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Ruby: The Story of Ruby Bridges

Book and lyrics by
CHRISTINA HAM

Music and lyrics by
GARY RUE

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Book and lyrics by CHRISTINA HAM

Music and lyrics by GARY RUE

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(RUBY: THE STORY OF RUBY BRIDGES)

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RUBY!: THE STORY OF RUBY BRIDGES

Book and lyrics by Christina Ham

Music and lyrics by Gary Rue

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“Originally produced by SteppingStone Theatre for Youth Development,
St. Paul, Minn., Richard Hitchler, Artistic Director.”

Ruby: The Story of Ruby Bridges premiered at SteppingStone Theatre for Youth Development in St. Paul, Minn. in Feb. 2013.

Cast:

Kellan Beck-O’Sullivan....Protestor, Marshal, White Chorus
Anthony Brown.....Black Chorus
Melrose Brown.....Black Chorus
Jonathan Buckner.....Black Chorus
Natalia CoxJoana Bridges
Alieyah Dangerfield-Schauls Diana
Alicia Dansby.....Lucille Bridges
Miranda Davis..... Protestor, White Chorus
Eponine DiattaJill
Rashaad Dinkins Milton Bridges
Anna Evans Protestor, White Chorus
Brandon Flowers.....Michael Bridges
DeMarquez Frazier Marshal, Black Chorus
Amari Gamble.....Black Chorus
Serene Lewis..... Gail Etienne, Black Chorus
T.J. McCormick..... Greg Thompson
Madison Neal..... White Chorus
Nathan ParshallProtestor, Marshal, White Chorus
Sophie Prock Yolanda Gabrielle
Amanda Schnabel Mrs. Barbara Henry
Essence Stiggers..... Older Ruby
Rhapsody Stiggers Younger Ruby
Haiden Van De Cruize..... Tessie Provost
Afiya WardLeona Tate
Amani WardBlack Chorus
A.C. Wilson..... Marshal, Black Chorus

Production Staff:

Richard Hitchler..... Director
Patricia Lacy-Aiken Music Director
Ahanti Young Choreographer
Alan Pagel..... Technical Director/Sound/Set Designer
Karin Olson..... Lighting Designer
Ross Willits Projection Designer
Alicia C. Vegell..... Costume Designer
Brooke Nelson Properties Designer
Jessica Buelow Stage Manager
Jamie Macpherson Assistant Stage Manager
Anthony Brown..... Student Assistant Stage Manager
DeMarquez Frazier Scenery Construction

Ruby:

The Story of Ruby Bridges

CHARACTERS

OLDER RUBY: 17

YOUNGER RUBY: 6

LUCILLE BRIDGES: mother

MICHAEL BRIDGES: Ruby's younger brother

MILTON BRIDGES: Ruby's older brother

JOANA BRIDGES: Ruby's younger sister

MRS. BARBARA HENRY: Ruby's teacher

YVONNE GABRIELLE: William Frantz pupil

TESSIE PREVOST: McDonogh No. 19 pupil

GAIL ETIENNE: McDonogh No. 19 pupil

LEONA TATE: McDonogh No. 19 pupil

GREG THOMPSON: McDonogh No. 19 pupil

MARSHALS

PROTESTORS/WHITE STUDENTS: Six white teenagers

PARENTS: Two parents of the protestors

JILL: Ruby's friend

DIANA: Ruby's friend

CHORUS: a mixture of races and ages

SETTING

The setting will alternate between Ruby's home, outside of William Frantz Elementary and the William Frantz Elementary classroom.

TIME

Fall 1960-Spring 1961.

PRODUCTION NOTE

The action of the play should extend beyond the stage in regard to the chorus and protestors that consist of both black and white youth. There should be a pervasive feeling of the hostility that is felt by the audience as well as Ruby and the other youth that are integrating the schools. As the play progresses, the protestors should thin out and join the students in the classroom either at William Frantz and/or McDonogh No. 19.

MUSICAL NUMBERS

1. The Den of Segregation	11
2. The Saints Are Crying.....	16
3. Melt the Troubles of This World.....	18
4. The Problem That We Live With	22
5. My Buddy Jim Crow.....	34
6. Why Can't They Leave You Alone?	48
7. When the Saints Go Marching In/ This Little Light of Mine	62

Ruby:

The Story of Ruby Bridges

SCENE ONE

(As the lights come up, they reveal the black and white photographs from a bygone era. The photos emphasize children in the early stages of the Civil Rights Movement such as the Little Rock 9, the Greensboro sit-ins and the Children's Crusade [even though the Crusade was in 1963]. A CHORUS of representatives from these key Civil Rights moments comes into view as they begin to sing.)

(#1: "The Den of Segregation")

CHORUS.

WHAT'S THIS A-SEEIN' FRUSTRATIN' THE NATION,
PEOPLE SAY THEY'RE GONNA DROWN THE CRIES
OF INTEGRATION,
OH ME, OH MY, LOOK AT WHAT'S BEEN DONE,
YOU CAN CALL IT LIKE YOU SEE IT, I CALL IT THE
DEN OF SEGREGATION, MM-HMM

SEGREGATION DIVISION, THE MATH AIN'T RIGHT,
SAY TO ME IN SUNSHINE WHAT YOU SAY TO ME
IN THE NIGHT,
OH ME, OH MY, LOOK AT WHAT'S BEEN DONE,
YOU CAN CALL IT LIKE YOU SEE IT, I CALL IT THE
DEN OF SEGREGATION, MM-HMM

WE'RE RUNNING SEGREGATION OUT OF EVERY
SOUTHERN TOWN,

LETTING EVERYBODY KNOW THAT WE'RE NOT
 GONNA DROWN,
 WE WON'T BE TORN ASUNDER, RIGHTEOUS
 THUNDER ROLLIN' DOWN,
 EVERYBODY KNOW WHATEVER GO COME BACK
 AROUND

WHAT'S THIS A-SEEIN' FRUSTRATIN' THE NATION,
 PEOPLE SAY THEY'RE GONNA DROWN THE CRIES
 OF INTEGRATION,
 OH ME, OH MY, LOOK AT WHAT'S BEEN DONE,
 YOU CAN CALL IT LIKE YOU SEE IT, I CALL IT THE
 DEN OF SEGREGATION,
 MM-HMM, MM-HMM, MM-HMM

YOU CAN CALL IT LIKE YOU SEE IT, I CALL IT THE
 DEN OF SEGREGATION

(As the CHORUS completes the opening song, the underscore of the music from this scene transitions us to our 17-year-old RUBY, who emerges from this Children's Crusade movement in her graduation gown, holding a diploma in her hand. She will be known to us as OLDER RUBY to contrast her from our YOUNGER RUBY. She addresses the audience. A CHORUS MEMBER writes on a chalkboard, "November 13, 1960. Evening." During this scene, the PROTESTORS will be assembling their signs and the other members of the CHORUS will play varied children's games like hand clapping games in the background.)

CHORUS MEMBERS #1 & #2.

Miss Mary Mack, Mack, Mack
 All dressed in black, black, black
 With silver buttons, buttons, buttons
 All down her back, back, back ...

OLDER RUBY. When I was six—the Civil Rights movement came pounding on my door.

PARENT #1 (*pointing at OLDER RUBY*). They ain't got no right to my kid's schools.

PROTESTOR #1. Should I make the letters bigger, daddy?

PARENT #1. A lot bigger.

(The lights shift to include YOUNGER RUBY, who plays hopscotch with members of the CHORUS. Once the lights shift, she becomes aware of the audience, stops playing and begins to address them.)

YOUNGER RUBY & OLDER RUBY. I'm Ruby Nell Bridges. Born September 8, 1954.

OLDER RUBY. I was born the same year the Supreme Court passed Brown vs. Board of Education—the law that called for public schools to be desegregated, “with all deliberate speed.”

YOUNGER RUBY. What segregation mean?

PROTESTOR #3 (*stops pitching marbles*). Y'all go to your schools. We go to ours.

(PROTESTOR #2 holds a brick and demonstrates how to throw it to PROTESTOR #4.)

PROTESTOR #2. When her car pulls up to the school, throw the brick at it—like this.

OLDER RUBY (*staring hard at PROTESTORS*). When I was in kindergarten I took a really hard test with a bunch of other kids to decide which of us would be the first to integrate New Orleans' school system. I passed that test.

YOUNGER RUBY. Leaving my teacher and friends at Johnson Lockett to go to William Frantz is gonna be hard. Every kid on my block goes to Johnson Lockett.

(JILL and DIANA walk over to YOUNGER RUBY.)

JILL. Have fun at school tomorrow, Ruby.

DIANA. We'll miss you.

(JILL and DIANA hug YOUNGER RUBY.)

YOUNGER RUBY. I'll miss you too, Jill and Diana.

(JILL and DIANA exit.)

OLDER RUBY. Except for going to Johnson Lockett and church—most of my family's world didn't go beyond our block. But, that was going to change. My mama reminded me of that.

LUCILLE. One day you gonna be holding a high-school diploma and maybe one from college. A piece of paper has the power to change lives.

(YOUNGER RUBY turns and goes to her bed where her mom, LUCILLE BRIDGES, waits to tuck her in. YOUNGER RUBY takes the teddy bear from her mom. OLDER RUBY watches YOUNGER RUBY climb into bed.)

OLDER RUBY. This was our two-bedroom rooming house on France that was overrun with my brothers and only sister.

(Suddenly, MICHAEL, MILTON and JOANA BRIDGES come running into the bedroom and hop into their assigned beds with YOUNGER RUBY climbing into her own bed.)

YOUNGER RUBY. Mama and Daddy work hard but we still poor.

OLDER RUBY. We didn't know it 'cause we prayed to God to make sure we had everything we needed.

(OLDER RUBY sits opposite the bed as she watches YOUNGER RUBY with LUCILLE.)

LUCILLE. Did you all say your prayers?

BRIDGES CHILDREN. Yes, ma'am!

LUCILLE. You thanked God for today and the gift that'll be tomorrow?

YOUNGER RUBY. I prayed that God bless you, daddy, my brothers and my sister, AND that I have a great first day at my new school.

(YOUNGER RUBY's siblings begin to drift into sleep as YOUNGER RUBY and LUCILLE continue to talk. OLDER RUBY watches them.)

LUCILLE. Them all good things to pray about. Now, get to sleep so you can be rested.

YOUNGER RUBY. I'm too excited to sleep, Mama.

OLDER RUBY. Tomorrow the six-year-old me was about to knock down some of the strongest doors that even Louisiana's court system couldn't keep closed to me.

LUCILLE. You got to try to sleep.

YOUNGER RUBY. Any other Negro kids gonna be at William Frantz with me?

LUCILLE. Let's see. Two children decided to stay at their old school and three other girls is going to that white school McDonogh No. 19.

YOUNGER RUBY. So, I'll be the only Negro at William Frantz?

LUCILLE. For now.

OLDER RUBY. If Mama thought I could do something like integration, then I could.

(LUCILLE kisses YOUNGER RUBY on the forehead.)

LUCILLE. Close your eyes and invite dreams in.

(YOUNGER RUBY does as she's told. As LUCILLE exits, OLDER RUBY enters and watches.)

OLDER RUBY. I tried to do as I was told—

YOUNGER RUBY. But, I'm too excited to sleep—

OLDER RUBY. Too young to know I should be scared.

YOUNGER RUBY. But, the saints knew ...

("The Saints Are Crying")

YOUNGER RUBY.

THE SAINTS ARE CRYIN',
 LOOK AT THE TEARS POOL AT MY FEET,
 THE SAINTS ARE CRYIN',
 LOOK AT THE TEARS POOL AT MY FEET,
 I'M HOLDING BACK THOSE TEARS, DEAR MAMA,
 I KNOW THIS CANNOT BE DEFEAT.

OLDER RUBY.

YOU GOT YOUR GUARD'AN ANGEL,
 WALKIN' BESIDE YOU DOWN THE STREET,
 YOU GOT YOUR GUARD'AN ANGEL,
 WALKIN' BESIDE YOU DOWN THE STREET,
 HE MAKE ME FEEL SO SAFE, DEAR SISTA,
 THAT THING CALL FEAR, IT CAN BE BEAT.

YOUNGER RUBY.

I GOT AN ACHIN', FEELIN',
 AIN'T GONE BE NO TURNIN' 'ROUND,
 I GOT AN ACHIN' FEELIN',
 AIN'T GONE BE NO TURNIN' 'ROUND,

THE SAINTS ARE CRYIN' NOW, DEAR SISTA,
GONE SEND THOSE BLUES BACK UNDERGROUND,

YOUNGER RUBY & OLDER RUBY.

THE SAINTS ARE CRYIN',
BUT THEY TEARS WON'T BE POOLIN' AT MY FEET,
THE SAINTS ARE CRYIN',
BUT THEY TEARS WON'T BE POOLIN' AT MY FEET,
I'M HOLDIN' BACK THOSE TEARS, DEAR MAMA,
I KNOW THIS WILL NOT BE DEFEAT.

(As YOUNGER RUBY rolls over to go to sleep, OLDER RUBY smiles as the lights and music from "The Saints Are Crying" transition.)

SCENE TWO

(The following morning. YOUNGER RUBY is dressed by LUCILLE. She wears a white pinafore, long blue stockings, and a big white dress as LUCILLE puts the finishing touches on YOUNGER RUBY's hair. LUCILLE wears a blue sweater and blue plaid skirt. A CHORUS MEMBER writes on the chalkboard, "November 14, 1960. Morning." Some CHORUS MEMBERS might take fall leaves, etc., and begin to form an autumnal backdrop that would be found in a classroom. Others might play childhood games including resuming the handclapping game. The PROTESTORS begin to assemble with their signs.)

CHORUS MEMBERS #1 & #2.

She asked her mother, mother, mother
For fifty cents, cents, cents
To see the elephants, elephants, elephants
Jump over the fence, fence, fence ...

OLDER RUBY. With all the fighting in the courts over integration it was nearly Thanksgiving by the time I went to school! Mama marked the occasion with a freshly starched dress.

YOUNGER RUBY. I'm gonna be real careful not to get it dirty.

(LUCILLE zips YOUNGER RUBY into her starched dress and YOUNGER RUBY ties a ribbon into her hair. OLDER RUBY primps beside her younger self. JOANA looks at YOUNGER RUBY, who spins around in her dress.)

YOUNGER RUBY. How do I look, Joana?

JOANA. Pretty!

(YOUNGER RUBY grabs her lunch pail.)

YOUNGER RUBY. I'm ready, mama.

(LUCILLE turns YOUNGER RUBY to face her.)

LUCILLE. Remember what I said might be waiting outside the school.

YOUNGER RUBY. Bad people?

LUCILLE. Angry people.

YOUNGER RUBY. Why they so mad?

(“Melt the Troubles of This World”)

LUCILLE.

DON'T KNOW WHY THERE'S FIGHTING,
DON'T KNOW WHY THERE'S CRYING ALL OVER,
DON'T KNOW WHY THERE'S AN OPEN WOUND
GOT TO MELT THE TROUBLES OF THIS WORLD

YOUNGER RUBY.

DON'T KNOW WHY THERE'S SHOUTING,
DON'T KNOW WHY THERE'S DOUBTING ALL
OVER,
DON'T KNOW WHY NO ONE SEEMS TO KNOW,
HOW TO MELT THE TROUBLES OF THIS WORLD

OLDER RUBY.

BUT I KNOW

CHORUS 1.

BUT I KNOW

CHORUS 2.

BUT I KNOW

OLDER RUBY.

PEACE AND JUSTICE ARE TRUE
AND I KNOW

CHORUS 1.

AND I KNOW

CHORUS 2.

AND I KNOW

OLDER RUBY.

THAT CHANGE WILL RING,
IF EACH VOICE WILL ONLY LIFT AND SING
DON'T KNOW WHY

CHORUS.

DON'T KNOW WHY

ALL.

THERE'S FIGHTING

OLDER RUBY.

DON'T KNOW WHY

CHORUS.

DON'T KNOW WHY

ALL.

THERE'S CRYING ALL OVER

OLDER RUBY.

BUT I KNOW CHANGE IS SURE TO COME
AND WE WILL

ALL.

MELT THE TROUBLES OF THIS WORLD
MELT THE TROUBLES OF THIS WORLD
MELT THE TROUBLES OF THIS WORLD

(The doorbell rings. The BRIDGES SIBLINGS compete for who can get to the door first by running to it.)

MILTON. I got it!

JOANA. Just 'cause you're older, Milton, I should still be able to get the door!

LUCILLE. All of you get back. I got this.

(They do as she says. LUCILLE pauses then straightens herself. She opens the door to the federal MARSHALS. YOUNGER RUBY, seeing the guns, hides behind her mother. So do her SIBLINGS, except for MILTON.)

MICHAEL. Are they here to kill us, Mama?

MILTON. Should I get Daddy?

YOUNGER RUBY *(guarding her siblings)*. Mama?!