***Sunny Afternoon* Proposal—Fourth Wall Series**

**Submitted by John Fleming**

1. CV—see separate attachment
2. Biography: John Fleming is Dean of the College of Fine Arts and Communication at Texas State University. His books include *Stoppard’s Theatre: Finding Order amid Chaos*, *Tom Stoppard’s Arcadia*, *Romulus Linney: Maverick of the American Theater*, and the 11th edition of Oscar Brockett’s *The Essential Theatre*.
3. Contents:
4. Introduction: a 2000-word primer on the musical including the history of its development and reviews of its inaugural production. (Attached as sample chapter.)
5. Ch. 1 Key Players: Since *Sunny Afternoon* is a bio-musical, this chapter provides overviews of the principal characters presented in the show, offering context for who these characters are, and in some cases what happened to them in the years after the content of *Sunny Afternoon*. It also provides snapshots of some of the creative responsible for *Sunny Afternoon*’s success.
6. Ch. 2 Act One: This chapter provides detailed analysis of the structure, story, songs, and content of Act One, the story of The Kinks’ formation as working-class teenagers who signed with a management team who was looking out for their own interests, not just the band’s. It includes the creation of their iconic song “You Really Got Me” and the evolution of Ray Davies’s personal and professional life as the band began to take off. At the same time, in the run-up to their unlikely success, the seeds of the band’s inner turmoil are also evident as conflicts erupt prior to their fateful U.S. tour of 1965.
7. Ch.3 Act Two: This chapter provides detailed analysis of the structure, story, songs, and content of Act Two, the tale of The Kinks’ disastrous 1965 U.S. tour which includes darkly comic encounters with various American union officials, Ray Davies emotional isolation while on the road, his eventual nervous breakdown, followed by the band’s triumphant return encapsulated in the creation of the iconic songs “Sunny Afternoon” and “Waterloo Sunset.”

Note on Analytic Approach: With any bio-drama, audiences almost always ask: ‘how true is the depiction?’ Did that really happen? Was he really like that?’ In the case of *Sunny Afternoon*, I always tell people that the show is not factual, but it is truthful (or that it is truthful but not always factual). Indeed, in an interview writer Joe Penhall remarked: ‘I told Ray [Davies], “Never let the facts get in the way of a good story.” So there’s a little poetic licence, but not much.’

Inspired by Penhall’s statement, as well as my own conversations with audience members and observations from message boards, the analysis provided in Chapters Two and Three revolves around answering the following types of questions:

  1) Why did Joe Penhall select these events and songs? How do they reveal character, theme and the story of the Kinks?

2)  How accurate is the portrayal?

For example, take the classic stage moment where Dave Davies, dressed in lingerie, swings from a chandelier and then uses an axe to break apart the hotel desk… did that actually happen?  Yes and no, or rather it is a conflation of three separate events. There are many instances of the young Dave wearing women’s clothing, but there is also an account of Dave, dressed in armor, swinging from a chandelier in a Scottish castle and then later on that tour (along with a member of Gary and the Pacemakers) taking an axe to a hotel desk (when they couldn’t get into a bar that was closed because it was 2:00 in the morning.) Via the conflation of these separate events, Penhall quickly and memorably demonstrates the flamboyant, sexually ambiguous, and volatile personality of the young ‘Dave the Rave.’

One other quick example: Moving the song “Dead End Street” to have it sung by their father (and mother) highlights the lower middle-class status of the family (and Ray and Dave did not grow up like brothers as they often lived apart with members of the extended family)… and then having their management team come in with the closing trombone section is actually a homage to the fact that Ray secretly produced an alternate version of the song (after producer Shel Talmy left) and Wace pulled in a trombone player from a pub. (And according to Davies, Talmy never knew it was an alternate recording and it is the version that Davies produced that went top 5 in the singles chart.)

Overall, using extensive external research, the analysis will provide the reader and audience member a fuller understanding of the truth of the depictions as opposed to just the ‘facts.’ The inquiry will delve into the way in which Penhall constructed the story around the songs, using them to explore the characters and themes … and when appropriate some interesting anecdotes will be interspersed to show the way the facts and the truth dance together.

1. Appendix A: *Sunny Afternoon* fact sheet: A brief overview documenting production dates, creative team, and awards. Rather than bog down the narrative, the essential facts are placed in an easy access appendix.
2. Appendix B: The Songs of *Sunny Afternoon*: The show includes 28 Kinks songs, both hit singles as well as lesser known works, and this appendix chronicles any relevant background information on the songs and their life outside the musical.
3. Sample Chapter: The Introduction is included as a separate attachment.
4. Blurb: When “You Really Got Me” exploded on Swinging London in 1964, The Kinks forever changed the course of rock ‘n’ roll. Led by singer-songwriter Ray Davies and the manic guitar playing of younger brother Dave, The Kinks were mere teenagers when they created some of the most unforgettable songs of The British Invasion. Featuring hits such as “Waterloo Sunset”, “Lola”, “A Well Respected Man”, “Dedicated Follower of Fashion,” the genre-changing power-chord sonic thumpers “You Really Got Me” and “All Day and All of the Night” as well as the sing-along title track that defined England’s glorious summer of 1966, the Olivier Award-winning *Sunny Afternoon* covers the band’s formative years of 1964-1967, when four working-class North London lads broke through to become one of the most unlikely and influential rock bands of the 1960s. With the story provided by Ray Davies himself, this musical provides an inside look at the formation of the iconic rock band. It chronicles the obstacles the band faced, including numerous financial and contractual disputes with their management and publishing team, a disastrous 1965 U.S. tour that led to a four-year ban from the country, as well as the legendary intra-fighting among the four bandmates. Mixing the comic adventures of “Dave the Rave” with the touching introspection of Ray’s sometimes fragile psyche, Joe Penhall’s script weaves Ray Davies’ songs, both the hits and lesser-known works, into one of the finest jukebox musicals of the new millennium, a show hailed as the best rock musical since *Jersey Boys* and the best British musical since *Billy Elliott*. Via the collaboration of Penhall and Davies, *Sunny Afternoon* reveals the inner dynamics of The Kinks, while also providing insight on an era that continues to reverberate through popular culture.
5. Competition: Currently there are no books written about *Sunny Afternoon*.
6. Why This Play?: Throughout the 1980s, my high school and college years, The Kinks were my favorite band. (My Facebook page includes a 1984 photo of Ray Davies with me and my friends.) Ray has long been known as one of the most literate songwriters, and I was always a fan of his wit, intelligence, and incisive lyrics, songs that have a theatrical sense of character and story-telling. Now as a theatre professor, *Sunny Afternoon* provides an opportunity to wed two of my loves: the music of The Kinks and theater history.
7. Who Will Read It?: The Kinks have been a part of popular culture for more than fifty years, have sold millions of records, and have a fascinating biographical story (highlighted by the intense love-hate relationship between Ray and Dave Davies.) There are nearly a dozen books about The Kinks as a rock band, but this will be the only one about the musical that tells their story. It will appeal to fans of the band and fans of the musical, as it contributes to the body of literature on both rock ‘n’ roll and musical theatre.
8. Delivery Date: August 2016