



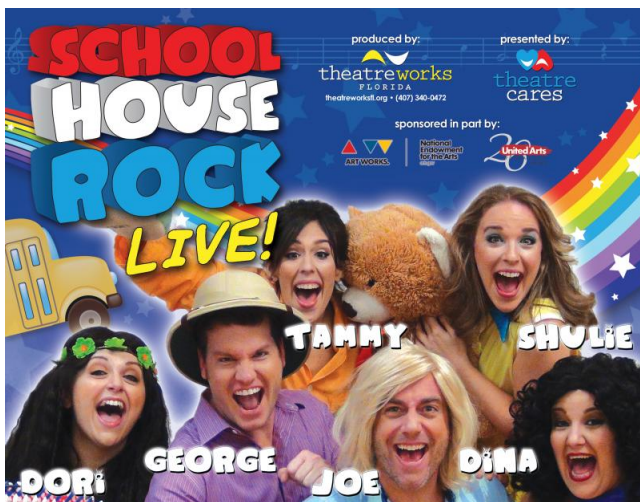
# Orlando

## BWW Interview: Rockin' SCHOOLHOUSE ROCK LIVE with TheatreWorks Florida's Scott A. Cook 8/27

by  
Kimberly Moy

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TheatreWorks Florida is known throughout the Orlando theater scene for putting on hit productions like Legally Blonde in 2013, Sweeney Todd in 2014, and Nunsense in 2015. If you've seen any of those shows you know that the quality of theater is best in the business. This year, TheatreWorks Florida was awarded grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and United Arts of Central Florida. These grants will support their community outreach program TheatreCares, which brings full-quality productions to education locations that may not otherwise be able to experience live theater.

This year TheatreCares presented by TheatreWorks Florida will bring SCHOOLHOUSE ROCK LIVE! to nine select community locations throughout Central Florida. The best part? These performances are free of charge for the students and organizations. The tour will reach more than 1100 people. The tour takes place throughout September and ends on October 4th. BroadwayWorld Orlando sat down with TheatreWorks Florida's Artistic Director, Scott Cook to talk about SCHOOLHOUSE ROCK LIVE!

**I grew up watching Schoolhouse Rock. I fondly remember "I'm Just a Bill." Do any of these songs appear in the show?**

Scott A. Cook: So did I. I think I was more in love with Schoolhouse Rock than the actual mainstream cartoons! The live stage show, Schoolhouse Rock Live!, includes "I'm Just A Bill", "Conjunction Junction", "Sufferin' Til Suffrage" and a host of other iconic songs that turned the animated musical educational shorts into a pop culture phenomenon which spanned several generations of audiences. TheatreWorks Florida (TWF) is so excited to have the opportunity to produce this energetic live stage musical through their community outreach program, TheatreCares. The show will play to underserved youth groups throughout Central Florida free of charge.

**Do you think that this content is still relevant to kids these days? Does the live show still have an old school vibe from the cartoons?**

The content is still extremely relevant because the original subject matter has not changed. Topics include grammar, American history, mathematics, science and civics. These topics are presented through song and cover the basic educational foundations in each subject chosen. As far as an "old school" vibe, this is where TWF's vision of the show takes over with a fresh, original concept. We simply analyzed the title - Schoolhouse Rock Live! - then made the creative decision that this was a live performance, not the cartoons. This led us into a completely original take on the show where we've developed it as a first time experience that does not require you to have ever seen the animated shorts. Although we certainly have used the cartoons as a basis for research, we emphasize the live stage show story and stay in the world of the play as it is happening. We've kept enough nostalgia for anyone who remembers the cartoons but filled it with all new visual presentations for the younger generation!

**What do you hope the children who see this production takeaway?**

That's a loaded question. It's vital to understand that TWF's TheatreCares program is presenting Schoolhouse Rock Live! TheatreCares is a unique outreach program serving a vital role to our community by bringing full-scale theatrical experiences directly to venues with audiences who are physically, emotionally, socially, financially or geographically challenged and may otherwise not have the opportunity to embrace and engage in the art of live performance. TheatreCares is sponsored in part by the National Endowment for Arts - Artworks (NEA). The TWF program TheatreCares has been selected for the 2nd year in a row to be the Central Florida representative for the NEA program "Arts Engagement in American Communities" (AEAC). The AEAC mission is to 'increase arts understanding by enhancing the arts experience through engagement'. Staying true to the AEAC mission, not only does TWF produce a show but also a well-crafted post show talk back to get audiences to take part in the experience they just had. TWF chose Schoolhouse Rock Live! as the next TheatreCares production because we wanted to give back to the children in our community with something fresh, energetic and educational. The powerful mix of contemporary music and live theatre is an exceptional way to reach the youth of today and make a difference in their lives. We hope the children will take away not only the enjoyment and education of the material itself, but will want to become more involved in the arts throughout their young lives

and on into adulthood.

### **Where can people see the show before it goes on tour?**

There will be 2 public shows on Wed Sept 9 and Sat Sept 12 at 7PM at the Davenport Community Campus, 8 W. Palmetto St., Davenport, FL 33837. Seats are free but must be reserved in advance. Seating is limited. If these dates are inconvenient, the tour will be playing at select community centers for underserved youth in both Orange and Polk counties. Several of our tour venues have expressed an open arms invitation, if space allows. To book reservations for public shows or for further information on tour venues, dates and times, please contact Abel Gonzales, TWF Company Manager, at: [theatrecares@theatreworksfl.org](mailto:theatrecares@theatreworksfl.org) or (407) 340-0473.

### **If someone loves the idea of non-profit theater and would like to support your mission of TheatreCares, where could they learn more or donate?**

As the TheatreCares program grows, we hope we will find a wide variety of support from our home community of Davenport, FL, Polk County and all of Central Florida - maybe even beyond. To find out how you can help and support TheatreCares, please contact Abel Gonzales, TWF Company Manager, at: [theatrecares@theatreworksfl.org](mailto:theatrecares@theatreworksfl.org) or (407) 340-0473.

### **Ever since the first BroadwayWorld Orlando Regional Awards took place in 2013, your productions have won. What makes TheatreWorks Florida so special?**

TWF was founded in 2007 on one very important core principal: everyone coming to the table would be here to produce top-notch, professional theatrical experiences. Simply put: we are here to work and work very hard for our audiences. Our reputation for setting the bar extremely high results in a complete team commitment to quality. Along the way, we have been incredibly blessed with seasoned professionals that are an integral part of our success story. I am humbled to continue to have the opportunity to bring together such amazing and hard working individuals that believe in TWF's vision of quality theatre.

### **As an Artistic Producer, how do you select the shows each year?**

It's not just me making choices. The process is a complete team effort. Each year, the TWF core staff and designers look at show titles that have, first and foremost, great marketing potential. Second, we consider current trends, national reviews and local audience draw. Third, we make sure we can actually design the show in a particular space with professional quality production values. What this really means is once we are seriously considering a show title we go through the entire initial design and budget process with every department before any serious commitment occurs. Interestingly, each year we all bring up the same shows on our "personal wish lists" but many of them end up on the cutting room floor because we feel local area audiences won't support them or our reputable TWF production quality cannot be achieved in a certain space. In the end, our decisions are all about what the

audience wants - top notch, quality, professional theatre. TWF makes the commitment to deliver just that, every single time.

### **What do you have on deck for the upcoming season?**

Next up, TWF is very excited to be producing the Central Florida regional premiere of Hands On A Hardbody for Garden Theatre (Winter Garden, FL) opening Jan. 29, 2016. It is Everyman's story with country and rock music infused into every character. At its heart, the show is the blue-collar America's A Chorus Line - the quintessential American Dream story for our times. It is based on the acclaimed documentary from 1997 of the same name. The story revolves around 10 Texan characters all brought together at a contest to win a Nissan hardbody truck at the Floyd King Nissan dealership in Longview, Texas. To compete, they each place one hand on the truck. Last person to remove their hand wins the truck. Simple, right? Wrong. The show is a complete production challenge in some very unique ways. First, we decided to build our own truck that must spin and move all over the stage magically. Second, it is a choreographic challenge keeping the 10 actors moving dynamically while never removing one hand from the truck. Tons of fun! We are also gearing up for the 25th anniversary of the Orlando International Fringe Theatre Festival in 2016. But that's a whole other story...

### **Where do you see the company going in the next few years?**

Last year when we were chosen to accept our 1st NEA grant, our home base community of Davenport, FL began to show unprecedented support in all our endeavors for the first time on our 8-year existence. The Polk County School Board, in particular, opened their arms and partnered with us to donate space at a defunct School of the Arts building. We used the space strictly for rehearsals in 2014 but as we rounded the corner in 2015, we saw much more potential. The school facility has a beautiful dance studio, a small theatre, shop space, storage space and office areas. In Jan 2015, TWF made a commitment to this space and our hometown to begin the process of building a strong arts community in the City of Davenport. Our efforts sparked incredible interest and we have gained great momentum with many local organizations and the City of Davenport itself. That being said, we still intend to create main stage productions and tour them to venues like Garden Theatre or the Orlando International Fringe Theatre Festival but our long term goals now include developing the old School of the Arts space into a cultural arts center with multi-faceted programming, expansion of a year round production schedule for TheatreCares, adding additional classes to our existing ClassWorks educational program and adding a full theatre season at the School of the Arts facility. TWF has become part of a much larger picture and we are proud to be leading the way towards a vibrant arts community in the City of Davenport for the very first time. TWF has even developed a Facebook marketing initiative called "Imagine Davenport" which brings all sorts of organizations in Davenport under one roof where we can educate the public on everyone's efforts to improve the quality of life in our city. Imagine Davenport information can be found at: <https://www.facebook.com/imaginedavenportfl>. Time will tell how successful we

will be.

**Thank you for your time Scott!**

For more information on TWF and TheatreCares visit [www.theatreworksfl.org](http://www.theatreworksfl.org) or on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/theatreworksfl](http://www.facebook.com/theatreworksfl)

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SCHOOLHOUSE ROCK LIVE! is presented through special arrangement with [Music Theatre International](#) (MTI).

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