE 22: ...the first being to exist was Ra, born of the waters called Nun.

VOICE 23: ...Wulbari moved up higher and higher until he was out of everyone's way...

VOICE 24: ...the nothing grew to be a something called Phan Ku...

VOICE 25: ...and God saw that it was good.

(The chaos diminishes, things settle down a bit.)

VOICE 26: No one knows for sure just what happened "in the beginning."

VOICE 27: None of us were there, there are no eyewitness accounts.

VOICE 28: The many cultures of Earth have many legends of creation.

VOICE 29: Some quite different, others quite similar to each other.

VOICE 30: Then came the scientists, who tried to explain the universe.

(A quartet of SCIENTISTS appears, wearing lab coats, holding, slide rules, calculators, and other scientific devices.)

SCIENTIST 1: The Earth is the center of the universe. All things revolve around us.

SCIENTIST 2: The world is flat, and if you reach the edge you fall off into a great void.

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SCIENTIST 3: The only great void is between your ears. The world is round and it revolves around the sun.

SCIENTIST 4: *(With a wacky accent)* Ze universe is like a giant bowl of potato salad, with just the right blend of herbs and spices.

SCIENTIST 1: The universe is expanding.

SCIENTIST 2: The universe is shrinking.

SCIENTIST 3: The universe is in a constant state of flux.

SCIENTIST 4: Ze universe stays ze same shape. But, if you take away ze bowl we are all kaput!

VOICE 31: Centuries of research, studying to find the answer to the question, "What happened 'in the beginning'?"

VOICE 32: Finally, the great minds of the world came up with the following answer...

ALL SCIENTISTS: WE DON'T KNOW!

VOICE 33: But they came up with a theory. A theory that gave the universe an exciting start.

SONG: THE BIG BANG

NO ONE'S SURE HOW IT HAPPENED. NONE OF US WERE THERE
DID OUR UNIVERSE APPEAR OUT OF THIN AIR?
THE SCIENTISTS ALL THEORIZE
ABOUT WHERE ALL THIS STUFF CAME FROM
DID IT COME TO BE QUITE GRADUALLY?
OR DID IT BURST TO LIFE...
WITH A BIG BANG!

BANG! THERE'S A PLANET
BANG! THERE'S A STAR
BANG! THERE'S A COMET
BANG! HERE WE ARE
BANG! THERE'S A MOUNTAIN
BANG! THERE'S A SEA
BANG! THERE'S A YOU
BANG! THERE'S A ME.

THE BEGINNING IS NOT CLEAR
ALL THAT MATTERS IS WE'RE HERE
SO LET'S ALL GIVE A CHEER...
WITH A BIG BANG!

End of Freeview

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