

Rushcart Players

STUDY GUIDE

Wow! What A Century!

A Musical Play to Celebrate the Millennium

By Ruth Fost • Music by Larry Hochman





A NOTE TO PARENTS AND TEACHERS

As you can well imagine, selecting material spanning one hundred years to be compressed into a one-hour presentation has been a daunting task. We have made difficult but necessary choices and recognize that there are volumes of additional moments, episodes, headlines and issues of significance within each era. Our hope is that you will use our presentation and this study guide as a springboard for further discussion and investigation of national and global milestones of the 20th Century.

The discussion points suggested may seem advanced and indeed raise difficult questions with no easy answers. Please be assured that all topics may be made accessible and interesting to very young as well as older students. A general "menu" of project or exercise ideas is included at the end of this study guide and may be applied to any or all points. Vocabulary words and headlines of the various eras are noted for further investigation and celebration of the awesome events of the 20th Century.

In addition, a resource list, bibliography and overview of Goals 2000 Literacy in the Arts information is attached to assist you in maximizing the benefits of this arts in education event!

Ruth Fost

Wow! What A Century!

ABOUT THE SHOW

"Wow! What A Century" is a whirlwind tour of the twists and turns in history – from 1900 to the year 2000. Filled with drama and discovery, heartbreak and hope, it offers an overview of the 20th century as new frontiers were reached at breakneck speed. Travel moved from rail to road to air and outer space. Science and technology doubled man's life expectancy and brought the world into our living rooms with the flick of a switch. Radio, TV, film, phones, cars, computers – the list goes on and provides an endless story.

Pushcart personalizes this story through portraits of people who moved this century forward. Beginning with a look at family life in 1900, the play quickly becomes a collector's album that displays significant moments in an era of boundless optimism, opportunity and accomplishment.

The music in this presentation reflects the rhythms of history while scenic elements provide a fanciful look at ever changing fashion and style. A loving blend of nostalgia, fact and fun – "Wow! What A Century!" will leave a lasting impression on young audiences as they move into a new century to create new frontiers of their own.

SUMMARY

Alex Mayer is a writer. The year is 1999 and he is writing a story about the 20th Century. His grandfather, Charles Mayer, who was born in 1900 and lived to 1995 was a journalist. Grandpa Charlie's collection of photos and articles, neatly arranged in an album, provides a chronicle of the generations of his family and the events of the century. As Alex opens the album, the first photo comes to life onstage and our musical journey through the decades begins.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES AND EVENTS INCLUDED IN "WOW! WHAT A CENTURY!"

"Oh My, What A Century"

Opening number providing overview of accomplishments of the late 19th Century

1900-1920

Growing Industry in Cities
Edison and Electrification
Wright Brothers and the First Flight at Kitty Hawk
Henry Ford, Assembly Lines and the Automobile
Movies and Charlie Chaplin
Headlines: Titanic, Panama Canal and World War I

1920-1940

Women's Suffrage
The Roaring Twenties/The Varsity Drag
The Great Depression
Roosevelt and the New Deal
Scientific Advances (Penicillin)
Einstein and Relativity

1940 – 1960

World War II, Hitler and The Holocaust
The American/Allied War Effort/Iwo Jima/ "And The World Changed" (entry into the atomic age)
Sensational Crooner, Frank Sinatra/Rock 'n' Roll King, Elvis Presley
Headlines: Hoola Hoops, the Twist, the Beatles

1960 – 1980

Kennedy Inauguration
Ground Troops to Vietnam
Civil Rights Movement/LBJ, Martin Luther King and Racial Discrimination Bill
Peace Movement
Space Age & Apollo II: Neil Armstrong Steps on the Moon
Headlines: Peace Treaty in Vietnam, Disco and Saturday Night Fever, Women's Lib Movement
Headlines for Kids: Big Bird, Play Dough, Shrinky Dinks

1980 – 2000

Technology (computers, cordless and cell phones, electronic mail etc.)
Ecological Awareness (Green Peace, etc.)
World Wide Social Awareness (Live Aid, Band Aid, "We Are The World," etc.)
Music Headliners: Bob Geldof, Bob Dylan, Mick Jagger, Madonna, Michael Jackson
Headlines: Speed of Travel and Communication
Concerns: Human Rights, Diversity, Equality, Peace within and among Nations

"Wow! What A Century!" Closing number providing a summary/assessment of the 20th Century, a sense of legacy, responsibility and celebration of what is yet to come.



1900 – 1920: The New Century In America

Grandpa Charlie is a few months old as the first “photo,” taken in 1900, comes to life. We see the family preparing to leave their farm and move to the city. While it is the dawn of a new era, they feel great pride in the accomplishments of the 19th Century.

Many of their new neighbors in the city are immigrants who have come to America for religious freedom and economic opportunity. They are swept up by industry, willing to work hard, and soon become a part of progress beyond anything they might have imagined a few years earlier. Edison brings electricity and all its benefits into their lives; Ford creates the assembly line, making automobiles accessible to the average family. The Wright Brothers revolutionize travel with their flying machine. And women gain stature with their victory in the struggle for the right to vote.

These are the Ragtime years in which Grandpa Charlie is growing up. Always interested in current events, he is the “extra, extra” newspaper boy, soon to become a free-lance reporter as a young man. One of his first assignments is Women’s Suffrage: The struggle of women to gain the right to vote.

Themes for Discussion and Further Investigation*

- The impact of industry on travel; education; family life; the economy; immigration
- Similarities and differences between life in 1900 and the latter part of the 1800’s (*i.e. speed and mode of travel, life expectancy, infant mortality, number of immigrants, political strength, cultural and ethnic diversity, entertainment, communication, etc.*) today (*Draw from italicized list above*)
- Similarities and differences between the Immigrant Experience in 1900 and today
- Discuss the impact of immigration and cultural diversity on life in the United States
- Consider and discuss the remarkable phenomenon of electricity supplied to households and how it changed lifestyles in the early 1900’s (*i.e. Domestic labor was*

simplified and people had leisure time for entertainment now available by radio, gramo-phone and movies. The complex implications of this can be taken further by older students).

- Talk about human needs and behavior (values, morals, ethics as well as hopes, dreams, goals) at the turn of the century and now.
 - Discuss the vision and tenacity of those involved in the struggle for Women’s Suffrage
- *Activities, projects and drama exercises that can be applied to these topics are described on page 6 of this study guide.*

Headlines For Further Investigation

- Box Camera launched by Kodak in 1900
- Wright Brothers take to the air with first powered flight on beach at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina
- First Model A Ford sold to a physician in Michigan for \$850 in July 1903
- World Fair in St. Louis, MO. celebrates 100 years since purchase of much of Midwest from France
- Remarkable phenomenon of electricity supplied to households changes lifestyles in the early 1900’s. Domestic labor simplified and leisure time available for radio, gramophone and movie entertainment.
- Teddy Roosevelt and The Panama Canal
- Sinking of Titanic – Worst Sea



Disaster Ever

- World War I – The War To End All Wars
- The Nineteenth Amendment

Vocabulary Words

Assemble
Aviation
Centenary
Era

Experiment
Immigrant
Industry
Journalist

Pioneers
Propeller
Ragtime
Suffrage



★ 1920 - 1940: The Roaring Twenties, a Depression and Another War



While covering a rally of women campaigning for the right to vote, Charlie meets a "suffragette," Alice, who finally agrees to marry him as the roar-

ing twenties tumble into the depression years of the early thirties.

The second family portrait in 1932 marks the year Alex's father, Franklin, is born to Charlie and Alice. Frank's childhood is influenced by Roosevelt's New Deal, putting America back on its feet, scientific advances (penicillin, Einstein's theory of relativity) and, ultimately, by World War II and the atomic age.

Themes for Discussion and Further Investigation*

- Read about controversial issues, history and background in connection with Women's Suffrage
- Account for the new freedom, prosperity and carefree lifestyle of the 1920's
- Compare ragtime music of the 1900's with jazz of the 1920's; with swing. How are they similar and how are they different?
- Read about and discuss the emergence of the United States as a leading power after World War I
- Discuss implications of huge growth in transportation (car, rail and air) available to the average person
- Research off-beat rhythms of African music that spawned jazz and dances like the "Charleston" and "Lindy Hop"

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Headlines For Further Investigation

- New York Yankees sign up sensational homerun hitter Babe Ruth (George Herman Ruth)
- Marcus Garvey initiates organization "to promote race pride"
- Charlie Chaplin opens first full length film, "The Kid"

- Sacco and Vanzetti found guilty
- ★ Egyptologist (as in Archeologist) Howard Carter discovers Tomb of Tutankhamen
- Hitler arrested for attempt to overthrow Bavarian government ("Beer-Hall Putsch"), publishes "Mein Kampf," promoting Nazism and attacking Jews
- Biology teacher John Scopes arrested for teaching evolution
- African American dancer Josephine Baker is huge success in Paris
- Author F. Scott Fitzgerald acclaimed for "The Great Gatsby"
- Winnie-the-Pooh by A. A. Milne, drawn by E. H. Shepard, is introduced into children's literature; Walt Disney introduces animated Mickey Mouse
- Lindbergh makes first solo flight across the Atlantic



- Insulin used successfully; Penicillin discovered, by chance, by Alexander Fleming

- Dawn of Television

- Mahatma Gandhi introduces peaceful methods of protest to effect change

- Recession and unemployment at all time high, leading to depression; Dust storms across Midwest destroy crops and livelihood of farmers

★ Vocabulary Words

| | | |
|------------|------------|----------|
| Convert | Journalist | Minority |
| Depression | Mass | Racism |
| Economy | Matter | Theory |
| Energy | | |

★ 1940 - 1960's: War Years, Rebuilding the World and a Leisure Boom

Following in his father's footsteps, Frank also becomes a newsboy and then a reporter, with a special interest in photography. He covers stories such as Frank Sinatra's sensational opening at the Paramount Theatre in New York and Elvis Presley's new style of music in the 1950's.

In the early 1960's Frank begins covering political events including the Inauguration of John F. Kennedy. It is here that he meets a fellow reporter, Julia Gordon, who will one day become his wife. So, while some folks are busy Hoola Hooping, doing the Twist and screaming for

the Beatles, Frank and Julie cover and write about the war in Vietnam and the Civil Rights Movement in the South.

**Activities, projects and drama exercises that can be applied to these topics are described on page 6 of this study guide.*

Themes for Discussion and Further Investigation* ☆

- Circumstances and issues that led to World War II (i.e. economic conditions in Europe and throughout the world; Political conditions in Germany in 1930's; National pride in Germany, etc.)
- **Hitler and the Holocaust (i.e. history of anti-Semitism in Germany; Scape-goat and "bully" tactics of Hitler and the Nazi Party, etc.)
- **Examine and define the following terms: stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination or racial bias, persecution, violence, genocide. Explore ways in which these terms applied to the Holocaust. Explore ways in which they exist in the world today. In our everyday lives. What can we do as individuals to eliminate the behavior these terms suggest? What can we do as a nation? As children? As parents? As group leaders or educators?
- Albert Einstein's lament, "... and the world changed forever," when the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima is filled with sadness, regret and fear for the future of mankind. Explore and discuss/debate the specifics of atomic warfare in World War II and the implications of its use following that era and the future.
- Define and read about the implications of the post war "baby boom" and the "leisure boom" of the 1950's (i.e. recovery from effects of World War II, improved methods of mass production, prosperity of national economies, etc.)
- Listen and compare music of Frank Sinatra and Elvis Presley. How did they and their music affect audiences? How were they different? Similar? How did they influence music through the decades?
- The meaning and significance of John F. Kennedy's inaugural message, "... ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country." ☆



Headlines for Further Investigation

- Japanese Americans rounded up and sent to detention camps following Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1942
- "Casablanca" starring Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman is hit for movie goers
- Women play vital role in war effort
- Anthropologist Leaky discovers tools used in Stone Age
- Wartime forces of science and industry together speed research and progress (radar, computer science, atomic fission, jet aircraft, etc.)
- Iron curtain divides Europe
- Israel becomes a state ☆ ☆
- War in Korea
- TV age begins – Marshall McLuhan predicts electronic communication will turn world into "global village"
- Scientists discover structure of DNA
- Supreme Court overturns "separate but equal" law
- McCarthy communist witch hunt era ends
- Berlin Wall divides East Berlin (communist) from West Berlin (democratic)
- USSR launches Sputnik – first satellite in outer space
- Rachel Carson publishes "Silent Spring" – provocative book on environmental concerns
- First troops sent to Vietnam; war divides nation
- *Parents, Teachers, Students: Add headlines of your choosing*

Vocabulary Words

| | |
|---------------|-------------|
| Allies | Injustice |
| Anti-Semitism | Nationalism |
| Bully | Tyranny |
| Croon | Victim |
| Genocide | |

**If you are planning or would like to plan a unit on Holocaust Education, Pushcart Players can provide further programming, resources and support materials. Contact Pushcart at 973-857-1115

1970's - 1999: Protest, Peace and Age of Information



Frank and Julie are among the first "hippies" and are married during a peace march in the 1960's. The third family portrait is taken in 1969 shortly after Alex, the writer of this story, is born. His growing up years include not only Big Bird, Shrinky Dinks and Captain Kangaroo, but major advances in science, travel and technology.

Alex marries his high school sweetheart, Jennifer Simon, in the mid-1990's. The final family portrait is taken in 1999, marking the birth of Alex and Jenn's son, Charles, named, of course, for Grandpa Charlie. The closing song reviews the events of the century and looks towards the achievements yet to come by young Charlie's generation in the 21st Century.

Themes for Discussion and Further Investigation*

- The "Space Race" and implications of the USSR being the first to send a satellite into space; The U.S. being the first to send a man to walk on the moon. The meaning of Buzz Aldrin's words: "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind."
- The war in Vietnam: What was its purpose? Why was it costly and ultimately futile? What were the after effects for the South Vietnamese? For the U.S.?
- Discuss the meaning behind slogans such as: "War is unhealthy for children and other living things." "Wars will cease when men refuse to fight." "Be brave. Risk peace."
- The 1970's launched the current era known as "the microchip age." Discuss the meaning of this phrase and the implications for our lifestyle today and in the future. What advantages do we have today compared to the turn of the century. The 1930's? 1940's, etc. What disadvantages?
- Discuss the impact of music on social issues and world problems (i.e. "Feed The World," Live Aid, Band Aid, etc.)
- Discuss the importance of the fight for the planet which began in the 1980's and continues today (i.e. long term exploitation of natural resources such as forests, wildlife, rivers, ozone layers, etc.)
- Interpret Mahatma Ghandi's words: "We don't inherit the earth from our parents – we borrow it from our children."



*Activities, projects and drama exercises that can be applied to these topics are described on page 6 of this study guide.

Headlines for Further Investigation

- The feminist fight forges ahead 
- Nixon is first president to resign
- Seventies sounds include disco, reggae, pop, punk and glitter rock
- Personal stereo (walkman) is launched by Sony
- Nuclear accident at Three Mile Island power plant in Pennsylvania
- Ronald Reagan elected president in landslide victory. He proposes "Star Wars" defense technology
- Fairy tale wedding of Prince Charles to Lady Diane Spencer
- Virus causing AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) is identified (1984)
- Titanic wreck is found
- Devastating earthquake in San Francisco
- Cold War (nuclear arms race between U.S. and Soviet Union) ends. Berlin Wall falls and communism topples.
- Gulf War liberates Kuwait from Iraqi occupation
- Peace accord signed by Rabin and Arafat offering promise of peace in middle east
- Ethnic conflict in Rwanda erupts into violence causing unprecedented loss of lives
- Apartheid ends in South Africa
- Music technology revolution of the nineties brings high quality digital sound and new wave of musical excitement. Sounds include rap, country, ragga, grunge and pop.
- New millennium promises technology rivaling science fiction: Antimatter for fuel, radios that need neither electricity nor batteries, aerodynamic hotels, computer-controlled cars that reach speeds of 302 mph and can change shape and color, International Space Station (ISS) for a permanent orbiting research complex.
- Add your headlines here!

Vocabulary Words

| | | |
|-------------|-----------|--------|
| Accord | Apartheid | Ethnic |
| Aerodynamic | Equality | Global |





Activities, Projects and Drama Exercises that can be Applied to Topics Included in this Study Guide



Highlights of the Century

- Write a magazine article about one of the topics for discussion
- Draw a picture or write a short story, essay or poem about one of the discussion points
- Interview a family member, friend or neighbor who was growing up during one of the eras highlighted in this play (i.e. World War I, World War II, the Great Depression years, the Rock 'n' Roll Fifties, the Swinging Sixties, etc.) Give a news report on your interview in class.
- Role-Playing Exercise: Have students work in pairs. One student pretends to be living in a particular era (may be assigned or chosen). The other student interviews that person for a TV talk show. May be presented on a given day or over time in class.
- Design a poster advertising one of the new inventions or products of technology that became available over the course of the century.
- Choose or assign a well-known scientist or inventor from "Wow! What A Century!" (i.e. Ford, Edison, Einstein, Fleming) or from 20th century history in general. Have students describe or report the invention or discovery as though they were that person.
- Classroom or school project: Create a mural, collage or quilt with each student or class taking one unit of 20th century events (i.e. assign by decades and events within or by subjects such as music styles, political events, science, technology, etc.) Hang finished product in classroom or hallway.
- School project: Plan a "20th Century in America" Festival. Students can dress in styles of the eras, bring in popular foods of the various times, hang posters of events and products available through the decades, design booths with games, toys, activities, music, art, entertainment of the past, etc. Projections of life in the next century could be fun and an interesting creative challenge as well.
- Create family albums by having students select events of interest and family pictures (if possible) to go along with the events.



- This concept can be illustrated by suggesting that students imagine an orchestra or band in which everyone plays just one note on the same instrument. Or a rainbow that has only one color. Draw a picture or write a poem or story about a world in which everyone looks exactly the same, wears the same color, eats the same food, etc. Now draw a picture (or write a poem or story) about a diverse world. What are some of the things that your cultural heritage contributes to American life today? What are some of the contributions of other cultures?

Do a research project entitled "Rainbow Heroes of the 20th Century" in which students select a famous person (artist, politician, scientist, sports figure, etc.) whose heritage is culturally diverse. After finding out as much as possible about that person, have students write a story, poem, play or simply tell about that person in class. This project could also become a mural, magazine or assembly presentation.

- Plan an "International Festival" in which students share foods, costumes/clothing, musical instruments, music, artwork, crafts, designs and other significant aspects of their heritage.
- For further ideas and insights to promote harmony, awareness and appreciation of cultural diversity write to Editor, "Teaching Tolerance," 400 Washington Ave. Montgomery, AL 36104 to receive free copies of "Teaching Tolerance," a colorful and well informed magazine/resource guide for teachers.

Looking Toward the Future

- "Publish" a book or magazine within your class or school by collecting a short essay or poem from each student that begins with "I hope that life in the next century will. . ." Encourage students to submit artwork to illustrate the written work.
- "If I could Re-Write History" Exercise: This can be written, oral or illustrated. It could even be in the form of a play, dance or debate. Students may select any one of the many events in 20th century history that are covered in the play (or additional headlines) and present their thoughts and ideas that might have changed the course of history.

On Ethnic Diversity

- Discuss the fact that America has historically been strengthened by contributions made by culturally diverse individuals and groups, particularly in the last century.



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Resource List For Goals 2000 Objectives

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Pushcart is a member of Actors' Equity Association, Alliance for Arts Education NJ, ArtPride, ARTSmart, Arts Council of the Essex Area, Arts Council of the Morris Area, Coalition for Arts & Humanities, Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation, NJ Theatre Group, Producer's League of Theatre for Young Audiences.



Funding for Pushcart Players' programming is made possible in part by ADP Foundation; Allergy Consultants, PA.; Bell Atlantic - NJ; Fylstra Wright & Co.; Metropolitan Life Foundation; National Starch & Chemical Foundation, Inc.; New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State; The Prudential Foundation; Puffin Foundation Ltd.; The Ann E. Talcott Fund/First Union National Bank, Trustee and numerous individuals.

YOUR NOTES:

