In 1990 renowned cartoonist and children's book illustrator William Steig published *Shrek*, the story of a young ogre who leaves home and meets the ogre of his dreams. The central character's name is derived from the German/Yiddish word 'schreck', meaning 'fear' or 'terror'. Eleven years later Dreamworks released the feature film of Shrek, voiced by such stars as Eddie Murphy, Cameron Diaz, and Mike Myers in the title role. The film went on to earn a worldwide $500 million gross, and won an Oscar for 2001’s Best Animated Film. The original was followed by *Shrek 2* in 2004, *Shrek the Third* in 2007, and 2010’s *Shrek Ever After*.

In 2002 lyricist David Lindsay-Abaire and director Jason Moore began work on the concept for a stage musical. Composer Jeanine Tesori came on board in 2004, and the trio presented the first reading in August of 2007. Out of town try-outs began at Seattle's Fifth Avenue Theatre in the fall of 2008; after some extensive changes, it opened in December of that same year and ran until January 2010. At the time it was the one of the most expensive musicals in Broadway history.

In a 2008 interview with Fifth Avenue’s producing Artistic Director David Armstrong, Jeanine Tesori had this to say about making Shrek into a musical:

“You start with the characters – like any show, if you start with who the characters are and what they want and what world they are part of – everything has to follow from there. It’s also truly the hero’s journey... Shrek sets out on a journey to find out who he is in the world and that’s the story we wanted to find. What this story has at its center is a beating heart – about a guy who wants to find love. Obviously the humor is there and we all love the irreverence, but it’s also an emotionally driven story and, at the end of the day, those are the best things in a musical”.

**ABOUT**

We have rated Shrek PG for some fairytale violence, mild language and crude humor.

**Language** – Jackass is used twice, hell is used three times; there is an entire song about flatulence.

**Violence** – Townsfolk chase and threaten young Shrek with pitchforks and tools, and he is tied to a stake to be burnt; Gingy is tortured by Lord Fahrquad; Fahrquad sings about torture and the guillotine.
CHARACTERS

SHREK - Our story’s title character. A big, green, terrifying ogre who lives alone on a swamp. He embarks on a journey to rid his land of fairytale creatures and, along the way, falls in love with Fiona. Begins as a grumpy hermit, but reveals his layers and eventually becomes the hero.

FIONA - The beautiful princess of Far Far Away, she transforms into an ogre every night when the sun sets. Rescued by Shrek and eventually falls in love with him. Quirky and blunt, she is not an ordinary princess.

DONKEY - A talking donkey who joins Shrek on the run from Farquaad’s guards. Quite the chatterbox, he is not deterred by Shrek’s looks and practically forces himself into his good graces. Easily frightened and pushy, but possesses a big heart.

LORD FARQUAAD - The comically short, ruthless ruler of Duloc. He is in search of a princess to marry so that he can become king. Has an intensely unfair bias against fairytale creatures that stems from a resentment of his father. Self-absorbed, lonely, and cruel.

DRAGON - A dragon that has been charged with guarding Princess Fiona in her isolated castle. She eventually falls in love with Donkey and attempts to keep him there forever. Imposing and flirtatious, but tired of her job as the glorified baby-sitter.

GINGY - A gingerbread man initially kidnapped by Lord Farquaad. His wit and resolution help him both avoid trouble and inspire the rest of the fairytale creatures. Puppet.

PINOCCHIO - The leader of the fairytale creatures. He is an animated puppet whose nose grows every time he lies. Plenty of sass with a penchant for lying.

ENSEMBLE - Fairytale Creatures (Big Bad Wolf, Three Little Pigs, White Rabbit, Fairy Godmother, Peter Pan, Wicked Witch, Ugly Duckling, Three Bears, Mad Hatter, Humpty Dumpty, Elf, Dwarf, Three Blind Mice); Angry Mob; Happy People; Guards; Knights; Rats

SYNOPSIS

ACT ONE

Opening like a storybook, our musical adventure begins with a large ogre named Shrek narrating the story of his seventh birthday. As he narrates, the storybook comes to life and we see Shrek’s parents telling the seven-year old version of himself that it is time for him to venture out into the world on his own. As he does, his parents’ warning that everyone will hate him because of his hideous looks proves to be true, and he is forced to live alone, embittered, and angry in a swamp. Before our eyes Shrek grows up, the adult ogre now stepping into the story he was previously narrating (Big Bright Beautiful World). His solitude is interrupted one day, however, when all of the Fairytale Creatures show up at his swamp, banished there by Lord Farquaad (Story of My Life). Not at all pleased to have his home invaded, Shrek decides to travel to see Lord Farquaad in order to regain the privacy of his swamp (The Goodbye Song). Along the way, he rescues a talking Donkey from Farquaad’s guards, and, after much begging on the Donkey’s part (Don’t Let Me Go), Shrek reluctantly allows him to tag along.

Meanwhile, in Duloc, the surprisingly diminutive Lord Farquaad, is torturing Gingy, the Gingerbread Man, into revealing the whereabouts of a princess he wishes to marry so that he may finally be a true king. Gingy claims Princess Fiona is locked in a nearby tower, surrounded by lava and a dragon. Lord Farquaad decides to have a festival to draw the name of a Duloc citizen that will have to fetch Princess Fiona for him. As the crowd gathers (Welcome to Duloc/What’s Up Duloc?), Shrek and Donkey arrive and Lord Farquaad demands that in return for the deed to the swamp Shrek must find and bring back Princess Fiona.

While Shrek and Donkey set off, the lights come up on seven-year old Fiona, stuck in her castle and dreaming that she will one day be rescued by one a prince (True Love’s First Kiss).
As she grows into a teenager, and then a headstrong woman, she never loses her faith in her fairy tales (I Know It’s Today). As Shrek and Donkey continue on their journey, Shrek becomes increasingly annoyed with Donkey’s constant chattering (Travel Song). However, a reluctant friendship has begun to form. After crossing the lava-bridge, and arriving at the castle, Shrek sets off alone to rescue Fiona while Donkey encounters a ferocious female Dragon (Forever). When Shrek reaches Fiona, she tries and fails to get him to play out romantic scenarios similar to all those in her storybooks, and at last he is forced to drag her off. Reunited with Donkey, they must then escape angry Dragon. Fiona is thrilled to finally have her rescuer fighting for her (This Is How A Dream Comes True). Through this, their pasts are revealed to one another, and a friendship blooms.

Meanwhile, back in Duloc, Lord Farquaad plans his wedding, and he reveals his own sordid heritage (The Ballad of Farquaad). As Shrek and Fiona’s newfound camaraderie grows into love, Donkey insists, with the help of the Three Blind Mice, that Shrek should tell Fiona how he feels (Make a Move). Before he can follow through the sun begins to set, and Fiona once again rushes away to bed. Refusing to give up, Donkey goes to the barn where Fiona has retreated only to discover that she turns into an ogress at night due to a curse placed on her as a child. She tells Donkey that only a kiss from her true love will return her to love’s true form. Alone, Shrek tries to summon the courage to express his feelings (When Words Fail). When he finally goes to Fiona, he overhears the end of her conversation with Donkey, completely misunderstanding her description of herself as an ugly beast as a reference to him. Hurt, he storms off.

The next day, transformed back to her human form, Fiona decides to tell Shrek about her curse (Morning Person (Reprise)). When Fiona tries to explain, however, Shrek rebuffs her. Farquaad and his army approach to claim an upset Fiona, who not only agrees to the marriage, but also insists that it take place before sunset. Donkey tries to appeal to Shrek, but Shrek rejects him, angry that Donkey would talk about him with Fiona behind his back, and declares he will return to his swamp, alone (Build A Wall).

Elsewhere, while the Fairytale Creatures, evicted from the swamp, head for their new home, they decide they’ve had it with Farquaad’s discriminatory treatment (Freak Flag). With a newfound confidence, they decide to return to Duloc and take on Lord Farquaad. Back at the swamp, Donkey and Shrek argue until Shrek is convinced that Donkey and Fiona weren’t talking about him. Each one forgives the other, and Donkey convinces Shrek that Fiona cares about him. They rush to Duloc, and Shrek is able to stop the wedding just in the nick of time. He finally finds the words to express his feelings, declaring his love to and for Fiona (Big Bright Beautiful World (Reprise)). Caught between love and her desire to break the curse, Fiona tries to escape the event, but the exiled Fairytale Creatures storm the wedding and protest their banishment. Amidst the protests, the sun sets, turning Fiona back into an ogress in front of everyone. Farquaad is disgusted, but insists the marriage is already binding, claiming he will lock Fiona in a tower and continue to rule as Duloc’s true King. Shrek whistles for the Dragon and she swoops in, destroying Farquaad in one fiery breath. Finally free of Farquaad, Shrek and Fiona admit their love for one another and share a kiss. Fiona’s curse is broken and she takes her true form: an ogress. At first, she is ashamed of her looks, but Shrek declares that she is still beautiful. Shrek and Fiona begin a new life together, as everyone celebrates what makes them special (This Is Our Story). They all live happily ever after (I’m a Believer).