

“Captains Courageous”

An original musical by Peter J. Fakoury

SYNOPSIS

“Captains Courageous” is an original musical adaptation of Rudyard Kipling’s timeless story of the same title. Featuring sixteen original musical numbers, the show received its world premier production at FCT in 1995. The author/composer (who is directing this production) is excited about reviving it for its 20th anniversary. “Captains Courageous” is a show for the whole family. It brings Kipling’s work to the stage in a manner that engages and delights audiences of all ages.

Fifteen-year-old Harvey Cheyne, the quintessential spoiled brat, is the central character in this tale of transformations. The son of a millionaire, who is too busy with business to be a father to the boy, Harvey is sent to Europe aboard an ocean liner to complete his education. When the cocky heir to millions accidentally tumbles over the deck rail and into the ocean, he is rescued by the crew of a Gloucester, Massachusetts fishing schooner. Annoyed by these simple fishermen, who have “nothing better to do than fish,” Harvey attempts to bribe the ship’s captain with stories of his wealth and promises of rewards for his return to land. When the captain refuses, Harvey resorts to rude insults that find him the recipient of his first dose of discipline, at the hand of the crusty but fair Captain Disko Troop.

Over the course of several months, Harvey must learn the ways of the fisherman, and the code of honor that binds them together. He “learns the ropes” aboard the ship, and many valuable lessons that transform him from snobby boy to respectful man. His unwitting friend along the way is Captain Troop’s son, Dan, who is the same age as Harvey. With Dan’s help, and that of the other crewmembers aboard, Harvey earns the right to be accepted and officially inducted as a fully capable member of the crew.

Meanwhile, the boy’s heartbroken parents believe that he has drowned. His mother is near death from sorrow, and his grieved father has abandoned his business empire at a time when his archrival is about to crush everything he has worked so hard to build. While Mr. and Mrs. Cheyne struggle with their own sorrow, the wives of Gloucester depict the dangers of the late 1800s fishing industry, which claimed so many of their men.

Ultimately, Harvey is reunited with his parents after forging a lasting friendship with his shipmates, finding a love for the sea, and learning the value of hard work. The journey carries Harvey from the Grand Banks of the North Atlantic back to the shores of home, and from a world of money and status to one where honor and respect hold greater value.

Written more than 100 years ago, the window through which Kipling’s story unfolds – the cod fishing industry of New England – has long since passed away. But his tale is teeming with constants and issues which will remain universal forever: the struggle to grow up, the development of character, the challenge of balancing career with family, and the fleeting value of money and status.

In this adaptation of Kipling’s masterpiece, Fakoury has stayed close to the novel, taking few liberties in dramatizing it. The show’s music includes rollicking sea songs, introspective numbers about love, life and parenthood, and humorous tunes that help define the characters. For this new production, Fakoury is rescoring the music for a nine-piece live orchestra, and adjusting the cast to include more women. A completely new musical number has been added that features the Gloucester wives.

CAST REQUIREMENTS

The cast of “Captains Courageous” is composed of approximately 12 men and 10 women. Almost all of the parts involve at least some singing. There are few parts for complete non-singers. Two of the principal male roles include two teenage boys with strong singing voices.

Much of the show takes place aboard the Gloucester, Mass. fishing schooner “We’re Here.” The principal male roles include the protagonist, Harvey (teenage boy), the ship’s captain, Disko Troop, and his son, Dan Troop (approximately Harvey’s age – 15 or 16). Seven other fishermen make up the rest of the “We’re Here’s” crew, and form the male half of the ensemble. Aboard the schooner, the songs are mostly male choral numbers that range from sea shanties to comedy numbers to sentimental tunes. The members of the ship’s crew also double as wealthy passengers aboard an ocean liner, and several other small roles scattered through the show.

Also filling out the male half of the cast, though never on the schooner, is Harvey’s father, a billionaire with many business interests to take him away from fathering his son.

The principal females leads in the show are Harvey’s mother (Constance Cheyne) and Captain Disko’s wife, Mary. The rest of the female cast includes Harvey’s father’s personal secretary (Janet), Mary’s best friend Lottie, a nurse and a handful of Gloucester wives who pray their men return home safe at the end of the fishing season.

THE CHARACTERS

Harvey Cheyne, Jr. – the protagonist in this story. He is a 15-year old spoiled rich brat. When he falls from an ocean liner into the ocean and is picked up by the crusty crew of the “We’re Here” fishing schooner, he’s in for the learning experience of his life.

Dan Troop – The captain’s son, a boy about Harvey’s age. He is the polar opposite of Harvey. He is innocent to the ways of the world, gullible, but good-hearted. He teaches Harvey a lot about how to be a fisherman, and to earn the captain’s respect. They become good friends during the course of the story.

Disko Troop – the wise captain of the “We’re Here” fishing schooner. He becomes a surrogate father to Harvey while he is aboard the schooner, teaching him much about life and manhood.

Harvey Cheyne, Sr. – Harvey’s father, a billionaire with so many business dealings that he has neglected the fathering of his son. The loss of his boy at sea, and their eventual reunion, gives him a second chance at parenthood and a different look at what really matters in life.

Constance Cheyne – Harvey’s mother. She dotes on him continually, giving in to all his desires. Consequently, she never dispenses discipline on her son. Partly because of her love for him, he becomes a spoiled brat.

Manuel – A Portuguese fisherman and member of the crew of the “We’re Here.” It is he who rescues Harvey from the ocean and teaches him many lessons aboard the schooner. He has a huge heart, and an eye for the ladies.

Long Jack – An Irishman sailor and fisherman who is full of nautical superstitions.

Tom Platt – an old ex-navy man who continually recounts his days aboard his naval ship. An Irishman and lifelong fisherman, he literally has salt water in his blood.

Salters Troop – Disko’s brother. He is really a farmer, and gets teased about it all the time. But for now, he is a member of his brothers fishing crew, a job he detests, but will rough it through while he dreams of farming. He has adopted Pennsylvania Pratt, another member of the crew, and the two are inseparable.

Penn – Pennsylvania Pratt is a meek, almost mentally disturbed member of the crew. He had once been a church pastor, but when he witnessed his wife and daughters drown at the Johnstown, PA disaster, he turns inward to deal with his grief. Not a fisherman at all, he is prodded along by his friend, Salters, until a disaster at sea reveals his true strength.

Mary Troop – Disko’s wife and Dan’s mother. She prays for their safe return, and is always conscious of how many Gloucester fishermen never come home from the sea. She and her fellow wives of the town deal with life alone while their husbands make a living in one of the world’s most dangerous occupations.

Lottie – Another Gloucester wife, and Mary’s best friend.

Gloucester Wives 1-6 – other women left behind to cope while their husbands are at sea. They make up the chorus on the home front.

Doubled Parts (these roles are covered by the members of the company)

Mrs. Lawton – A passenger aboard the ocean liner. Somewhat sympathetic to Harvey.

Mrs. Nelson – Another passenger on the liner. A bit less sympathetic to Harvey.

Mr. Martin – A passenger aboard the ocean liner who has had a bad experience with Harvey, and rants about what he’d like to do the young man.

German – A passenger on the liner who swings his fist a lot at Harvey, and wishes he had a “rope’s end” with which to swat the bratty boy.

Mr. MacDonald – The ocean’s liner’s chief engineer.

Captain Sullivan – The captain of the Atlantic Star ocean liner.

Jason Olley – The captain of another Gloucester schooner whose ship is hit by an ocean liner. He loses the ship and most of his crew, but his son is miraculously saved from drowning.

Mark Levinson – Harvey Cheyne, Senior’s attorney.

Mrs. Atkins – Levinson’s assistant.

Randolph Snelling – Harvey Cheyne, Senior’s business rival. A nasty and spiteful character who will resort to anything to bring down Cheyne.

Albert Phipps – Snelling’s attorney.

Nurse – Cares for Mrs. Cheyne in her depression after Harvey’s loss at sea.

MUSICAL NUMBERS

“I Wouldn’t Want A Boy Like Harvey” – Mrs. Cheyne and the ocean liner passengers

“I’ve Heard Some Stories” – Disko Troop

“We’re Here” – Harvey Cheyne

“Haul Away, Harvey” – The We’re Here company

“The Sooner You Finish” – Tom Plat and the company

“Listen to the Rain” – Mr. and Mrs. Cheyne, Janet, and the Gloucester wives

“Codfish Ballet” – Manuel

“Larn the Ropes” – Long Jack and company

“Somewhere In My Heart” – Mary and Disco Troop, the Gloucester wives

“He’s My Friend” – Salters Troop

“Hih! Yi! Yo Ho!” – The We’re Here company

“Look At Me Now” – Harvey

“Listen” – Dan Troop and Harvey

“Sailing on the Sea” – Captain Disko

“Man to Man” – Captain Disko and Harvey Cheyne, Sr.

“Fishing” – Gloucester wives company