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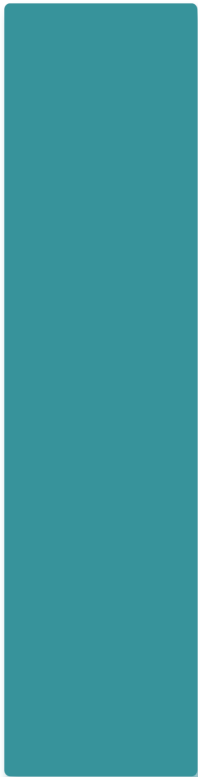

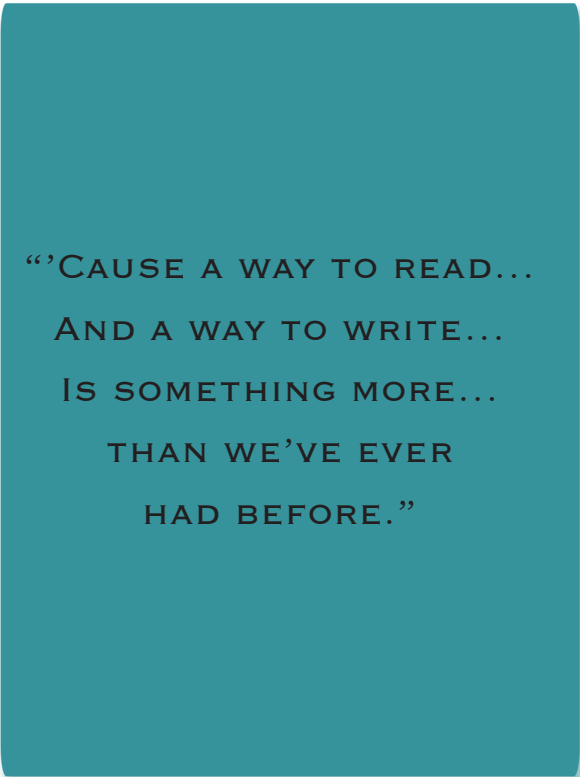
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## **Family Plays**



# LOUIS BRAILLE: THE WORLD AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

BOOK BY CYNTHIA L. COOPER AND JOEL VIG  
MUSIC BY ANNIE LEBEAUX  
LYRICS BY JANE SMULYAN



“CAUSE A WAY TO READ...  
AND A WAY TO WRITE...  
IS SOMETHING MORE...  
THAN WE’VE EVER  
HAD BEFORE.”

## **LOUIS BRAILLE: THE WORLD AT YOUR FINGERTIPS**

book by Cynthia L. Cooper and Joel Vig, music by Annie LeBeaux,  
lyrics by Jane Smulyan

**SUMMARY:** A teen-aged Louis Braille, blind since age 3, enrolls in The Blind School of Paris hoping to learn to read and write. He dreams of becoming a diplomat. When Louis protests broom-making class and exposes a fake display of reading at the annual presentation for donors, he nearly gets expelled. Thankfully, Marie deVries, an instructor, introduces him to music and supports his creative mind by arranging a meeting with the French captain who invented a rudimentary method of nightwriting for soldiers. The method's absurdity and impracticality are clear to Louis, but it gives him the springboard for a burst of creative genius. The result? The Braille system, a code to be scanned under the fingertips, opening a world of literature and musical notation previously closed to the blind. Code: LG8.

With an uplifting story and a vibrant score, this musical demonstrates the youthful power of belief and determination that brought about change during a time in the 1800s when the visually impaired faced untold obstacles and prejudice.

**APPROX. RUNNING TIME:** 55 MINUTES

**CAST:** 5 MINIMUM (2F, 3M), OR UP TO 26 WITH ROLES DISTRIBUTED.

**SETTING:** FLEXIBLE STAGING

**COSTUMES:** PERIOD COSTUMES

**MUSIC:** PIANO/VOCAL MUSIC SCORE AVAILABLE; REHEARSAL CD OF MUSIC WITH VOCALS AVAILABLE.

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ISBN-13 978-0-87602-422-5



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Louis Braille: The World  
at Your Fingertips

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ANCHORAGE PRESS PLAYS, INC.

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(LOUIS BRAILLE: THE WORLD AT YOUR FINGERTIPS)

ISBN: 978-0-87602-422-5

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## IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

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## ORIGINAL PRODUCTION CREDIT

**LOUIS BRAILLE: THE WORLD AT YOUR FINGERTIPS** was successfully premiered by Theatreworks/USA in New York City, Off-Broadway, at Town Hall on February 22, 1988 and the Promenade Theatre on February 27, 1988 for several performances thereafter. Under the aegis of Theatreworks/USA, it was warmly received in hundreds of touring performances in approximately 20 states east of the Mississippi, including the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. It was selected as finalist in 2002 by the National Children's Theatre Festival which honors exceptional musical plays for children, and was selected for a special feature presentation at the Actor's Playhouse at the Miracle Theatre in Coral Gables, Florida in April 2004.

The original production was directed by Alma Becker, choreographed by Laurie Brongo and David Brunetti was the musical director. Costumes were by Heidi Hollmann, settings by Robert Edmonds, stage management by Sherrill Ann Moyer, developmental dramaturgy by John Henry Davis and workshop choreography by Elizabeth Keene.

The artistic and managing directors of Theatreworks/USA were Jay Harnick and Charles Hull, respectively.

### Original Cast:

Samuel D. Cohen	PHILLIPE and others
Karen Jo Prager	BEATRICE, JACQUELINE and others
Steve Pudenz	M. deVRIES, BARBIER and others
Geraldine Singer	MARIE deVRIES and others
Peter Toran	LOUIS BRAILLE

Play Script Layout & Design: Randy Blevins, jrbdesign

**MUSIC**

- IN THE DARK — Company (Scene 1)
- SCHOOL IN PARIS — Simon & Louis (Scene 2)
- YOU’LL FIT RIGHT IN — Phillipe, Beatrice & Louis (Scene 3)
- ON A ROPE/STREETS OF PARIS (Pantomime) —  
Louis, Beatrice, Phillipe & deVries/Louis & Company (Scene 4)
- TROUBLE/TROUBLE-Tag — Louis & Phillipe (Scene 5)
- A LITTLE RAY OF LIGHT —  
Marie, Louis, deVries, Beatrice & Phillipe (Scene 6)
- WHAT COULD BE EASIER THAN THAT? —  
Barbier, Louis & Marie (Scene 9)
- DREAM SEQUENCE/THE FIRST DREAM — Louis (Scene 9)
- THE SECOND DREAM — Louis (Scene 10)
- THE THIRD DREAM — Louis (Scene 10)
- SOMETHING MORE — Louis, Phillipe, Beatrice & Marie (Scene 10)
- LOUIS PLANNING FOR THE ACADEMY – Louis (Scene 11)
- CROSSOVER – Louis (Scene 11)
- THE ACADEMY — Academics #1, #2, #3 & Louis (Scene 12)
- HAND TO HAND FINALE —  
Louis, Phillipe, Jacqueline, deVries, & Marie (Scene 13)
- A LITTLE RAY OF LIGHT (Tag and Bows) – Company (Scene 13)



## **CAST OF CHARACTERS**

(In Order of Appearance)

LOUIS BRAILLE (blind, b. 1809)

CECILE (sighted, age 13)

CHARLES (sighted, age 13)

DENISE (sighted, age 13)

SIMON BRAILLE (Louis's father)

MARIE deVRIES (music teacher, sister of M. deVries)

MONSIEUR CLAUDE deVRIES (director of School for the Blind)

BEATRICE (blind student)

PHILLIPE (blind student)

VENDOR WOMAN

PACKAGE MAN

ORGAN GRINDER

DOG WOMAN

RUFFIAN 1 and 2

CAPTAIN BARBIER (French military captain)

BARBIER'S ASSISTANT

ACADEMIC #1, #2 and #3 (The French Academy of Science)

JACQUELINE (young blind student)

## **CASTING FOR FIVE ACTORS**

ACTOR 1: Louis Braille

ACTOR 2: Charles, Phillipe, Package Man, Ruffian 1, Academic #1

ACTOR 3: Simon Braille, M. deVries, Organ Grinder, Barbier,  
Academic #2

ACTOR 4: Denise, Marie, Vendor Woman, Dog Woman

ACTOR 5: Cecile, Beatrice, Ruffian 2, Barbier's Assistant, Academic  
#3, Jacqueline

All actors sing in the first scene. All actors but Louis are street-goers and vendors in scene four.

## **SETTING**

The play starts in 1822, a time when the world was still largely closed off to the blind. The world that surrounded a curious and bright thirteen-year-old Louis Braille is finally edging toward change—sometimes slow, sometimes misguided. The play is about that world, as well as the young man who inhabited it and, indeed, changed it. The entire play takes place from 1822 to 1828 in France. Settings are a small town (Coupvray); the School for the Blind in Paris; the streets of Paris; the French Academy.

# LOUIS BRAILLE: THE WORLD AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

Book by Cynthia L. Cooper and Joel Vig  
Music by Annie LeBeaux; Lyrics by Jane Smulyan

## SCENE ONE

*[Music Cue: 1. IN THE DARK]*

### SONG: 1. IN THE DARK

**ALL:** *(Sing)*

In the dark,  
What's it like when you're  
Always in the dark?  
Imagine that it's dark.  
Shut your eyes,  
Shut them tight.

**WOMEN:** *(Sing)*

In the dark...

**MEN:** *(Sing)*

Always night.

**ALL:** *(Sing)*

In the dark,  
Shut your eyes  
And imagine that it's dark.

Can you describe the world?

**INDIVIDUAL ACTORS:** *(Sing)*

Smells like rain,  
Lovely roses.  
Bitter taste,  
Much too sweet.  
Feel how smooth.  
Lumpy texture.

**WOMEN:** *(Sing)*

What's that sound?

**MEN:** *(Sing)*

What's that sound?

**ALL:** *(Sing)*

What's that sound?  
A crack of thunder  
Or a falling tree.  
A hurricane  
Or a waterfall.

The village fountain  
Or a summer shower.  
A carriage riding  
Over cobblestone.

**INDIVIDUAL ACTORS:** *(Sing)*

An elephant  
Or a slide trombone.  
A squeaky hinge  
Or an old man's groan.

**ALL:** *(Sing)*

A cry,  
A scream,  
The sound of waking  
From a bad, bad dream...  
Like the dream...

**ACTOR 1 (LOUIS):** *(Sings)*

That you're really in the dark.

**ALL:** *(Sing)*

What's it like when you  
Only know the dark?  
Surrounded by the dark,  
There you are,  
In a box.  
Where's the key  
That unlocks the door?

**WOMEN:** *(Sing)*

The key

**ACTOR 1 (LOUIS):** *(Sings)*

To the light

**ACTORS 2 & 3:** *(Sing)*

When you're locked...

**ALL:** *(Sing)*

In the dark?

## SCENE TWO

*(Following IN THE DARK, Louis and the Ensemble exit while Charles, Cecile and Denise pull away and begin to play tag. They are outside the school in Coupvray, France, 1822.)*

*[Music Cue: 2. POKING LOUIS-UNDERSCORE, under dialogue.]*

**CECILE:** We're locked out of the school again this morning.

**CHARLES:** Probably because Monsieur is reading to you-know-who!

*(Cecile nods knowingly.)*

**DENISE:** I have an announcement to make anyhow. My costume's ready!

**CECILE:** *(Laughs)* You mean your costume for the Mardi Gras party is done?

**DENISE:** I'm going to be the most famous woman in France... *(Holds a sword aloft)* ...Saint Joan of Arc!

**CHARLES:** How boring. She's dead!

**CECILE:** Well, I'm going to be someone... more familiar. *(Takes a stick; begins to walk with it and does an imitation)* "Read to me. Please. Plato? Or Aristotle. Some Sophocles? Monsieur..."

**CHARLES:** It's easy... you're Loui...

*(Before he finishes, Louis enters, guided by his cane. Denise tries to hush Charles and Cecile.)*

*[Music ends.]*

**DENISE:** Louis Braille... hello!

*(Cecile ignores Denise and begins following Louis, imitating him. She motions for Charles and Denise to join her. They do.)*

**LOUIS:** Hello there. Monsieur is through reading to me. He said to send the rest of you on to class.

**CECILE:** That so?

**LOUIS:** I hated to stop. We were in the middle of Plato. The idea of Platonic friendships comes from Plato, you know. That's people who like to discuss ideas together.

*[Music Cue: 3. POKING LOUIS-UNDERSCORE, under dialogue.]*

*(Charles begins making faces, and running his hands in front of Louis, three stooges style, as if testing Louis's lack of sight. Cecile joins actively, barely concealing her laughter, and Denise joins a bit less actively.)*

**DENISE:** Yes, I've heard about that.

**CHARLES:** You didn't cut it short on our account, I hope?

**LOUIS:** It seems like there's never enough time.

*(Charles lies on the ground, and unbuckles Louis's shoes. Cecile and Denise laugh.)*

**LOUIS:** Is that funny?

**DENISE:** We were laughing about... something else. Actually, we were just planning the Mardi Gras party.

**CECILE:** Of course, there won't be any reason for you to come.

**CHARLES:** Because everyone will wear masks, but you couldn't see them anyhow! *(Making more faces)*

**LOUIS:** I'd enjoy it in other ways.

**DENISE:** We'll tell you all about it.

**CHARLES:** When it's over, that is!

*(Simon enters and listens for a moment.)*

**CECILE:** I'm practicing my "masquerade" already. *(She walks around in more exaggerated terms, waving her arms.)*

**SIMON:** *(Interrupts and speaks to Charles, Denise and Cecile)* Get out of HERE! All of you! GET OUT!

*[Music ends abruptly.]*

**LOUIS:** Papa! These are my friends.

**SIMON:** Get out, or I shall go to my shop and get a good, strong leather strap.

*(Cecile screams.)*

**CHARLES:** C'mon. Monsieur's probably waiting for us anyhow.

*(Charles and Cecile pick up books and exit. Denise touches Louis lightly on the arm.)*

**DENISE:** Bye.

*(Denise exits.)*

**LOUIS:** *(Calling)* See you after class!

**SIMON:** Your shoes, Louis.

**LOUIS:** Oh, Charles always unbuckles them. (*Rebuckles them*) It doesn't really bother me.

**SIMON:** You can't allow it! I won't always be around to look after you.

**LOUIS:** I can take care of myself.

**SIMON:** No. I won't settle for this. This makes up my mind. I'm going to send you away...

**LOUIS:** Away? But, papa, WHY?

**SIMON:** I have this letter, and I'm going to make arrangements to...

**LOUIS:** I'm not a child anymore. I should have some say about...

**SIMON:** (*Thrusting a letter into Louis's hands*) Very well. Then read this...

**LOUIS:** But, papa...

**SIMON:** GO AHEAD... READ IT... AND YOU WRITE A RESPONSE!

**LOUIS:** Why are you telling me to do something you know I can't do?

**SIMON:** To prove a point. This is a small town with small-minded people. There's nothing more for you to learn in Coupvray!

**LOUIS:** It's my home.

**SIMON:** There's a world to explore, Louis!

**LOUIS:** My family, my friends...

**SIMON:** Your friends?

**LOUIS:** Yes.

[*Music Cue: 4. SCHOOL IN PARIS*]

**SIMON:** They aren't your friends, Louis! Why don't you admit it?

**LOUIS:** I know they make fun of me a little...

**SIMON:** A little?

**LOUIS:** But, sometimes we talk about things...

**SIMON:** Louis... they're cruel—

**SONG: 4. SCHOOL IN PARIS**

**SIMON:** (*Sings*)

And if I know you,  
As I think I do,  
You'll outgrow this town  
In a year or two.  
What will you do then?  
What will you do when  
That time comes?

**LOUIS:** (*Speaks*)

But papa—

**SIMON:** (*Sings*)

Would you want to be read to  
All your life if you knew  
You *could* learn to read?  
Is that the kind of life  
You'd choose to lead?

**LOUIS:** (*Speaks*)

Papa—

**SIMON:** (*Sings*)

Where's the boy whose first  
word was "more"?  
Stop me if what I'm saying  
isn't true.

**LOUIS:** (*Sings*)

Papa, what should I do?

**SIMON:** (*Sings*)

There's a school in Paris...

**LOUIS:** (*Sings*)

There's a school right here...

**SIMON:** (*Sings*)

So there is,  
But not this kind.

**LOUIS:** (*Sings*)

As a gen'ral rule,  
Isn't school just school?

**SIMON:** (*Sings*)

All the students there are blind.

**LOUIS:** (*Speaks*)

They are?

**SIMON:** (*Sings*)

At the school in Paris  
You would learn to write.

**LOUIS:** (*Sings*)

And I'll learn to read?

- SIMON:** (*Sings*) You will.
- LOUIS:** (*Speaks*) I will?
- SIMON:** (*Sings*) From the way it looks,  
They have shelves of books,  
And you'd even  
Learn a skill.
- LOUIS:** (*Sings*) You'd be one day's ride away...
- SIMON:** (*Sings*) So it's really not "farewell."  
If there's anything at all you  
need  
You'd write and simply
- SIMON & LOUIS:** (*Sing*) *Tell me—*
- LOUIS:** (*Sings*) ...More about reading.  
I wonder how they do that.  
I mean, of course,  
I know what a book is...  
But the pages are flat...
- LOUIS:** (*Speaks*) I can't read that.
- LOUIS:** (*Sings*) How will I know what a word is?  
I mean, of course,  
I know how to spell.  
But will these words be like  
lilacs?  
Will I know them by their  
smell?  
Do you think they're more  
like music?  
And they each have a song  
like a bird?  
I hope they're more like  
peaches...  
I want to devour each word!
- SIMON:** (*Speaks*) Louis, you will!
- LOUIS:** (*Sings*) At the school in Paris,  
Would I find real friends?
- SIMON:** (*Sings*) Yes, I'm sure you'd make a few.



**LOUIS:** *(Sings)*

And if they can't see,  
They'd be just like me!

**SIMON:** *(Sings)*

There is no one quite like you...

But at the school in Paris  
Your life could change,  
And your world could grow.  
It would make me proud  
If you said out loud,  
"Papa, I want to go."

**LOUIS:** *(Lost in his own thoughts; Sings)*

Would I really learn to read?

**SIMON:** *(Sings)*

Yes, they told me so...  
They have hundreds of books...

*(Speaks, trying to get his attention)*

Louis? Hello?

**LOUIS:** *(Sings)*

Papa, I want to go!

**SIMON:** *(Speaks)* Come with me, Louis. I shall have to carve you a new cane— something fashionable for the city life. *(Simon exits.)*

**LOUIS:** *(Sings)*

It's a place where I'll fit in...  
It's a chance for me,  
And the chance to read and  
write

*(Speaks)*

Is my chance—to "see."

*(Sings)*

Fin'ly, a chance for me!

*(Simon enters with a new cane and suitcase. They hug and Simon exits.)*

*[Music Cue: 5. SCENE CHANGE TO SCHOOL ROOM as needed.]*