

**THE
NEIL DIAMOND
MUSICAL
A BEAUTIFUL NOISE**

STUDY GUIDE



THE
NATIONAL THEATRE
FOUNDATION

A Beautiful Noise

The National Theatre

December 3 – 8, 2024

Music and Lyrics by Neil Diamond
Book by Anthony McCarten
Directed by Michael Mayer
Choreographed by Steven Hoggett
Packet prepared by Dramaturg Lindsey R. Barr

THE UNTOLD TRUE STORY OF A BROOKLYN KID WHO BECAME A CHART-BUSTING, SHOW-STOPPING, AWARD-WINNING AMERICAN ICON.

Created in collaboration with Neil Diamond himself, *A BEAUTIFUL NOISE* is the uplifting true story of how a kid from Brooklyn became a chart-busting, show-stopping American rock icon. With 120 million albums sold, a catalogue of classics like “America,” “Forever in Blue Jeans,” and “Sweet Caroline,” an induction into the Songwriters and Rock and Roll Halls of Fame, a Grammy® Lifetime Achievement Award, and sold-out concerts around the world that made him bigger than Elvis, Neil Diamond’s story was made to shine on Broadway—and head out on the road across America.

Like *Jersey Boys* and *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* before it, *A BEAUTIFUL NOISE: THE NEIL DIAMOND MUSICAL* is an inspiring, exhilarating, energy-filled musical memoir, that tells the untold true story of how America’s greatest hitmaker became a star, set to the songs that defined his career.

Presented in association with and endorsed by Neil Diamond.

A BEAUTIFUL NOISE runs approximately 2 hours, 15 minutes including intermission.



For almost 200 years, The National Theatre has occupied a prominent position on Pennsylvania Avenue—“America’s Main Street”—and played a central role in the cultural and civic life of Washington, DC. Located a stone’s throw from the White House and having the Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site as its “front yard,” The National Theatre is a historic, cultural presence in our Nation’s Capital and the oldest continuously operating enterprise on Pennsylvania Avenue. The non-profit National Theatre Foundation oversees the historic theatre and serves the DC community through three free outreach programs, *Saturday Morning Live!*, *Community Stage Connections*, and *Teens Behind the Scenes*. These programs provide the greater Washington area with access to high quality performing arts experiences while promoting and employing local and regional artists.

This guide was created for the *Teens Behind the Scenes* program. *Teens Behind the Scenes* is made possible thanks to the generosity of the Jacqueline Badger Mars Next Generation Fund at The National Theatre. Established by Jacqueline Badger Mars in 2022, the fund provides leadership support for The National Theatre Foundation’s signature community programs and seeks to inspire future theatre artists and appreciators onstage, behind the scenes, and in the audience.

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www.nationaltheatre.org



KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

We are excited to welcome you to The National Theatre through our *Teens Behind the Scenes* program! Whether you're a new theatre-goer or a seasoned veteran, here are a few things to bear in mind.

WHAT WILL I BE SEEING?

Over the course of its long history, The National Theatre has hosted many memorable productions. These days, the shows you are most likely to see here are Broadway tours. A Broadway tour grows out of a production that is currently running or recently ran on Broadway in New York City. The touring version uses the same script, musical score, choreography, and direction. The production elements, such as the sets and costumes, are largely the same, too, though many have been adapted so they can be transported across the country. The actors you see onstage are also traveling all over the country, often for a year or more at a time. In other words, the show you see in Washington, DC is the same show that folks in Baltimore, Philadelphia, or Atlanta might have just seen, too.

In addition to Broadway tours, you may also see the occasional pre-Broadway tryout. This is when producers debut a show in a major city outside of New York in order to test new or revised material in front of a paying audience. Oftentimes, the creative team adjusts the show based on audience reactions before moving on to New York, usually with much of the same cast and crew in tow.

HOW CAN I MAXIMIZE MY EXPERIENCE?

Historically, audience members' behavior at the theatre has been guided, and sometimes constrained, by unspoken norms or "rules." Over time, certain norms like formal dress codes have gradually relaxed, allowing for a more inclusive environment. Rather than list other "rules," we want to share some considerations that will help you enjoy your time at The National.

- **Arrive early and look for the ushers.** This gives you time to grab refreshments and use the restroom. If you are late and the show has already started, you may have to wait to be seated. The ushers can direct you to your seat and answer any questions you have.
- **Respect the space and your fellow audience members.** Consume any food and drink you bring into the auditorium carefully. Keep the aisles and rows clear by putting your belongings under your seat. Be mindful of your neighbor's personal bubble and stand to let them pass if need be. Generally, avoid talking during a performance; if you must, keep it to a whisper or briefly share your thoughts during laughter or applause.
- **Take a break from your screen.** Cellphones and tablets shine brightly in the dark and their noises can distract from the experience. Be sure to silence your devices and put them away. An exception is a closed captioning app like GalaPro, which you can use on your device; you can also request a special device from the theatre.
- **Show your appreciation.** If you enjoyed that big musical number, applaud and cheer! If something shocks or surprises you, feel free to gasp! Laugh if the moment calls for it; nothing kills a comedy like a quiet auditorium. While courtesy is important, it shouldn't stop you from having a good time.

GO BEHIND THE SCENES WITH OUR TBTS WEBINAR SERIES

The TBTS Webinar series is a collection of interviews with emerging and leading theatre professionals, each conducted by one of our TBTS Dramaturgs. The artists share their pathways into the profession, what their creative process entails, and what young artists like yourself can learn from their experience. Check out this summer's offerings, featuring the artistic director of one of America's leading regional theatres, a prolific actor and teacher, a Tony-nominated lighting designer, a New York-based stage manager, a composer and music director, and a professor and leading access specialist!



The National Theatre Foundation presents

BEHIND THE SCENES OF MUSIC DIRECTION
featuring Kristin Stowell

Interviewed by Lindsey R. Barr
in June 2024

KRISTIN STOWELL

LINDSEY R. BARR



The National Theatre Foundation presents

BEHIND THE SCENES OF STAGE MANAGEMENT
featuring Maria De Barros

Interviewed by Lindsey R. Barr
in June 2024

MARIA DE BARROS

LINDSEY R. BARR



The National Theatre Foundation presents

BEHIND THE SCENES OF LIGHTING DESIGN
featuring Amith Chandrashaker

Interviewed by Leayne Dempsey
in June 2024

AMITH CHANDRASHAKER

LEAYNE DEMPSEY



The National Theatre Foundation presents

BEHIND THE SCENES OF DRAMATURGY
featuring Samuel Yates

Interviewed by Leayne Dempsey
in July 2024

SAMUEL YATES

LEAYNE DEMPSEY



The National Theatre Foundation presents

BEHIND THE SCENES OF ACTING
featuring Ro Boddie

Interviewed by Leayne Dempsey
in July 2024

RO BODDIE

LEAYNE DEMPSEY



The National Theatre Foundation presents

BEHIND THE SCENES OF ARTISTIC DIRECTION
featuring Hana S. Sharif

Interviewed by Lindsey R. Barr
in August 2024

HANA S. SHARIF

LINDSEY R. BARR



LETTER FROM THE DRAMATURG

There are few artists whose music is so iconic that it is woven into the very fabric of our society. Of course, there are standouts like Michael Jackson, Bruce Springsteen, and Barbra Streisand, each with discographies that span decades and legacies that feel insurmountable by other artists. Add to this impressive cadre of talented performers Neil Diamond, an artist whose songs and aura infiltrated my life before I even knew his name. Whether I was listening to “Red Red Wine” on the staticky “Oldies” radio that came to define my teenage years driving around with my dad in rural America or hearing various renditions of “I’m a Believer” covered by other notable artists, Diamond’s music permeated some of my oldest and clearest memories.

And of course, there is “Sweet Caroline.” Perhaps Diamond’s most well-known work, a song that feels like it has a cultural life all its own. Who hasn’t emphatically sung “bah bah bah,” mimicking the trumpets that so clearly punctuate the song’s infamous chorus? I can’t recall a party, wedding, or celebration I’ve been to that has not played this song; in some ways, it feels like an unofficial national anthem. Though, my New York Yankees loving spouse would tell you that it’s a complicated song for many, too: the bitter rivals of my husband’s favorite team, the Boston Red Sox, play “Sweet Caroline” during the 8th inning of every home game, with die-hard fans of both the team and Diamond screaming the lyrics in iconic Fenway Park. Regardless of your sports allegiance or your familiarity with Diamond’s music, there is likely a time when you can recall hearing at least some of his work, even if by chance.

For all the celebratory correlations Diamond’s music often brings up, *A Beautiful Noise* notably utilizes his expansive career in a different way. The musical tells the story of Diamond’s rise from humble beginnings in Brooklyn to super stardom via a series of therapy sessions. That the show depicts Diamond’s struggles amongst his triumphs allows audiences to potentially relate to the singer in a way that at first might feel impossible. After all, there aren’t too many people who have reached the level of long-term success that he has in the music industry. Though he has achieved superstar status in the canon of American songwriters, he struggled with depression, questioned his career, and tried to make sense of what can feel like a confusing world—themes that you yourself might relate to. It doesn’t feel like a coincidence then that a musical designed to give us a closer look at Diamond’s life suggests that we actually don’t know the singer as much as we think we might. After all, don’t so many of us yearn for those “good times” Diamond sings about in his most famous piece “Sweet Caroline”?



Nick Fradiani as ‘Neil–Then’ (center) and ‘The Noise’

Jeremy Daniel

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