

Polkadots The Cool Kids Musical at the Renaissance Theatre's Theatre 166

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The Renaissance, in collaboration with the Mansfield Youth Theatre ("MY Theatre"), will perform *Polkadots: The Cool Kids Musical* on the stage of the Renaissance's Theatre 166.



Polkadots, an enduring children's show with a subtle, but strong lesson on inclusion and acceptance; is based on a concept by Douglas Lyons with music by Greg Borowsky and Douglas Lyons. The show's timely message about equality and compassion is presented with pep and positivity to engage and inspire young audiences. Following its 2016 premiere at the Ivoryton Playhouse, *Polkadots* has been performed to great acclaim on stages across the United States. With rock-and-roll and jazz-flavored songs, and audience participation segments, the production promises to be a heartwarming feast for the senses; and has been designed to tour to schools within the North Central Ohio area during the 2019-2020 school year.

Polkadots: The Cool Kids Musical follows 8-year-old Lily Polkadot who has just moved to the "Squares Only" small town of Rockaway. As the first Polkadot in an all-Square school, Lily faces an almost impossible task of gaining acceptance from her peers. From daily bullying to segregated drinking fountains, Lily's quest seems hopeless until she meets Sky, a shy Square boy whose curiosity for her unique polka-dot skin blooms into an unexpected friendship. Inspired by Civil Rights pioneers Ruby Bridges and The Little Rock Nine, *Polkadots* serves as a colorful history lesson for the world, reminding us that our differences make us awesome, not outcasts.

The musical is the brainchild of its lyricist and co-composer, Douglas Lyons. Lyons has said that his idea for *Polkadots* was inspired by a video interview during which actor Phylicia Rashad talked about having grown up in the segregated Jim Crow South. She recounted her curiosity about the 'white only' drinking fountain. According to Lyons, one day, when no one was looking, Rashad tasted the water from the forbidden fountain and realized the water tasted no different. Lyons said that the visual of that simple action triggered a light for him.

Along with playwright Melvin Tunstall III, and co-composer Greg Borowsky, Lyons set out to retell the story for a new audience, using shapes instead of color to educate youth on

challenging subject matter. The show employs the use of bright costumes, light and fun music, and dance to tell the story and keep the young audience entertained. a great message about friendship and acceptance. As the show progresses, the barriers break down and friendship blossoms.

The four-person cast features Lilly Casey and McKenna Stoffer, of Ontario High School; and Kristin Kaufman and Christian Shepherd, both students at Mansfield Christian School. Zavier Alterio of Lexington High School will serve as the Stage Manager for the production.

Dauphne Maloney directs the show with musical direction by Brian K.

Polkadots is presented with the generous support of the Taylor Family Fund of the Richland County Foundation.

Friday, June 7th at 7:00pm

Saturday, June 8th at 11:00am (Sensory Friendly)

Tickets are FREE and are general admission.

A free “one night only” public performance will take place at 7:00 PM on Friday; with a free sensory-friendly performance of *Polkadots: The Cool Kids Musical* offered on Saturday, June 8 at 11:00 AM for families of individuals with special needs.

Interested individuals must register for their free tickets by visiting or calling Dauphne Maloney at 419.522.2726, ext 212.

A limited number of tickets is available for both the public and sensory-friendly performances. No walk-ups will be accommodated for the sensory-friendly performance.

Theatre 166

166 Park Ave. West, Mansfield

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