

# CLASS DISMISSED THE BULLYING PROJECT

Book by Jeffrey E. Sanzel  
Music by Douglas J. Quattrock  
Lyrics by

Jeffrey E. Sanzel & Douglas J. Quattrock



Featuring

Nicole Bianco \* Michelle LaBozzetta \* Krysal Lawless \* Brielle Levenberg  
Eric J. Hughes \* Andrew Lenahan \* Steven Uihlein  
Douglas J. Quattrock, at the piano

Directed by Jeffrey E. Sanzel

Musical Direction by Douglas J. Quattrock

Original Choreography Created by Sari Feldman/Additional Choreography by Nicole Bianco

Production Stage Manager Melissa Troxler

## Introduction

The mission of Theatre Three's Touring Theatre is to bring exciting, innovative and educational programs to schools all over Long Island and the tri-state area. Over the years, programs have included the anti-DWI play *And These, Our Friends* (eighteen seasons); *From the Fires: Voices of the Holocaust* (eleven years, over four hundred performances, seen by over one hundred thousand people); *Way to Grow*, dealing with issues ranging from divorce to death of a pet to the first day of school to procrastination; *The Three Little Pigs* or "*Home Is Where You Hold Your Heart*", focusing on race relations and the homeless; the Shakespeare project which presented accessible productions of *Hamlet*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; etc. Literally, tens of thousands of students have experienced live theatre for the first time through these unique programs.

Now in its fifteenth season, *Class Dismissed: The Bullying Project* is an original musical has been created exclusively for Theatre Three by Executive Artistic Director Jeffrey Sanzel (author/director of *From the Fires*; *And These, Our Friends*; and dozens of other educational programs) in collaboration with composer Douglas J. Quattrock (*Barnaby Saves Christmas*; *Cinderella*; *Stages of Love*). The pair spent several years researching and creating the project with the guidance of experienced teachers, administrators, and psychologists. The goal was to create an entertaining and informative reflection of the situation that currently exists in our schools. The target audience is grades 4 through 8.



### The Story

*Class Dismissed: The Bullying Project* tells the two intertwining stories of Tom Brinkman and Julie Albertson. Julie is the new student—seven schools in seven years due to her parents shifting jobs; each year she has had to begin anew, finding new friends and new ways to get along. Tom has been in the school system his entire life but has had trouble fitting in; he has been the victim for as long as he or anyone can remember. Logan Montrose is the Queen Bee of the school, collecting and controlling the students around her. She is assisted by Kaitlin Schuler, a well-meaning but ultimately weaker girl, who is most concerned about fitting in. This translates to agreeing with Logan and doing her bidding. Victor Simmons is the school bully; he is popular with the girls, pushes the limits, and rarely if ever gets caught. Tom is his particular target.

The play begins with the morning of the first day of school. The five young people get ready in their own ways. Each anticipates what the day, and ultimately the year, will bring. They express their hopes and concerns with the either the support or opposition of the adults in their lives. Tom's father is rather vague in his focus on what is going on in his son's life.

Victor's father is a strong, judgmental man who is belittling to both Victor and Victor's mother; it is clear that Victor patterns his behavior off of this opinionated and volatile man. Kaitlin's mother is supportive but non-communicative; she offers advice and suggestions but is not interested in engaging her daughter beyond the most superficial level. Julie's parents are already at work and she expresses her fears to her understanding grandmother. Logan's parents are never seen as she is someone who operates in her own terms.

The opening shifts from the hallway to homeroom, back to the hallways, then to lunch and finally the bus ride home. Along the way, Julie meets Tom but chooses to connect herself with Logan and Kaitlin. The plot follows Julie's struggles to attain a certain amount of popularity, which forces her to choose Logan and Kaitlin over Tom, as well as to relinquish a great deal of personal freedom and control over her own choices. In this world,

Logan calls all the shots. The situation builds to Logan's pressuring Julie to taking a Snapchat photo of another girl (the unseen Rachel Corman) in the locker room. After the picture is posted, it forces the victim to leave school. In addition, Logan pits Julie and Kaitlin against each other, using Julie's e-mail password to send out mail in Julie's name. In the meantime, Victor continues to harass Tom, with acceleration after Victor wrongly suspects Tom of going to a teacher about the abuse.





Ultimately, the faculty and administrators get involved with a program that they label “See it. Say it. Stop it.” The purpose is to acknowledge acts of bullying, address them as such, and arrest their progress. “See it. Say it. Stop it.” Julie is first to step-up. After several incidents, she sees Logan for who she is and that Tom is her true friend. When Victor is once again terrorizing Tom, Julie stands-up for him. Later, after Logan sets Kaitlin against Julie, Kaitlin realizes that she has been manipulated. In a true act of courage, Kaitlin stands-up to both Victor and Logan, clearly siding with Julie and Tom. She admits to Julie that what has happened is as much her own fault as Julie’s. With this offer, new friendships are formed.



### The Location

*Class Dismissed: The Bullying Project* takes place at Harrison Central School, in the town of Clarkson. This is a middle and upper-middle class community. There is a cross-section of both blue-collar and privileged students. The majority of the play takes place in the school but also begins and returns several times to the students’ homes as well as on the bus. In addition, various fantasy sequences take the audience into the world of reality television as well as children’s programming and sporting competitions.

### The Student Characters



There are five student characters in the play:

Julie Albertson. She has just moved to Harrison from New Hartsman. Both of her parents work and their jobs have kept them moving over the past seven years. She has a close relationship with her grandmother to whom she speaks twice in the play as well as a third phone call to her grandmother



hen the latter is not home. She is an intelligent, pleasant and outgoing young woman with a desire to fit-in.

Logan Montrose. The penultimate Queen Bee, she is both beautiful and ruthless. She stays in power through lies, manipulation, and keeping her hands clean, choosing instead to have her minions do the actual dirty work. She is controlling and rules with an iron fist. She changes allegiances easily and will turn on a close friend just to exercise her power.

Kaitlin Schuler. Logan's number two. A kind but weak young woman who is desperately in need of approval. She has been Logan's confidant, servant, and lackey for as long as she can remember. She has maintained her position by feeding into Logan's whims and acting on anything that she is assigned. When Logan chooses Julie over her, she is devastated and takes it out on Julie rather than the true source.

Tom Brinkman. Tom has lived on the periphery of the school community. His earphones serve to buffer and even close him off from the outside world. His father is not unkind but cannot be bothered (as seen by his only lackluster attempts to follow up on the guidance counselor's phone calls). Tom has given up seeking approval of his peers long ago and is now concentrating on just surviving. A stutter from elementary school, long left behind, still haunts him.

Victor Simmons. The son of a strong father and a weak mother, he has been drilled to be the best—a leader if not in the classrooms, in the halls. He has a mean-streak and a nasty sense of humor. He is the epitome of the physical and verbally abusive bully. He is a taker—whether it is money, food, or a seat on the bus. He is always “performing” for any audience.

### Adults and Others



In addition to these five major players, two actors play all of the adults in the piece, numbering some thirty different characters, ranging from staff and faculty to gameshow hosts and sports announcers.

The major characters include the following:



Mr. Marivell. The homeroom teacher who at first is indifferent to Tom's plight but eventually enlists the guidance counselor to approach the principal about dealing with the rise in bullying.

Mrs. Lamb. The guidance counselor for the A-L's. Overwhelmed but well-meaning, she tries to connect with the students and becomes more aware of the situation. She is genuinely concerned about Tom and diligently tries to confront his issues.

Principal Scolastica. The no nonsense administrator who takes a strong stand with "See it. Say it. Stop it."

Mr. Simmons. Victor's abrasive father and a bully.

Mrs. Simmons. Victor's put-upon mother.

Mr. Brinkman. Tom's passive father.

Julie's Grandmother. A kind and sensitive woman who hears what Julie has to say and is incredibly supportive.

Mrs. Schuler. Kaitlin's mother. Thoroughly impressed with Logan (as we suspect she might have been a Logan in her day), she is oblivious to the turmoil in Kaitlin's life.

The minor characters include:

Mr. Wheelwright. The bus driver who sees Victor for who and what he is.

Mrs. Traymaker. The disinterested cafeteria lady.



In addition, the fantasy characters include narrators, hosts, sports commentators, jungle hunters, reporters and paparazzi, computer voices, a newspaper hawker, a ringmaster, and a referee.



### The Unseen Characters

Two characters, while never actually appearing in the play, are discussed and should be considered major players in the story:

Alec Wilson. He is the object of Kaitlin's affection. Good looking, popular and president of student council, Logan uses Kaitlin's feelings for Alec to pit her against Julie.

Rachel Corman. A quiet, over-weight girl who is the constant butt of vicious jokes and pranks. Logan and Kaitlin refer to her as "T.F.T.L."—"Too Fat To Live." It is her picture that Julie is bullied into taking in the locker room which is then posted via Snapchat. After this incident, Rachel disappears from school.

### The Songs

"First Day Back." The entire company reveals various thoughts about the coming day and year. From their homes, each of the young people sings of the concerns, hopes, and fears.

"Learn and Live." This song takes place in the cafeteria. Logan, Kaitlin, and Victor lay out exactly who is who and what is what in a series of lettered descriptions. A L.I.T.S. is a "Lost in the Seventies." B.F.F. is "Best Friends Forever." "I.T.Z." is "In the Zone."

"The Lion's Share." Victor, having been admonished by his father about a call from school, assumes that it is Tom who has complained. In this number, he, along with Logan, and backed by the company, express the need to be on top as "only the strongest will survive."

"The Story That Logan Told." A rhythmic piece that traces the destructive power of gossip, both real and fabricated.

"Harrison Corner." In a fantasy sequence, Tom imagines that his day-to-day problems could be solved in the same manner as touted on Saturday morning children's shows. "Harrison Corner" is the peppy theme-song that turns dark as he returns to reality.

"Get a Voice." Mrs. Lamb and Mr. Marivell introduce the idea of standing up for yourself and others. Kaitlin eventually carries the message to Julie and Tom as they all become stronger by being heard. (See Get a Voice below.)





### The Style

*Class Dismissed: The Bullying Project* uses a range of styles, from realistic scenes of interaction in the halls, classroom and cafeteria, to Tom’s interior monologues, describing life in the school. In addition, computer conversations are voiced as are phone calls to friends and relations.

The play also steps into the realm of fantasy with “Where Shall I Sit?” competitions, the aforementioned “Harrison Corner” children’s show, a royal court, a referee who flags the play, a jungle hunt “on the trail of the bully,” muckraking reporters, and even a “House that Jack Built” anatomy of the spreading of rumors.

The scenes weave one into another without break or pause. Four lockers and six blocks encompass the entire set as they are moved and adjusted to create a dozen locales (hallways, classrooms, bedrooms, etc.). The adults change characters through the addition and subtraction of costume pieces (glasses, jackets, scarves) as well as props (clipboards, books, folders).

In addition to presenting the themes explored in the play, the goal is to give the audience an experience that is wholly theatrical. The production departs from the rigid and predictable world of film and television and enter a place that utilizes imagination on multiple levels.

### The Theme

*Class Dismissed* looks at both boy and girl bullying. The boy bullying represented in the play is of a more obvious nature. Victor torments Tom with both physical and verbal abuse. He is constantly tripping him, dumping his books, and taking money and food from him. In addition, he name-calls, with many “gay” and “fruit” references.



The girl bullying represented is of the insidious Queen Bee kind. Logan is a leader—popular, beautiful, and ruthless. She manipulates, wheedles, and lies, setting friends against friends. She uses her number two, Kaitlin, to do much of her dirty work as well as forcing the new girl, Julie, to take a picture of another student in the locker room. She controls her universe with threats and promises; the ultimate punishment that is her weapon of choice is banishment.

Ultimately, much of the solution to the bullying problem lies in turning bystanders into witnesses. It is the hope that those students who either go along with or turn a blind eye to bullying will finally speak-up and speak-out. In the play, Julie finally stands up for Tom against Victor; she asks him to stop picking on him, and, for the moment, having lost his audience, Victor concedes. Later, Kaitlin makes the choice to defy Queen Bee Logan and stand-up for both Julie and Tom. When Logan indicates that she is going to be “so alone,” Kaitlin makes it clear that she will not be—that the



friendships offered by people like Julie and Tom are more valuable and do not contain the same costs that the relationship with Logan does.

### Bullying

Bullying takes on many forms and can be broken down in various ways. The production addressed five types of bullying. There is no clear dividing line as often the types of bullying overlap:

1. Name calling and teasing.
2. Social isolation.
3. Threatening.
4. Physical bullying.
5. Cyber bullying.

### Dr. Laurie Mandel and The GET.A.VOICE™ Project

This creation of this project was greatly aided by the support and insight of Dr. Laurie Mandel, of the Three Village School District who created The GET.A.VOICE™ Project.

Dr. Laurie Mandel is an artist, an academic, and advocate. She has used her commitment to teaching, the arts, and to her students to bring deeper awareness of many of the social issues facing young people in our schools. She has done extensive work in dealing with peer harassment, teasing and bullying, body image and the media, homophobia, and adolescent gender issues. As an author, editor, and lecturer, her work has been acknowledged as landmark in the country.

The goal of the organization is to “raise awareness, intercept hurtful language, and empower students to stand up and challenge others.” The GET.A.VOICE™ Project “achieves its vision by providing schools with the framework and tools to proactively address the impact of language by empowering students to be leaders, to make a difference, and to be voices of courage and respect in their interactions and in their lives.”

To find out more about GET.A.VOICE™, please visit the website at [www.getavoice.net](http://www.getavoice.net).

Dr. Mandel was kind enough to create focus groups for *Class Dismissed: The Bullying Project*. In addition to spending many hours with the creators, she read and re-read multiple drafts of the play, giving insight and suggestions.

### Dana G. Bush, Ph.D.

In addition to Dr. Mandel’s extraordinary contributions, the creators of *Class Dismissed: The Bullying Project* acknowledge the outstanding support of Dr. Dana Bush who has been with the project since its inception.

Dr. Bush received her doctorate in Clinical Psychology in 1995 from the California School of Professional Psychology, Berkeley/Alameda. She has done research in the area of divorce and its effects on children. Her training included working in a junior high school conducting both group and individual sessions with a focus on resolving interpersonal conflicts. Dr. Bush spent years working in Veteran's Affairs Medical Centers with medical and psychiatric populations. She is a board certified expert in traumatic stress. Dr. Bush is currently a licensed psychologist in private practice in Lake Ronkonkoma, N.Y.



### For Discussion

1. What does “**See It. Say It. Stop It.**” mean to you?
2. What are the biggest differences in how boys bully as opposed to how girls bully?  
Is one any less harmful than the other?
3. Can all of you think of a student who reminds you of Victor (the male bully in *Class Dismissed*) and of Logan (the female bully in *Class Dismissed*)? How does it feel to interact with those students? Are you able to relax and be yourself around them?
4. Which of the characters in the play are able to assist and use their voices best?
5. Do you know students who remind you of Tom and of Julie (the bullied characters in the play)? Can you imagine what it would feel like to be Tom or Julie every day?
6. What is Kaitlin’s role in the play? How does she change throughout her interactions with Logan and Julie?
7. Look at the five types of bullying and discuss how each type was represented during the play.
  - a. Name calling and teasing.
  - b. Social isolation.
  - c. Threatening.
  - d. Physical bullying.
  - e. Cyber bullying.
8. Define the words: Bully, Bystander, and Victim as a class.
9. Can you recall a bullying incident in which you were the one being bullied? Do you think you handled yourself well? How did it feel? What could you have done differently?
10. Think of a bullying incident in which you were the bystander. Did you handle yourself well? How did it feel to be the bystander? What could you have done differently?
11. Can you think of a time when you felt you were a bully? Do you remember why you behaved the way you did? In looking back on your behavior, how do you feel about the incident now?
12. What role can the adults in the school and your parents play in assisting with bullying?



### Things to Do

1. Create posters expressing the themes discussed in the play. Students can utilize the “See it. Say it. Stop it.” and “Get-a-Voice” phrases.
2. Write a letter to one of the characters in the play. Ask questions about how the characters feel about the other characters, about their actions, and about what happens to them.
3. Create a school newspaper for Clarkson Central School. Include different events that might involve the different characters.
4. Using a bulletin board or wall in the classroom, begin to create a collage/mural expressing the themes in the play. Throughout the coming weeks, let the students add pictures and phrases that build on the themes of bullying, self-esteem, etc.
5. Have the students write stories about bullying using fictional characters (or even in the form of fables, using animals in place of the humans).
6. Write a review of the production of *Class Dismissed*. In addition to discussing the play’s themes/messages, the students can write about the technical elements (set pieces, properties, costumes) as well as the performances. Further discussion can include a discussion of the adults who play multiple characters.





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