

Little Shop of Horrors

Alan Menken

Composer

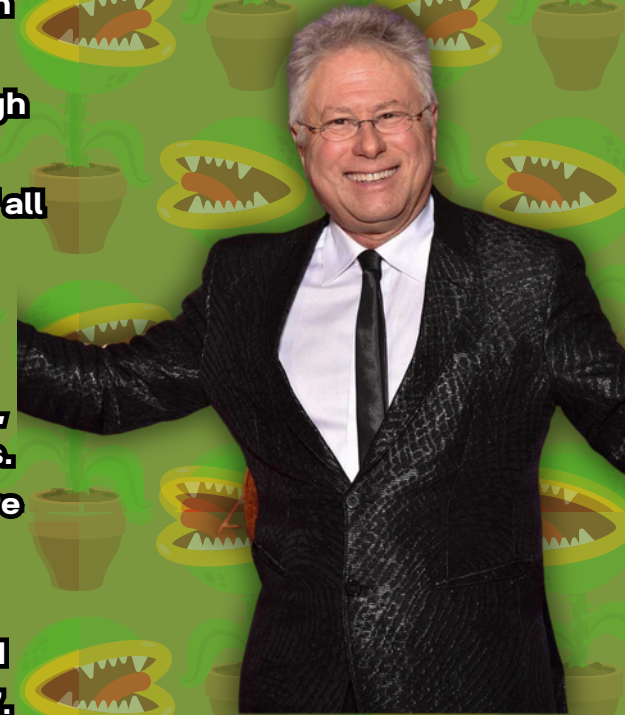
Alan Menken was born in New York City in 1949. He attended New York University's College of Arts and Sciences, where he graduated with a degree in musicology. After graduating, Menken tested out his composition skills with a rock-ballet, *Children of the World*, for The Downtown Ballet Company. Although not a success, Menken's breakthrough came with the huge hit, *Little Shop of Horrors* (1982). It set the record for the highest grossing OffBroadway show of all time and opened in Los Angeles and London, as well as embarking on several national tours. *Little Shop* was turned into a film musical in 1986.

Menken first worked with Disney on the 1989 film, *The Little Mermaid*. He then went on to *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), *Aladdin* (1992), and *Pocahontas* (1995), with Menken walking away with two academy awards for each of the four films. He has continued to work with Disney on works such as *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1996), *Enchanted* (2007), and *Tangled* (2010) among others, as well as composing for Broadway shows.

In 1994 Menken make his Broadway debut with a musical version of *Beauty and the Beast*. This was a huge success and ran for 13 years, before closing in 2007.

As well as a stage adaptation of *The Little Mermaid* (which ran on Broadway from 2008-2009), Menken's production of *Sister Act* first opened in London in 2009 before moving to Broadway in 2011. His new musical adaptation, *Newsies* (2012), earned Menken the Tony Award for Best Score. In 2012 he earned the achievement of having three Broadway musicals playing in the same season with *Sister Act*, *Newsies*, and *Leap of Faith* (2012), an adaptation of the Steve Martin film of the same name all running simultaneously in the early months of the year. His Broadway adaptation of *Aladdin* (2014) was nominated for Best Original Score and just celebrated 4 years on Broadway in March of 2018, while an adaptation of *A Bronx Tale* (2016) also continues is run on Broadway as of this writing. In 2017, Menken wrote four new songs for the film adaptation of his own Broadway version of *Beauty and the Beast* starring Emma Watson, Dan Stevens, and Emma Thompson.

In 2010, Menken received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. Throughout his career so far, he has won eight Academy Awards, seven Golden Globes, eleven Grammy Awards, and one Tony Award and countless nominations.



Little Shop of Horrors

Howard Ashman

Book and Lyrics

Howard Ashman is best remembered for his collaboration with the composer and lyricist, Alan Menken. Together, they are most widely known for producing the scores of several hugely successful Disney films, for which Ashman wrote the lyrics and Menken composed the music. The duo first began to work together on the musical *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* (1979), before hitting the big time with their next musical, *Little Shop of Horrors* (1982). *Little Shop* became a huge success and the musical was adapted into the 1986 feature film of the same name. Ashman and Menken's first Disney film was *The Little Mermaid* (1989), followed by *Beauty and the Beast* (1991). Ashman died from complications from AIDS while writing the songs for *Aladdin* but his work was included in the 1992 film. Together with Alan Menken, Howard Ashman won the Academy Award for Best Original Song twice--firstly for "Under the Sea" from *The Little Mermaid* (1989) and posthumously for the title song, "Beauty and the Beast" (1991). The stage show, *Beauty and the Beast*, also won the 1998 Olivier Award for Best New Musical.



Little Shop of Horrors

1960 Movie

The film stars Jonathan Haze, Jackie Joseph, Mel Welles, and Dick Miller, all of whom had worked for Corman on previous films. Screenwriter Griffith's grandmother, Myrtle Vail (who was also a writer and a radio star) portrays Seymour's mother, and Jack Nicholson has a small-but-memorable role as masochistic dental patient Wilbur Force. Many home video releases misleadingly make it appear that Nicholson is the star, and it's been frequently erroneously reported that this film was his screen debut.

The film's concept is thought to be based on a 1932 story called "Green Thoughts" by John Collier, which is about a man-eating plant. However, Griffith may have been influenced by Arthur C. Clarke's then more-recent sci-fi short story 'The Reluctant Orchid', which has an uncannily similar plot.

Produced under the title *The Passionate People Eater*, the film employs an original style of humor, combining black comedy with farce and incorporating Jewish humor and elements of spoof. *The Little Shop of Horrors* was shot on a budget of \$28,000 in two days utilizing sets that had been left standing from *A Bucket of Blood*.

The film slowly gained a cult following through word of mouth when it was distributed as the B-movie in a double feature with Mario Bava's *Black Sunday* and eventually with *The Last Woman on Earth*. The film's popularity increased with local television broadcasts, in addition to the presence of a young Jack Nicholson, whose small role in the film has been prominently promoted on home video releases of the film. [16] The film was the basis for an Off Broadway musical, *Little Shop of Horrors*, which was notably made into a 1986 feature film and enjoyed a 2003 Broadway revival, all of which have attracted attention to the 1960 film.

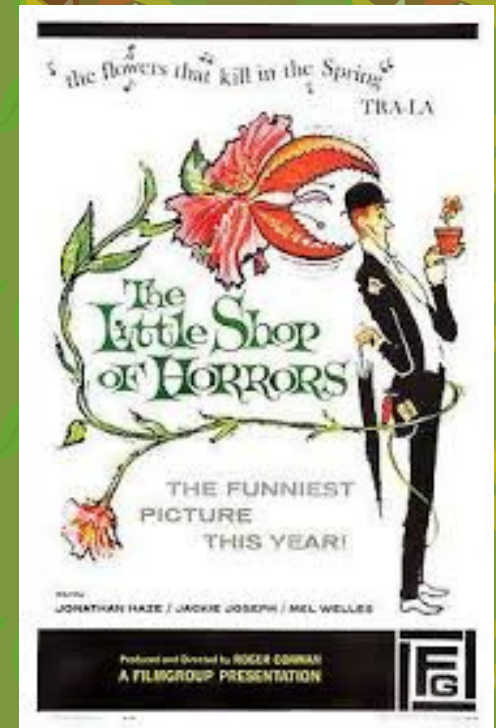
Roger Corman Productions (as Santa Clara Productions)

Directed by Roger Corman

Writing Credits

Charles B. Griffith (screenplay)

Roger Corman (co-writer) (uncredited)

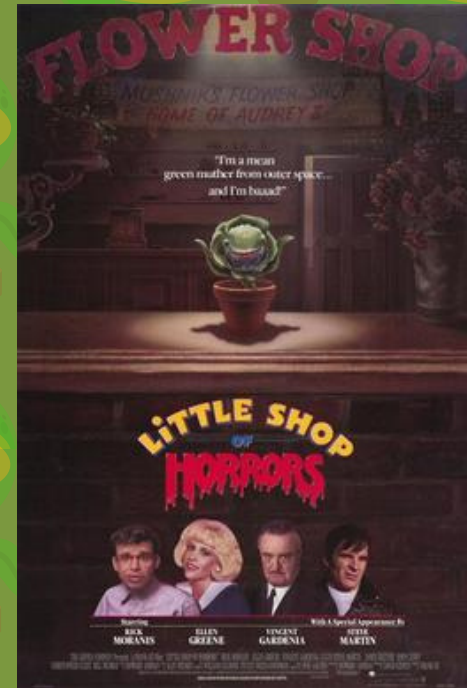


Little Shop of Horrors

1986 Movie

Little Shop of Horrors is a 1986 American horror comedy musical film directed by Frank Oz. It is an adaptation of the 1982 off-Broadway musical of the same name by composer Alan Menken and writer Howard Ashman, which is itself an adaptation of the 1960 film *The Little Shop of Horrors* by director Roger Corman. The film, which centers on a floral shop worker who discovers a sentient carnivorous plant that feeds on human blood, stars Rick Moranis, Ellen Greene, Vincent Gardenia, Steve Martin, and the voice of Levi Stubbs. The film also features special appearances by Jim Belushi, John Candy, Christopher Guest, and Bill Murray. It was produced by David Geffen through The Geffen Company and released by Warner Bros. on December 19, 1986.

Little Shop of Horrors was filmed on the Albert R. Broccoli 007 Stage at the Pinewood Studios in England, where a "downtown" set, complete with overhead train track, was constructed. Produced on a budget of \$25 million, in contrast to the original 1960 film, which, according to Corman, only cost \$30,000, it was well received by critics and audiences alike, eventually developing a cult following. The film's original 23-minute finale, based on the musical's ending, was rewritten and reshot after test audiences did not react positively to it. For years only available as black-and-white workprint footage, the original ending was fully restored in 2012 by Warner Home Video and a director's cut was released.



Little Shop of Horrors

Production History

1982 Off-Broadway

The musical had its world premiere off-off-Broadway on May 6, 1982, at the Workshop of the Players Art Foundation (WPA Theatre), playing there until June 6, 1982. It opened off-Broadway at the Orpheum Theatre in Manhattan's East Village on July 27, 1982. The production, directed by Ashman, with musical staging by Edie Cowan, was critically acclaimed and won several awards including the 1982-1983 Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Musical, as well as the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for Best Musical and the Outer Critics Circle Award. Howard Ashman wrote, in the introduction to the acting edition of the libretto, that the show "satirizes ... science fiction, 'B' movies, musical comedy itself, and even the Faust legend". In the original WPA cast were Lee Wilkof as Seymour, Ellen Greene as Audrey, Hy Anzell as Mr. Mushnik, Franc Luz as Orin, Jennifer Leigh Warren as Crystal, Sheila Kay Davis as Ronette and Leilani Jones as Chiffon; Ron Taylor was the voice of Audrey II, and Martin P. Robinson was the Audrey II puppeteer, who also designed the puppets. The production ran for five years. When it closed on November 1, 1987, after 2,209 performances, it was the third-longest running musical and the highest-grossing production in off-Broadway history. Though a Broadway transfer had been proposed for the production, book writer Howard Ashman felt the show belonged where it was. Since it was not produced on Broadway, the original production was ineligible for the 1982 Tony Awards. The producers were the WPA Theatre, David Geffen, Cameron Mackintosh and the Shubert Organization.

1983 West End

A London West End production opened on October 12, 1983, at the Comedy Theatre, produced by Cameron Mackintosh. It ran for 813 performances, starring Barry James as Seymour, Greene reprising her role as Audrey and Harry Towb as Mr. Mushnik, with Sinitta (then surnamed Renet) understudying Chiffon, Crystal and Ronette. Zeeteah Massiah took over as Chiffon in 1984. Greene was replaced as Audrey by Claire Moore (1984) then Sarah Payne (1985). Orin was played by Terence Hillyer (1983), David Burt (1984) and Bogdan Kominowski (1985). Audrey II was puppeteered by Anthony Asbury, and the costumes were designed by Tim Goodchild. It received the 1983 Evening Standard Award for Best Musical and closed on October 5, 1985.

2019 Off-Broadway Revival

An off-Broadway revival at the Westside Theatre began previews on September 17, 2019, with an official opening on October 17, 2019. The cast starred Jonathan Groff as Seymour, Tammy Blanchard as Audrey, Christian Borle as Orin and Tom Alan Robbins as Mr. Mushnik. Michael Mayer directed, with choreography by Ellenore Scott. The lighting designer was Bradley King. The plant for this production was voiced by Kingsley Leggs. A cast album was released digitally on December 20, 2019. Gideon Glick began playing Seymour in early 2020. The production suspended performances on March 11, 2020, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and reopened on September 21, 2021, with Jeremy Jordan as Seymour; Mayer, Scott, Blanchard, Borle and Robbins returned. The cast album received a physical release on the day of reopening. Some performances were cancelled, due to the pandemic, off and on during December 2021. The revival has gone on to have a long run: later players in the role of Seymour have included Conrad Ricamora, Skylar Astin, Rob McClure, Matt Doyle, Corbin Bleu, Darren Criss, and Andrew Barth Feldman. Drew Gehling, Bryce Pinkham and James Carpinello have played Orin, and replacements for Mushnik have included Stuart Zagnit, Brad Oscar and Stephen DeRosa. Audrey has been played by Lena Hall, Maude Apatow, Joy Woods, who originated the role of Chiffon in the revival, Constance Wu, Evan Rachel Wood, drag performer Jinkx Monsoon and Sarah Hyland. In October 2024, Nicholas Christopher and Sherie Rene Scott are set to take over the roles of Seymour and Audrey, respectively.

Puppetry

What is a Puppet?

Audrey II, the main antagonist in the show is a Venus flytrap-type plant depicted by a large puppet. A puppet is an inanimate object or representational figure that can be manipulated by a person, or puppeteer, in order to make the puppet come to life. A puppet can be made from a wide variety of materials and can vary in size and structure depending on its use. Some examples of different types of puppets are sock-puppet, finger-puppet, hand or glove puppet, marionette, arm-puppet, rod-puppet, shadow-puppet, and countless others.

The Art of Puppetry

Puppetry is an ancient art form that is thought to have originated about 3000 years ago. Puppets have been used since this time to animate and communicate the ideas and needs to other individuals. There is evidence that they were used in Egypt as early as 2000 BC when string-operated figures of wood were manipulated to perform the action of kneading bread. Wire controlled, articulated puppets made of clay and ivory have also been found in Egyptian tombs. Hieroglyphs also describe "walking statues" being used in Ancient Egyptian religious dramas. Puppetry was practiced in Ancient Greece and the oldest written records of puppetry can be found in the works of Herodotus and Xenophon, dating from the 5th century BC.

Types of Puppetry

Hand puppet: through any of a variety of finger configurations, the puppeteer's hand inside the puppet is the only thing which is making it move. This is frequently the simplest type of puppet, and can have very few moving parts – the fingers and thumb may be in different pockets to create a moving mouth, or they may be separate divisions for fingers that can help move arms, legs, etc.

Marionette: a puppet controls from above by the puppeteer, who uses strings connected to assorted mobile features of the puppet in order to make it walk, speak, etc. The amount of strings that are attached determines how complex the movements of the marionette puppets are.

Shadow figures: created in different ways: The first option includes figures placed directly to the shadow screen so their physical features are displayed on the screen. These are called "direct shadows" "Projected shadows" feature figures cut from glass and projected onto the screen via an overhead. Shadow figures can create simple or complex silhouettes on these translucent shadow screens depending on the cut outs in the shapes

Rod puppets: puppets primarily controlled by a rod connecting to the head, which functions as a way for the puppeteer to control the movements and turning of the head. The other limbs of the puppet are frequently also attached to rods which are simply moved about in order to direct the movement.

Marotte: a simplified puppet which is often just a head on a stick. While it works similar to an undisguised rod puppet, this head can be controlled by a handle at the bottom of the stick which opens and closes the mouth when squeezed.

