



# SPACE SCHOOL MUSICAL

HOW TO  
PRODUCE  
THE  
PLAY

**A KidTribe Production**

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

**Space School Musical** is a partnership between NASA's Discovery and New Frontiers Programs and KidTribe. Kellee McQuinn created, wrote and directed the musical. Kellee and Dr. Gale K. Gorke created and wrote the Activity Guide. Shari Asplund, Discovery and New Frontiers Education and Outreach Manager, oversaw development and production of the musical and the accompanying guides.

Learn more @ <http://discovery.nasa.gov> and <http://kidtribe.com>

# HOW TO PRODUCE THE PLAY



## THE PRODUCTION

We've designed this to be as intuitive as possible, requiring next to no producing, directing or performing experience.

In the simplest terms, just watch the DVD over and over and listen to the music over and over until the performers know their parts, their songs, and their dances. The students themselves can direct, act, make the costumes, etc.

You may choose to do the entire play or a few selected numbers... it all depends on what works for you, your students and your structure.

Included in this section of the guide is *How to Make the Set*, *How to Make the Costumes*, *Useful Theatrical Terms*, *Lyrics*, and many more helpful tidbits to make this process as easy as possible. We have designed this to be so user friendly that children themselves, without the assistance of any adults, have mounted full productions of their own.

## MUSIC

In using the provided music CD, performers can "lip-sync" along with the original cast recording or they can perform it live, with their own voices. If they're performing live, we highly recommend using a microphone, either hand-held wireless or headset microphones.

# HOW TO PRODUCE THE PLAY



## CASTING

This is a tricky subject because KidTribe's philosophy is to create opportunities for children's self-esteem, self-expression, interests and talents to soar. We don't believe in competitive environments and do not ever want to turn away a willing, excited child. However, not everyone can be a "star"... and some children clearly have more talent in certain areas than others...

But do bear in mind that first and foremost this exercise is designed to be a memorable learning experience for its participants, integrating arts and academics to help foster a new way of learning. With that, we don't recommend competitive auditions where kids get turned away... this might damage their confidence, dull their curiosity and dampen their enthusiasm.

We recommend that everyone who tries out gets a part... or is an understudy with a guaranteed performance. You can break up some of the songs (like Orbital Mechanics - Gravity, MoonDance, the Meteor-Wrong Blues, The Asteroid Gang, and We're the Scientists) to include even more cast members... be creative!

## REHEARSALS

Depending on your schedule, how many musical numbers you will be doing, how intricate the production is, and how much of a perfectionist you are, there are many different options for rehearsing. We recommend a minimum of at least 3 - 5 one-hour rehearsals per musical number with 2 - 3 final run-throughs and a dress rehearsal before the "big performance." Since there are 9 numbers in the show, this could prove to be time consuming, so just do your best.

# HOW TO PRODUCE THE PLAY



## AUDITIONS

To get a good grasp of ability levels, we recommend doing something simple and consistent for auditions.

For instance, use PLANETARY POSSE for everyone auditioning. For the girls, print out the CHORUS and VENUS' first verse. For the boys, print out the CHORUS and MARS' first verse. Practice it all together as a big group and then give them some time alone to work with it. Using the KAREOKE TRACK, have them come in one by one and sing / rap the part. Encourage them to have fun with it, to make it their own, to take a risk... remind them that it's NOT about memorization - that's what rehearsal is for... it's OK for them to read from the paper. Just help them do it with personality.

For the dancing portion, take the first half of ORBITAL MECHANICS - GRAVITY and see how they move. Again, it's not about getting it perfect. It's about having fun and getting a feel for individual styles.

What you should be looking for:

- personality
- annunciation & diction
- enthusiasm & stage presence
- ability to take direction
- good singing & speaking voice
- unique style
- rhythm & coordination
- positive attitude
- dancing ability
- humor

And then just trust your judgment! Casting is NEVER easy... take lots of notes if necessary and "trust your gut." Create opportunities for everyone to be featured so no feelings are hurt.

If some of your students don't want to be in the play, for whatever the reason, assign them to be a valuable member of the CREW. This is a group effort where everyone is important.

# HOW TO PRODUCE THE PLAY



## DANCES & STAGING

You can follow along exactly to the choreography and gestures in the video or you can create your own (or have the students create their own) original dances. We do recommend sticking with the choreography for *Big Bang*, since it was purposely designed to help kinesthetic learners better understand our solar system, how everything orbits around our Sun and the correct placement of the planets and other celestial bodies.

## PERFORMANCE

### Things to remind your cast about performing:

- Smile! Smile! Smile! Energy! Energy! Energy!
- Practice makes perfect!
- Set and check your props before the show.
- If you make a mistake or something goes wrong, just keep going and don't get flustered... if you keep smiling, the audience won't ever notice!
- No talking, laughing, cheering or goofing around in the wings or backstage (the audience may hear you!)
- No eating or drinking anything (except water) while in costume.
- No gum chewing on stage.
- Support each other and give one another compliments for their great performances!
- Above all, the show must go on!

**Break a leg everyone!**

# HOW TO MAKE THE COSTUMES



## THE BASICS

The costumes were designed so they can be easily replicated, even on a shoe-string budget. We encourage the students themselves to have an active part of their costume's creation.

If you really have NO budget at all, then everyone can wear white T-shirts with the name of their character hand-written on the front with only accents of corresponding color.

The following is how we created the looks for the DVD. Please feel free to add your own flair and challenge the students to bring their own creativity to their costumes. Whenever possible, use the students' personal clothes. Just make sure the costumes are all accounted for and hanging up days before the show... there's nothing worse than a performer who forgot their costume. Also have an iron or a steamer ready so everything looks pressed, nice and neat.

## HANNAH

Pajamas. Preferably with stars, moons or something representing her love for space. She should wear socks, slippers or ballet slippers to protect her feet.

# HOW TO MAKE THE COSTUMES



## PLANETARY POSSE

**SUN:** Yellow. The more old school hip-hoppy, the better. You can make the "gold" medallion that says "SUN" from painted cardboard and string. Yellow headband or bandana. A hat will cause too much shadow on the face.

**MERCURY:** Grey. Either T-shirt or hoodie. Print or hand-write "MERCURY" on front. Dark sunglasses. Jeans and dark sneakers.

**VENUS:** Orange. Cheerleading uniform or something sporty, cute and girly. Print or hand-write "VENUS" on front of shirt.

**EARTH:** Blue and green tie-dye. Blue or green skirt or jeans. Sandals. Very hippy and natural look. Maybe a flower behind her ear, a peace sign painted on her cheek. Print or hand-write "EARTH" on front of shirt.

**MARS:** Red. Football jersey or some kind of sporty shirt. For shoulder padding we used hockey pads from a used sporting good store. They're much less expensive & cumbersome than football pads. Jeans. Sneakers. Print or hand-write "MARS" on front of shirt.

**JUPITER:** Orange, Red, Yellow & Blue Stripes. Create a fun mismatch of colors, textures and styles. Print or hand-write "JUPITER" on front of shirt.

**SATURN:** Pale yellows, pinks, grays. For fun, play up the "rings" with striped tube socks, striped head and wrist bands. And of course, a hula hoop! Print or hand-write "SATURN" on front of shirt.

# HOW TO MAKE THE COSTUMES



## PLANETARY POSSE

**URANUS:** Bright Blue. Basketball uniform or something sporty or hip-hoppy. Print or hand-write "URANUS" on front of shirt.

**NEPTUNE:** Light Blue. Surfer look. T-shirt. Board shorts (preferably with a water motif). Flip-flops. Print or hand-write "NEPTUNE" on front of shirt.

**PLUTO:** Browns, grays and tans. The layered skate-boarding look works well. Print or hand-write "PLUTO" on front of shirt.

## ORBITAL MECHANICS - GRAVITY

Since these dancers don't have "characters" per-se, we went for a Janet Jackson "Rhythm Nation" military look. Regardless of the look you choose, all the dancers should be uniform because this is a true ensemble piece.

To make the costumes that look like the ones in the video, it's easier than it looks:

- Kids will wear black long sleeve shirts or turtlenecks and black sweatpants. Black hat is optional.
- Buy a couple yards of inexpensive gold sparkly fabric or any inexpensive shiny fabric that is easy to work with and cut straight.
- Buy a product similar to "Stitch Witchery" - it's an adhesive bonding strip that you place between the two fabrics and iron on.
- We cut out circles for buttons, long strips for the military stripes. Have fun with your symmetrical geometric patterns!

# HOW TO MAKE THE COSTUMES



## MOONDANCE

These costumes can be as elaborate or simple as you want. We opted for the Diana Ross & the Supremes look for the girl moons and a Michael Jackson / Billie Jean look for the boys.

### ALL MOONS:

- White T-shirt with the word "MOON" printed or written on the front.
- For the Girl Moons, we "bedazzled" their shirts by gluing sequins to the front

### GIRL MOONS:

- White afro wig, or a white headband or even make a cute "halo" effect from a paper plate strapped to the back of the girls' heads.
- White skirt or leggings. White shoes.
- White boa (optional... but it really does add a lot)
- White long gloves

### BOY MOONS:

- White pants or sweatpants
- White shoes
- White hats or white headbands or even bandanas
- White glove on right hand

# HOW TO MAKE THE COSTUMES



## METEOR-WRONG BLUES

We opted for a navy blue and a silver motif again, you can be as elaborate or simple as you would like. To achieve the look created on the DVD:

- Navy blue t-shirt. Print or hand-write 'METEOR' with glitter paint.
- Navy blue leggings or tights
- Sparkly silver or silver lame' skirt
- For simple skirt design, lightly fringe the outer perimeter on each side and then simply cut a circle in the middle of the fabric to make the waist of the skirt
- Or lightly fringe only what will be the bottom of the skirt and simply wrap the skirt around the waste, tying it on the side and securing it with safety pins

### CAPE:

- Using the same fabric as a skirt, fringe the entire bottom half of the cape to give it a streamer effect and be sure to keep it at a decent length where the performer cannot trip on it

### ACCESSORIES:

- A silver foil wig found at local parties stores
- Or a simple tiara will do
- Sparkly leg warmers (get two pair and put them on her arms; too!)
- Silver or dark shoes

# HOW TO MAKE THE COSTUMES



## STAND-UP COMET

This guy needs to look like a comic from the 1970's show the Gong Show or straight off The Catskills. If that's not an option, then looking more like Pee Wee Herman would work as well. Or if you are going to use the karaoke track, in which case you can have the performer's costume look like the famed "Unknown Comic" with a brown paper bag over his head with eyes and mouth cut out.

We recommend; a baby blue tux and bow tie or at least slacks, a jacket, and a bow tie. Enlarge a "hello, my name is..." sticker, write the word "COMET" on it & stick it to his lapel.

### **Accessories:**

- Hair extension piece attached to hair to create the mullet look of the comets tail

## ASTEROID GANG

These guys are the epitome of the 'punk look'.

- Shirts: Black t-shirts with the word "ASTEROIDS" printed or hand written on the front. We recommend using the anarchy symbol for the A.
- Black jeans
- Black shoes
- **Accessories:**
  - o Spikes or bandanas around the neck or wrists
  - o Black nail polish
  - o Spiky Mohawk hair

# HOW TO MAKE THE COSTUMES



## WE'RE THE SCIENTISTS

Because these are well-known figures from history, these costumes may be a little more traditional and elaborate. Just do your best and be creative!

### ISAAC NEWTON:

- White collared shirt hopefully with ruffles. If this is not an option, then a turtle neck will do.
- Black knickers or pants rolled up just below the knee
- Black Robe or Cape
- Accessories:
  - o White knee socks
  - o Black shoes
  - o White long-haired wig, white spray or baby powder in hair

### GALILEO:

- White collared shirt hopefully with ruffles. If this is not an option, then a turtle neck will do.
- Black pants
- Black Robe or Cape
- Accessories:
  - o Long, brown beard
  - o Telescope

### ALBERT EINSTEIN:

- Turtle neck in blue, green or burgundy
- Tweed sport coat (optional)
- Tweed khaki or brown pants
- Accessories:
  - o White, short, wild-haired wig, spray painted hair, or baby powdered
  - o White bushy eye-brows and mustache (Caution: using spirit gum as an adhesive can burn the skin)

# HOW TO MAKE THE SET



## GETTING STARTED

This production can be done with absolutely no set or a very limited set. While making the DVD, we chose to go very minimally so that it would still be dynamic and entertaining to look at, but wouldn't be intimidating to replicate. If you choose to create a set for your production, the following tips will hopefully be helpful.

## HANNAH'S BEDROOM

Although we constructed an intricate breakaway bedroom to create a dramatic effect for when she 'travels to space', it's not at all necessary. Her bedroom can simply have a small bed or even a desk downstage or off to the side and remain there the entire time... or you can opt for a virtual bedroom with no set at all. That's the magic of theater!

\*\*\*If you opt for the "break-away bedroom," which is a magical effect, be sure to secure any furniture (ie: bed or desk) to the walls. The entire set (walls, furniture, etc) needs to be on wheels and fastened with ropes for pulling. We found it helpful to have a window in the center with black cloth covering behind the panes and white Christmas lights poking through, giving a starlight effect. The dividing split should be dead center. Fasten if needed, to avoid an obvious crack in the set. The stage-hands who are pulling the set must be well rehearsed... it's harder than it looks to get it right!

# HOW TO MAKE THE SET



## SPACE

### Night Sky

To give the effect of the stars, we suggest pinning small white Christmas lights to the back curtains. It's best to not have the wires showing (If possible use black sheets with holes and have lights poking through them, this will eliminate unsightly wires. Then you can attach the black sheet to the wall). We do not recommend the use of blinking or colored lights.

## PLATFORMS

We chose to use three levels of platforms, each about a foot high, 2-3 feet deep, totaling 12-19 feet long. Although not necessary, these platforms create level changes and make it more appealing for choreography and blocking. We recommend black uncarpeted platforms with black draping across the front and white rope lights secured to the edge of each platform for the performer's safety and visual appeal.

We do not recommend using the platforms in Big Bang because of the circular choreography. If possible, have the scientists perform **in front of a closed curtain** while the platforms are (quietly) being removed from the stage.

## STAND-UP COMET

To add to the "stand-up" effect, we created a painted brick wall background on flats for the Comet's routine and added a cabaret table and chair for Hannah to sit on. Again, this is not necessary... a simple spot-light on the Comet will do... or he can just come on the stage and do his thing.

# PROPS LIST



## WHATCHA NEED

### HANNAH:

- Solar system model
- Broken solar system model
- Einstein bobble head
- Paints, paint brushes, school books

### SUN:

- Large marching band drum (for Big Bang number)

### MERCURY:

- Sun glasses

### VENUS:

- Pom poms

### METEOR:

- Ladder (preferably silver and sparkly)

### COMET:

- Microphone, microphone stand

### NEWTON:

- Apple

### GALILEO:

- Small telescope

# PRODUCTION TERMS



## STAGING TERMS

**Center Stage:** The middle of the stage

**Downstage:** part of the stage that is closer to the audience

**Upstage:** part of the stage that is closer to the back wall

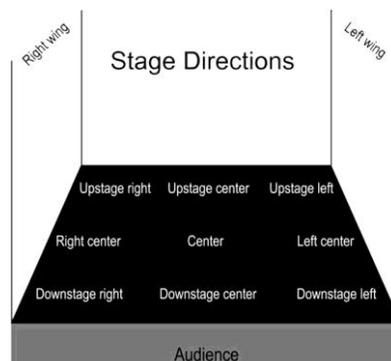
- *Or:* when one actor moves to the back of the stage and causes another actor to turn away from the audience (this is called "Upstaging")
- *Or:* when an actor draws attention to himself and away from the main action of a play

**Stage Right:** performer's right, facing the audience

**Stage Left:** performer's left, facing the audience

**Wings:** the areas of the stage that are to the sides of the acting area and are out of view. These areas are usually masked by curtains.

**Offstage:** the area of the stage which the audience cannot see



# PRODUCTION TERMS



## MOVEMENT / PERFORMING TERMS

**Audition:** trying out for the production

**Callback:** when an actor who has auditioned for a show is asked to come back for a second tryout

**Casting:** when the director chooses actors to be characters in a production

**Cast:** the performers who are in the show

**Call:** the time that performers must report to the theater for either a performance or rehearsal

**Understudy:** a performer who studies the lines and blocking of a role, and is able to take over for the original cast member in a role

**Rehearsal:** the period of practice before the beginning of a show in which the performers and director work on the development of the show

**Notes:** any comments, constructive criticism, observations, changes the director has for the performers after a rehearsal or performance

**Timing:** when a performer has the ability to say or do something at the best moment for the most effect

**Dialogue:** the words which are spoken in a play

**Cue:** signals that are given to the performers, the crew, the musicians and any others that are working on the show

**Off Book:** when the director tells the cast (usually by a certain date) that they must memorize their lines and can no longer use their scripts in rehearsal

**Projecting:** speaking / singing louder

**Marking it:** taking it easy in rehearsal by not performing or doing choreography "full out"

**Props:** all the items used in a play to tell the story not including the scenery or costumes

**Preset:** when either a prop, costume or something else used in a production is placed in or around the stage before the start of a performance

**Run-through:** a rehearsal in which the actors perform the show from the very beginning to the very end without stopping

**Dress Rehearsal:** a rehearsal for both cast and crew, usually just before a show opens, to practice the show just how it will be on opening night, including costumes and make-up

# PRODUCTION TERMS



## MOVEMENT / PERFORMING TERMS

**Blocking:** the instructions that actors use to know exactly where they are supposed to be on stage at all times, any stage direction, movement, or choreography

**Choreography:** dancing

**Cross:** crossing the stage to a predetermined mark

**Mark:** the place where the actor is directed to stand or move to

**Cheat Out:** facing front or diagonally towards the audience so the performer's face and voice can be heard and seen. This is especially important when a performer has dialogue with another actor on-stage.

**Exit:** a stage direction telling an actor to leave the stage

**Technical Rehearsal:** usually the first time a play is rehearsed in the place where it is going to be seen by the audience and in which the scenery, sound and lighting are used... this rehearsal can be done with or without costumes... "Tech" is the slang for this process

**Break A Leg:** something people tell actors to wish them "Good Luck" before a performance or audition

**Curtain call:** the bows at the end of a performance

## TECHNICAL TERMS

**Set:** the physical setting of the stage for each act and all the physical things that are used to change the stage for the performance

**Riser:** a platform placed on the stage to create different levels

**Scrim:** a drop made of a special weaved material that is used for setting the scene

**Drop:** a piece of fabric which is hung on stage and usually used in the scenery

**Running-Time:** the amount of time it takes to perform the play from beginning to end not including any intermissions

**Run:** the number of times a show is performed

**House Lights:** the lights that are used to light up the auditorium where the audience sits

**Black Out:** the quick shutting off of all the stage lights

# PRODUCTION TERMS



## THEATER TERMS

**House:** used to describe the audience or as a short way of saying "Front of House"

**Aisle:** a passage which goes through two areas of seats

**Rear of House:** the areas in the back of the stage and those places used for storage

**Box Office:** the place that sells tickets to a performance

**Control Booth:** the place in a theater from which all the sound and lights are controlled

**Callboard:** the place backstage where the Stage Manager puts up important information for the cast and crew

**Dressing Rooms:** rooms in a theater provided for the actors in which they change costumes and apply make-up

**Green Room:** a place for the performers to relax while waiting to go on stage

## CAST & CREW TERMS

**Director:** the person who provides the vision of how a show should be presented, who works with the actors on their roles, develops the blocking, and is in charge of the rehearsals

**Choreographer:** the person who creates dances and arranges movements for a musical

**Musical Director:** the person who works with the director, actors and orchestra to get the desired musical effects for a show

**Set Designer:** the person who designs the sets for a show...in smaller theaters this person also builds the sets

**Lighting Designer:** the person who designs the lighting for a show and works with the director to get desired effects

**Sound Designer:** the person who designs the sound direction for the show

**Cast:** the people who perform in a show

**Ensemble:** a group of actors, singers or dancers who perform together on stage

# PRODUCTION TERMS



## CAST & CREW TERMS

**Chorus:** in a musical the company of dancers and singers

*Or:* the dancing, singing or songs performed by that company

*Or:* the main "hook" of a song, to be repeated

**Company:** the cast and crew of a show and any other staff who work on the show

**Crew:** all the people who work together on a show except the cast

**Troupe:** a group of actors that form a company

**Stage Manager:** the person who runs the show from opening curtain to closing curtain and is in charge of everything on the stage and in the back of the stage

**Assistant Stage Manager:** person who helps the Stage Manager

**House Manager:** the person in charge of the theater auditorium and anything to do with the audience

**Front of House:** a term used to describe all of the people in a theater who deal with the audience including the people who sell tickets and the ushers, and any other people who deal with the public

**Box Office Manager:** the person who is in charge of ticket reservations and ticketing

**Costumer:** the person in charge of the costumes for a show

**Dressers:** people who help the actors get into and out of their costumes

**Prop Mistress/Master:** the person in charge of all the props and who usually works with them during a show

**Wrangler:** a person hired to take care of the younger members of a cast

**Dramatist:** a person who writes plays