Excerpt terms and conditions



"Spectacularly catchy songs, a wacky plot juggling a slew of different moral lessons."

Chicago Theater Beat

Based on the novel by Christopher Paul Curtis



Music and lyrics by Lamont Dozier and Paris Dozier

Adapted by David Ingber

Music supervision, orchestrations and arrangements by Brian Usifer

"Jubilant musical for the entire family."

Chicago Theatre Review

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"A heartfelt musical romp for kids of many ages."

-Chicago Sun-Times

Musical.

Music and lyrics by
Lamont Dozier and
Paris Dozier.

Book by David Ingber.

Based on the novel
Mr. Chickee's Funny Money by
Christopher Paul Curtis.
Orchestrations and arrangements by
Brian Usifer.

"[A] jubilant musical for the entire family ... terrifically entertaining ... a must-see ... top-notch family entertainment that just happens to promote positive values."

—Chicago Theatre Review

"From the moment you hear the opening number, "Where Your Dreams Come to Life," you revel in that inimitable Dozier sound ... a blend, really, of the senior Dozier's signature Motown-like sound and the younger Dozier's excursions more into hip-hop stylings."

-Chicago Tribune

"Will have your toes tapping and your kids leaving with a lesson every parent can support: Believe in yourself and those around you."

-Chicago Parent magazine

Cast: 5 to 6m., 2 to 4w., 1 either gender. Mr. Chickee's Funny Money follows 10-year-old Steven, a self-proclaimed spy and president of the Flint Future Detectives Club. At the heart of this whimsical journey is an intelligent, entrepreneurial boy who is asked to unlock the secret behind a mysterious bill. With his pals (and their giant flying dog, Zoopy), Steven discovers that family, friends, imagination and determination are the true keys to success, and sharing the spotlight with others can make one even richer. This all new rhythm and blues musical grooves to original songs by Motown legend Lamont Dozier (who wrote hits like "Stop! In the Name of Love," "How Sweet It Is (To Be Loved by You)," "Reach Out I'll Be There," "Where Did Our Love Go" and more) with additional music and lyrics by his son, Paris Dozier. Flexible staging. Accompaniment CD available. Approximate running time: 75 minutes. Code: MP3.

Cover design: Jeanette Alig-Sergel.





Dramatic Publishing

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Mr. Chickee's Funny Money

Music and lyrics by LAMONT DOZIER and PARIS DOZIER

Book by DAVID INGBER

Based on the novel by CHRISTOPHER PAUL CURTIS

Music supervision, orchestrations and arrangements by BRIAN USIFER

Mr. Chickee's Funny Money received its world premiere production at Chicago Children's Theatre, January 2014, Jacqueline Russell, Artistic Director, produced in association with Funny Money Enterprises and Bisno Productions and directed by Derrick Sanders.

Mr. Chickee's Funny Money received its first staged reading at the Apollo Theater in New York in 2012, directed by Kim Rubinstein, followed by a workshop in 2013 at Northwestern University's American Music Theatre Project.



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(MR. CHICKEE'S FUNNY MONEY)

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In addition, all producers of the musical must include the following acknowledgment on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the musical and on all advertising and promotional materials:

"Mr. Chickee's Funny Money received its first staged reading at the Apollo Theater in New York in 2012, directed by Kim Rubinstein, followed by a workshop in 2013 at Northwestern University's American Music Theatre Project."

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Chickee's Funny Money is a story about a boy who is beginning to learn what's important in life. The themes it presents are universal, and while the book is written featuring an African-American family, as a practical matter, producers should feel free to cast without regard to characters' races. For, to paraphrase Mr. Othello Chickee himself, the message of love, hope and belief that is in these pages is actually "in the music."

But watch out—the songs in this musical will implant themselves in your brain and have you humming them for days! And there is one person responsible for this: Lamont Dozier.

The number I can't get out of my head is "As Long as We Believe," the musical's finale. It sticks out for me because it is such a perfect summation of the process that brought my book for children to the stage.

It all seemed impossible those many years ago when Karen Pritzker called and said she wanted to turn the book into a musical. Authors occasionally get calls like this and learn to keep expectations low. I remember telling her, "Great," but thinking, "Yeah, right." I should have believed.

Karen's next call was to ask if I was familiar with a composer named Lamont Dozier because she was hoping to sign him to write all the songs for the musical.

Am I familiar with Lamont Dozier? One of my 10 strandedon-an-island albums is Lamont's first solo effort, "Out Here On My Own." The ballad "I'm Just Trying to Hold On" is one of the most impassioned, beautiful songs ever written. It is evidence of the reason Lamont is known as the Black Bach.

I started to believe.

My belief grew stronger when Karen and co-producer Debbie Bisno began updating me with who else they'd signed. David Ingber beautifully adapted the novel, and Lamont's son, Paris, added his interpretations to his father's work. The Chicago Children's Theatre with Jacqui Russell and Derrick Sanders were chosen to debut the performance. With that team of talent, energy and drive how could I not believe? I think once you've read this script you, too, will become a believer.

—Christopher Paul Curtis

I first encountered *Mr. Chickee's Funny Money* when I listened to the audiobook with my then 10-year-old son during the long drives to school. My daughters were required to read Christopher Paul Curtis' other books *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* and *Bud, Not Buddy*. Reluctant readers, they loved the books and made me read them both. My son and I were drawn in immediately to *Mr. Chickee's Funny Money*, which is the story about a boy trying to solve a mystery and losing his best friends along the way. It was fun to read with all of Curtis' humor and fun to imagine the enormous dog at the heart of the story. I could see the whole gang onstage and was lucky enough that Lamont and Paris Dozier and David Ingber could see these characters rise off the page and sing and dance their way onto a stage.

My son, a crafter of grand schemes, immediately recognized Steven as a fellow dreamer. I immediately recognized Steven's parents as well intentioned but misguided, and I knew, as the mother of four children, that as parents we get a lot of things wrong, but we hope that the love and care we have will shine through. A song can say in three minutes what takes a novelist pages to convey, and Lamont Dozier's roof-raising song "Till It Gets Better" is no exception:

"Being a parent is a job / That takes a lot of love and patience / And although it seems like it's out of range / We pray and hope / For our world to change / Our son needs to know he's free to be himself / Without fear of being put down / By somebody else / 'Cause we know he's just feeling his way / Expressing himself in an awkward stage"

Very little of the theatre I was seeing appealed to both me and my children, but here was a story with humor and wisdom that my 10-year-old and I could both enjoy.

Many, many drafts, readings, workshops and years later, we now have the script and score that's fun for children, grownups and anyone who likes dogs and mysteries!

—Karen Pritzker, producer

Mr. Chickee's Funny Money

CHARACTERS

STEVEN: 10, African-American or mixed race, the president of the Flint Future Detectives.

RICHELLE: 9, the smartest kid in the fourth grade.

RUSSELL: 8, the loyal best friend and sidekick of Steven.

ELMWOOD: 30s, Steven's father. LYNETTA: 30s, Steven's mother.

MR. CHICKEE: 60s, African-American, a blind street performer.

AGENT FONDOO: 40s to 50s, the head of the Treasury Department.

AGENT 2 (woman) and AGENT 3 (man): 20s to 30s, any race, Fondoo's minions.

MADAM DIRECTOR: 40s to 50s, top-level government operative, Agent Fondoo's boss.

ZOOPY: Steven's giant magical dog (a puppet manipulated by an actor).

Note: With double-casting, this show can be performed with as few as seven actors (5m., 2w.) and one puppeteer. Steven, Russell and Richelle can be played by age-appropriate actors or by adult actors playing children.

Suggested double-castings:

Lynetta / Madam Director Richelle / Agent 2 Russell / Agent 3

SETTING

Present day. Flint, Mich.

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Previous presentations have used a four-piece band:

Piano Drums

Bass

Guitar

Mr. Chickee's Funny Money

PROLOGUE: The Flint River

(#1: "Prologue")

(From high above the Flint River, STEVEN, RUSSELL and RICHELLE all stare down at the water in horror. There's a loud splash.)

VOICES (offstage).

AS LONG AS YOU BELIEVE YOU CAN MAKE IT

MR. CHICKEE. Mmm, mmm, mmm.

VOICES (offstage).

NO MATTER HOW SCARY LIFE GETS

MR. CHICKEE (cont'd, to audience). That's my man Stevie up there.

VOICES (offstage).

WE'LL OVERCOME THE FEARS AND THREATS

(Humming continues under.)

MR. CHICKEE. Just 10 years old. And he's already given up hope? Doesn't believe anymore? For my money, that is the worst sight in the world. The name's Othello Chickee. And I may be blind, but I've been walking the streets of Flint, Michigan my whole life. Flint has seen some boom times, and it's seen some busts. So we look to the kids here in Flint, the kids just like *you*, to truly *believe* that life can

get better. That our city can one day return to greatness! (Music changes.) But I'm getting ahead of myself. Let me hit the rewind button real quick ...

(#2: "Where Your Dreams Come to Life)

MR. CHICKEE (cont'd). And take you back exactly three days ago, before any of this mess even happened. It was a very special day, for a very special young man, in the most special town in America ...

(We go back in time three days as everything onstage transitions from a somber mood to a hopeful, joyous one. Flint is bustling, friendly and familiar.)

SCENE 1: The Streets of Flint

MR. CHICKEE (cont'd).

WELCOME HOME TO FLINT WHERE I'VE LIVED SINCE I WAS BORN I WATCHED IT GROW AND GO FROM DIRT ROADS TO ROWS OF SKYSCRAPERS THAT SOAR ALL THE CORNER STORES AND FACTORIES THAT AIN'T RUNNING ANYMORE I AM THIS TOWN AND IT IS ME ALL THE WAY DOWN TO MY CORE FLINT IS THE TOWN WHERE YOU CAN COUNT ON THE PERSON STANDING NEXT TO YOU REGARDLESS OF THE OBSTACLE WE'RE DEPRESSION AND RECESSION PROOF TO OTHERS WE'RE ASSUMED TO BE IN A STATE OF EMERGENCY BUT OUR SENSE OF COMMUNITY IS OUR MOST VALU'BLE CURRENCY

ALL

THIS IS WHERE YOUR DREAMS
THIS IS WHERE YOUR DREAMS COME TO LIFE

MR. CHICKEE.

CHANGE YOUR REALITY BY MANIFESTING YOUR FANTASIES

ALL.

THIS IS WHERE YOUR DREAMS
THIS IS WHERE YOUR DREAMS COME TO LIFE

MR. CHICKEE.

CREATE YOUR DESTINY WITH ALL YOUR POSITIVE ENERGY YOU CAN ACCOMPLISH ANYTHING

STEVEN. Mr. Chickee!

MR. CHICKEE. Is that you, Stevie boy? My eyes don't work as well as they used to. Because, ya know, they used to work. And now they don't.

STEVEN. Yes, it's me.

MR. CHICKEE. Well listen: I need every item on this grocery list. Do you think the president of the Flint Future Detectives is up for the task?

STEVEN. No problem! That's why I invented these: The Springboard Sneakers 5000. "Item too high? Jump to the sky!"

MR. CHICKEE. Then get going!

(STEVEN runs off with the list.)

STEVEN.

THIS IS WHERE I'M FREE FROM PARENTAL AUTHORITY THE BEST DETECTIVE YOU CAN FIND IN THIS TOWN, OF COURSE, IT'S ME AND THIS IS WHERE I PREPARE TO PROVE TO MY MOM AND DAD THAT AFTER ALL IS SAID AND DONE BEING A DREAMER IS NOT THAT BAD

ALL.

IF OUR SPIRITS ARE LOW OR WE'RE IN GRIEF, WE KNOW THERE WILL ALWAYS BE SOMEONE THERE WHO'S GONNA HELP US BELIEVE

STEVEN.

TO BELIEVE IN OURSELVES

ALL.

TO BELIEVE

RICHELLE

YOU DON'T NEED TO BE SOMEONE ELSE

ALL.

JUST BELIEVE

RUSSELL.

AND YOUR FEARS WILL DISSOLVE WE'LL BE HERE THROUGH IT ALL OPEN EARS TO YOUR CALLS

ALL.

JUST BELIEVE

MR. CHICKEE.

WHETHER YOUR COLOR IS DARK OR LIGHT, OR YOUR COLLAR IS BLUE OR WHITE, WE STICK TOGETHER THROUGH THIS FIGHT

ALL.

THAT'S RIGHT!
THIS IS WHERE YOUR DREAMS

ALL.
THIS IS WHERE YOUR
DREAMS COME TO LIFE

LYNETTA & RICHELLE.
JUST BELIEVE JUST BELIEVE
IN YOURSELF

LYNETTA & RICHELLE.
JUST BELIEVE JUST BELIEVE IN YOURSELF

ALL.

THIS IS WHERE YOUR DREAMS

ALL.
THIS IS WHERE YOUR
DREAMS COME TO LIFE

LYNETTA & RICHELLE.
JUST BELIEVE JUST BELIEVE
IN YOURSELF

ALL.

IS WHERE YOUR DREAMS
THIS IS WHERE YOUR DREAMS COME TO LIFE

MR. CHICKEE. Looks like you got everything! You really are the best detective in Flint. Most kids your age wouldn't wake up on a Saturday morning and help an old man with his groceries.

STEVEN. A good detective learns everything. And no one knows more about Flint than you!

MR. CHICKEE. Well I do know it is my man's 10th birthday today! I got you a gift: I'm gonna let you take care of my dog Zoopy while I go out of town! Say, where is that dog? He may wander off, but any time you need him, you just yell, "Zoop, Zoop, Zoopy," and he'll come running right to ya! (Nothing happens.) Well, sometimes he's so far away, it takes a couple people for him to hear you. Try it with me.

MR. CHICKEE & STEVEN. Zoop, Zoop, Zoopy!

(ZOOPY, a dog the size of a man, enters, gleefully woofing.)

STEVEN. Thanks, Mr. Chickee! I'll just have to ask my parents if it's OK

MR. CHICKEE. Ask your parents? Stevie boy, you're 10 years old! By the time I was 10 years old, I was 15 years old. You gotta think for yourself, just like Zoopy. He really is an extraordinary pooch. With his help, there's no doubt you'll solve the case! (He exits.)

STEVEN. Case? What case?

(RUSSELL and RICHELLE enter.)

RUSSELL & RICHELLE (singing). Happy birthday to you! Happy birthday to you!

STEVEN. Thanks guys!

RUSSELL. Hey bucko—(Seeing ZOOPY.) Oh my God, I love him.

STEVEN. Russell, Richelle, this is Zoopy. The world's first dogtective. According to Mr. Chickee, he's gonna help us solve a case.

RUSSELL & RICHELLE. A case?

RICHELLE. I can log each clue into a spreadsheet with my sweet new calculator. I call it the Gal-culator.

STEVEN. I don't know what the case is yet, but apparently, Zoopy's gonna be a big part of it.

(They all turn to ZOOPY and begin investigating him. ZOOPY starts coughing. He coughs up an envelope, which STEVEN picks up.)

STEVEN. "To Stevie boy—the president of the Flint Future Detectives!"

RICHELLE. Open it up! It's gotta be the first clue in Mr. Chickee's case!

STEVEN. Wait a second—whatever's in this envelope is our first clue in Mr. Chickee's case!

RICHELLE. Yeah, that's what I was—

STEVEN. It's a note! (Reading.) "Dear Stevie boy. I'm sorry ..."

MR. CHICKEE. ... sorry I had to dash off like that. I'm also sorry if this letter is covered in doggie slobber; ol' Zoopy will eat just about anything. But you're already on your way to solving the case. You are the only one I can trust with this bill. I need you to find out if it's real or not. This is a major case, Stevie boy. A case that can change lives, entire communities, the city of Flint, maybe all of mankind! Sincerely, Othello Chickee.

RICHELLE. I think he meant all of "personkind."

STEVEN (pulling a green bill out of the envelope). Look! This must be the bill Mr. Chickee was talking about!

RICHELLE. It's ... some kind of funny money!

RUSSELL. A one with 15 zeros? This can't be real. People with that kind of money don't come from Flint. They live in fancy places like New York City or Suburbs.

STEVEN. Who is this guy?

(#3: "A Job For Us")

STEVEN (cont'd). Is this bill real? And what should we do with it? Flint Future Detectives, get ready for the case of Mr. Chickee's Funny Money.

WHAT'S THIS? SO MYSTERIOUS! IT'S SOMETHING I NEVER THOUGHT COULD EXIST I NEED TO KNOW WHAT IT IS

STEVEN, RICHELLE & RUSSELL.
IT LOOKS JUST LIKE A JOB FOR US!

STEVEN.

WHERE DO I START? THIS WORLD IS JUST A BIG QUESTION MARK IT'S TIME TO ILLUMINATE THE DARK

STEVEN, RICHELLE & RUSSELL.
IT LOOKS JUST LIKE A JOB FOR US!

STEVEN

I'M ON A MISSION, STOP LOOK AND LISTEN CRIMINALS BEWARE, PREPARE TO GO TO PRISON I'M STEVEN, I LEAD THE FFD THAT STANDS FOR THE FLINT FUTURE DETECTIVES LET'S GET BUSY, TIME'S OF THE ESSENCE TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS, NOT YOUR PERCEPTION THE TRUTH CAN BE SO DECEPTIVE AND

STEVEN, RICHELLE & RUSSELL.
IT LOOKS JUST LIKE A JOB FOR US!

STEVEN.

TO GET A MYSTERY SOLVED, I AM THE KID YOU SHOULD CALL I'M MORE THAN QUALIFIED

RICHELLE & RUSSELL.
IT LOOKS JUST LIKE A JOB FOR US!

STEVEN

ANY CLUE OR CONCERN
I'M LEAVING NO STONE UNTURNED
IT'S KIND OF LOOKING LIKE

RICHELLE & RUSSELL.
IT LOOKS JUST LIKE A JOB FOR US!

STEVEN.

THERE'S NO TIME TO WASTE WE'VE GOT TO GO AND SOLVE THIS CASE

RICHELLE & RUSSELL.
IT LOOKS JUST LIKE A JOB FOR US!

STEVEN.

THERE'S NO TIME TO WASTE WE'VE GOT TO GO AND SOLVE THIS CASE WHO ARE WE?

RICHELLE & RUSSELL.

THE FLINT FUTURE DETECTIVES

STEVEN.

WHO ARE WE?

RICHELLE & RUSSELL.

FLINT FUTURE DETECTIVES

STEVEN.

THE FFD!

RICHELLE & RUSSELL.

FLINT FUTURE DETECTIVES

STEVEN.

WHO ARE WE?

RICHELLE & RUSSELL.

FLINT FUTURE DETECTIVES

ALL.

LET'S GO!

RICHELLE & RUSSELL.
FLINT FUTURE DETECTIVES

STEVEN.

WHO ARE WE?

RICHELLE & RUSSELL.

THE FLINT FUTURE DETECTIVES,

STEVEN.

THE FFD!

RICHELLE & RUSSELL.
FLINT FUTURE DETECTIVES

STEVEN

WHO ARE WE?

RICHELLE & RUSSELL.

FLINT FUTURE DETECTIVES

STEVEN.

LET'S GO!

ALL.

WHO'S THIS?

RICHELLE.

MY NAME IS RICHELLE STRONG INDEPENDENT FEMALE GIRLY GIRL THINGS DON'T SUIT ME WELL

ALL.

IT LOOKS JUST LIKE A JOB FOR US!

RICHELLE.

I GET THE DETAILS, PROVIDE THE INTEL AND EVERYTHING ELSE BUT STEVEN ONLY CREDITS HIMSELF

ALL.

IT LOOKS JUST LIKE A JOB FOR US!

RUSSELL.

RUSSELL IS THE NAME, STEVEN'S THE HEART, RICHELLE IS THE BRAIN I LOVE THEM BOTH AND THEY FEEL THE SAME

STEVEN & RICHELLE.

HE THINKS THAT HE IS ONE OF US

RUSSELL.

I ROCK THE HOUSE WITH MY CREW AND OUR DOG ZOOPY RAISES THE ...

ZOOPY

ROOF!

RUSSELL.

I'LL DO WHATEVER THEY ASK ME TO

ALL.

IT LOOKS JUST LIKE A JOB FOR US!

RICHELLE.

YEAH SO WHAT I'M A GIRL I CAN STILL CONQUER THE WORLD I'M GONNA SHOW YOU GUYS

STEVEN.

IT LOOKS JUST LIKE A JOB FOR US!

RUSSELL.

IF Y'ALL ARE EVER IN NEED YOU KNOW YOU CAN COUNT ON ME I'LL BE RIGHT BY YOUR SIDE

RICHELLE & RUSSELL.
IT LOOKS JUST LIKE A

ALL.

JOB FOR US

RICHELLE.

THERE'S NO TIME TO WASTE WE'VE GOT TO GO AND SOLVE THIS CASE

STEVEN & RUSSELL. IT LOOKS JUST LIKE A

ALL

JOB FOR US

STEVEN.

THERE'S NO TIME TO WASTE WE'VE GOT TO GO AND SOLVE THIS CASE

RICHELLE & RUSSELL. IT LOOKS JUST LIKE A JOB

ALL

FOR US

(#3a. "Who Are We?/Fondoo Phone Call")

STEVEN.

WHO ARE WE?

RICHELLE & RUSSELL.

THE FLINT FUTURE DETECTIVES

STEVEN.

WHO ARE WE?

RICHELLE & RUSSELL. FLINT FUTURE DETECTIVES,

STEVEN.

THE FFD!

RICHELLE & RUSSELL.

FLINT FUTURE DETECTIVES

STEVEN.

WHO ARE WE?

RICHELLE & RUSSELL.
FLINT FUTURE DETECTIVES

ALL.

LET'S GO!

RICHELLE & RUSSELL.
FLINT FUTURE DETECTIVES

STEVEN.

WHO ARE WE?

RICHELLE & RUSSELL.

THE FLINT FUTURE DETECTIVES.

STEVEN.

THE FFD!

RICHELLE & RUSSELL.
FLINT FUTURE DETECTIVES

STEVEN.

WHO ARE WE?

RICHELLE & RUSSELL.

FLINT FUTURE DETECTIVES

SCENE 2: The U.S. Treasury Department of Flint

(AGENT FONDOO is on the phone as AGENT 2 and AGENT 3 enter the room.)

AGENT FONDOO. Hello, Madam Director, Special Agent Fondoo calling ... again ... from the U.S. Treasury Department in Flint. You probably haven't gotten my last six or seven voicemails. I know you're very busy out there in Washington, D.C., but I just wanted to give you an update on Operation Funny Money Mega Bill! We're all very hard at work. It's just a little slow going, as my only assistants are those good-for-nothing clowns you sent me. (Seeing AGENT 2 and AGENT 3.) Oh, hey! I was just telling Madam Director how great you guys are!

AGENT 2.

AGENT 3.

Woohoo! That was a compliment, I think! I really love compliments!

We rock at our jobs. I'm gonna call my mom as soon as I buy a phone.