



A Note to Parents and Teachers from PAC Director Bart Lovins

On *Ragtime* and Age Appropriateness

There's no formal rating system for live theatre, but I want to offer guidance to help families and educators decide whether *Ragtime* is right for their students.

This production is a powerful, emotional, and ultimately uplifting experience—but it is not for most young children. Set in early 20th-century America, *Ragtime* explores themes of race, immigration, justice, and social change. Alongside its beautiful music and moments of joy, the story includes acts of violence, racial injustice, and strong language—some of which is disturbing but historically accurate.

Some audience members have asked, "Should I bring my child—and how old is old enough?" While every family is different, we recommend *Ragtime* for **9th grade and up**.

What to Expect

Language

Ragtime includes several **racial and ethnic slurs** used by characters to reflect the realities of the period. These include:

- "Nigger" (used multiple times—both hatefully and, in some scenes, reclaimed or rejected by Black characters)
 - "Yid," "Kike," "Polack," "Mick," "Kraut," "Cracker"
- Other profanities include "bastard," "sons o' bitches," "ass," "schmuck," and "God damned."

These words are not used carelessly—they are intentionally placed to underscore injustice, provoke discomfort, and drive the story's powerful message home.

Violence and Mature Themes

- The destruction of an African American man's car by racist firemen
- A grieving mother attempting to bury her newborn child
- A protective father attacking a man trying to buy his daughter
- Descriptions of arson and murder
- A police shooting that results in the death of an innocent character
- A dramatic standoff involving bombs and weapons

- A vaudeville number with sexual innuendo (no nudity, but suggestive language and attire)
- Moderate alcohol use (flasks onstage)

While there is **no graphic violence or gore**, several scenes are emotionally intense, and a few deaths occur onstage in a stylized manner.

Educational Value

Despite these difficult moments, *Ragtime* is an invaluable work of art that explores the American experience through unforgettable music and storytelling. Historical figures such as Booker T. Washington, Emma Goldman, and Henry Ford appear alongside fictional characters whose struggles reflect the social upheaval of the time.

Performance Info

- **Recommended Age:** 9th grade and up
 - **Public Performance Length:** ~3 hours (with intermission)
 - **School Matinee Length:** ~2.5 hours (no intermission)
 - **Created by:** Terrence McNally (book), Stephen Flaherty (music), Lynn Ahrens (lyrics)
 - **Based on:** *Ragtime*, the novel by E.L. Doctorow
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Final Thoughts

We want to be as transparent as possible so our audiences can make informed, comfortable choices. We also believe that *Ragtime* is an essential and resonant piece of theatre—one that confronts hard truths while offering hope, healing, and a vision for a better tomorrow.

If you have any questions or concerns about the content, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Warmly,
Bart Lovins
Director, Hardin County PAC