

THE MUSIC MAN

JULY 11-16

BOOK, MUSIC,
& LYRICS by
Meredith Willson
BASED ON A STORY by
Meredith Willson
and Franklin Lacey

- THE STORY -

On July 4, 1912, Professor Harold Hill arrives in River City, Iowa, with a foolproof scheme to charm the townspeople into paying him for instruments and uniforms for an all-boys marching band and then skip town with their money before anyone realizes he's a fraud. The stubbornly traditional community is easily wooed by Hill's claims that his band will keep young men out of trouble, but his plan hits a roadblock when he meets Marian Paroo, the town librarian. Marian immediately sees through Harold's scheme, but still finds herself drawn to him. With the school board catching on to his act, Harold finds himself torn between his con man past and the genuine love in front of him, and it will take a musical miracle to keep him out of trouble.

- THE CHARACTERS -

PROFESSOR HAROLD HILL: A smooth-talking traveling salesman

MARIAN PAROO: A reserved, intelligent librarian and piano teacher

MAYOR SHINN: The pompous, self-serious mayor of River City

MARCELLUS WASHBURN: Harold's friend and former colleague, who lives in River City

EULALIE SHINN: Mayor Shinn's stuck-up, gossipy wife

WINTHROP PAROO: Marian's sweet, shy younger brother, who has a speech impediment

MRS. PAROO: Marian and Winthrop's widowed Irish mother

TOMMY DJILAS: A troublemaking young man with a knack for inventing

ZANEETA SHINN: The mayor's eldest daughter

CHARLIE COWELL: A competing traveling salesman determined to expose Harold's schemes

THE SCHOOL BOARD: A quartet of townsmen who can't seem to get along

MAKING THE MUSICAL

FROM THE BANDSTAND TO BROADWAY

Meredith Willson was already an established musician and composer when he began developing **THE MUSIC MAN** in 1951, but writing for the stage was new territory for him. Born in Mason City, Iowa, in 1902, Willson had grown up playing piano, flute and piccolo and went on to study the flute at the Damrosch Institute of Music in New York City. He toured the U.S. for several years as the flutist for famed bandleader John Philip Sousa, then played with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra from 1924–1929 before moving to radio.

Between 1928 and the mid-1950s, Willson worked on several radio shows as either host or musical director, including a stint with the Armed Forces Radio Service during World War II. Throughout this time, he also worked on the scores for the films *The Great Dictator* and *The Little Foxes* and composed a handful of popular songs, including “It’s Beginning to Look a Lot Like Christmas.” In 1951, producers Cy Feuer and Ernest Martin proposed the idea of a musical inspired by his childhood in Iowa, and Willson set his sights on Broadway.



Meredith Willson leads the North Iowa Band Festival parade, June 19, 1962. Photo by Iowa Globe Gazette

Willson worked at developing a concept for his show for several years, taking inspiration from the photo in his office of the first-ever Mason City Boys’ Band. Reflecting on the memories of his time in the band, he developed the story of a conman bandleader named Harold Hill who would direct a boys’ band in smalltown Iowa. For the music, Willson sought to find natural rhythms in speech and everyday sounds that could make the show flow naturally between songs and spoken dialogue, often without even rhyming. At this point, the show’s working title was *The Silver Triangle*.



Robert Preston and Barbara Cook, 1957, New York Public Library Billy Rose Theatre Division

With the help of his wife Rini, Willson “auditioned” various drafts of his show for creative and producing teams numerous times during the developmental period. When his partnership with Feuer and Martin stalled, he found the perfect fit with producer Kermit Bloomgarden, director Morton Da Costa, and choreographer Onna White. The group set out to find a charming leading man, sorting through musical comedy actors such as Danny Kaye, Gene Kelly and Ray Bolger before landing on film star Robert Preston. With the complete team assembled, Willson and crew set forth to bring the show, now called **THE MUSIC MAN**, to New York City at long last.

THE MUSIC MAN finally opened on Broadway on December 19, 1957, after a lengthy development period that included a stressful out-of-town tryout in Philadelphia, over 30 drafts, and nearly 40 songs. It was a monumental success, running for over 1,300 performances, winning the first-ever Grammy Award for a cast recording and beating out *West Side Story* for Best Musical at the 1958 Tony Awards. In the 65 years since its premiere, **THE MUSIC MAN** has become a definitive example of American musical theatre, with several tours, two film adaptations and countless community performances. This production marks the eleventh time the show has been done at Broadway At Music Circus, proving that Meredith Willson’s spirited tribute to his hometown has a lasting charm that will likely continue to delight audiences for many more generations.

BUILDING A MARCHING BAND

In "Seventy-Six Trombones," Harold Hill names off a handful of instruments that you might find in a marching band. Read the descriptions of each instrument, and draw a line to the photo that you think matches. Feeling stuck? Check the bottom of the page for some help!

1. TROMBONE

A brass instrument with a long tube, two turns, and a slide for varying pitch

2. CORNET

A brass instrument with three valves and a short, cone-shaped tube

3. TIMPANI

Large, bowl-shaped drums

4. EUPHONIUM

A brass instrument with four valves that resembles a smaller, higher-pitched tuba

5. BASSOON

A large, double-reed woodwind instrument with a low range

6. CLARINET

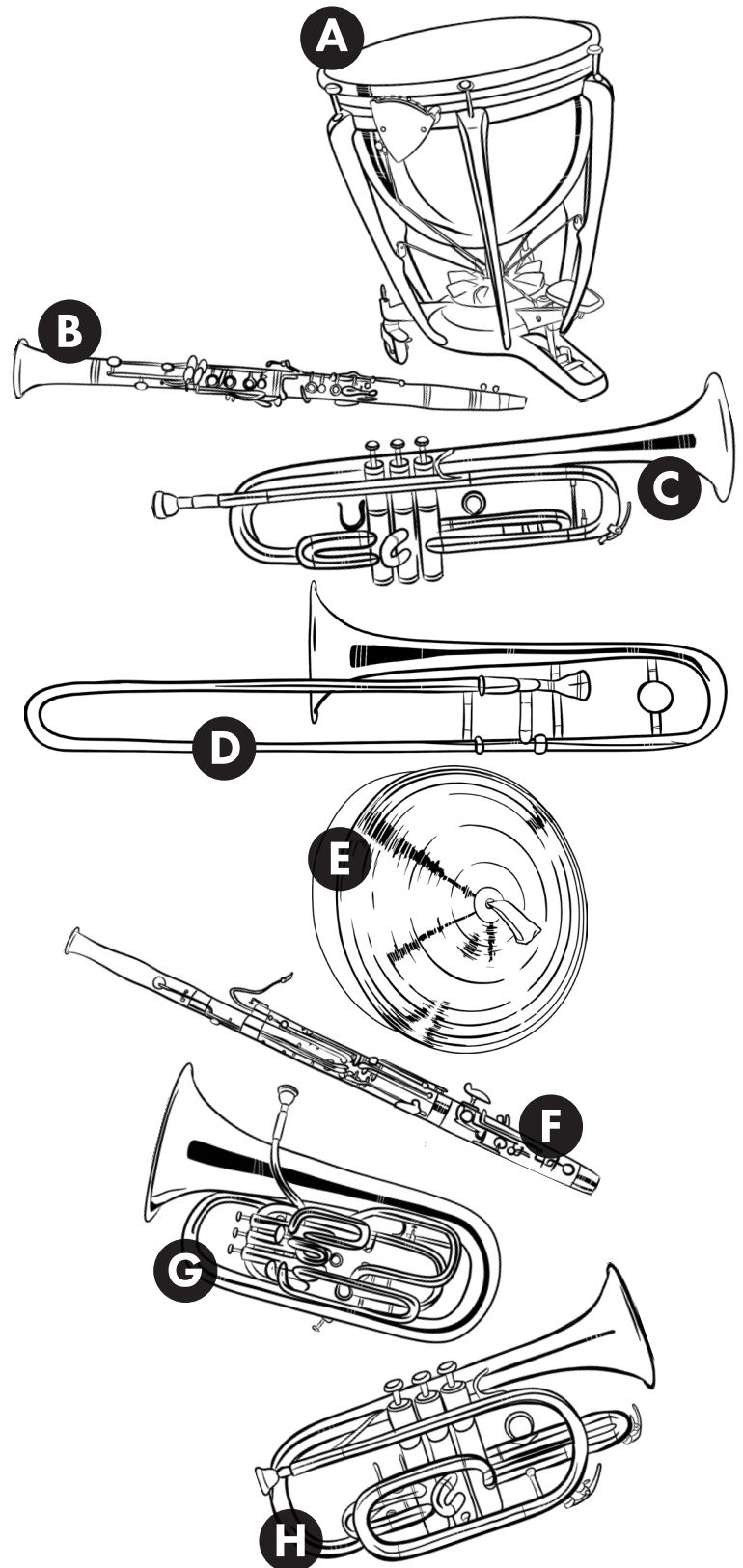
A single-reed woodwind with a flared opening

7. CYMBALS

Slightly curved metal plates that make brilliant crashing sounds when struck

8. TRUMPET

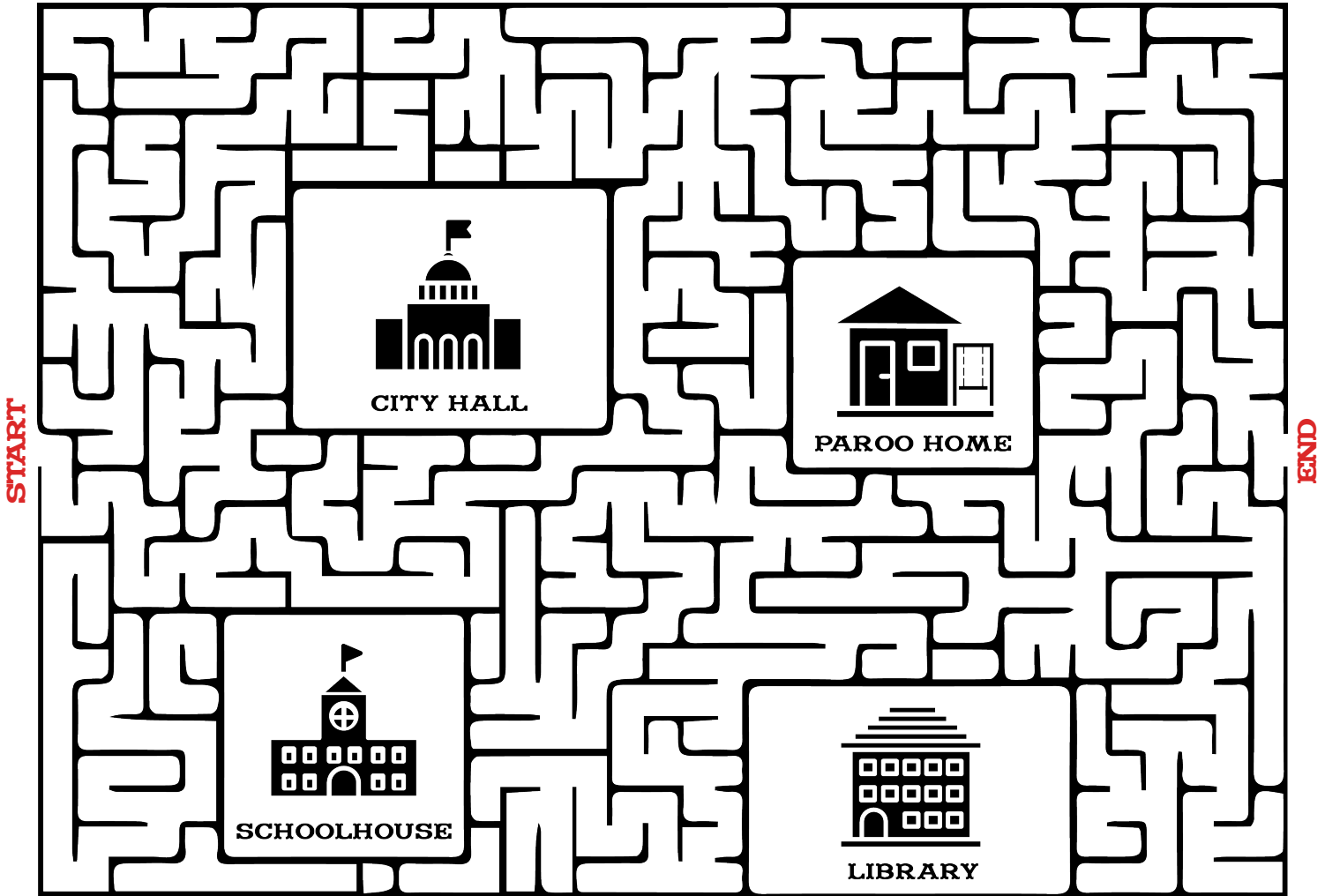
A three-valved brass instrument with a cylindrical tube



ANSWERS: 1-D; 2-H; 3-A; 4-G; 5-F; 6-B; 7-E; 8-C

THE BIG PARADE

Lead Professor Hill and the River City Boys' Band through the town to reach the crowds!



- THINK ABOUT IT -

- Meredith Willson's inspiration for **THE MUSIC MAN** came from his family and his hometown. If you wrote a musical about your community, what would it be about? What would the characters be like? What kind of music would you use?
- Marian and Harold seem to be polar opposites at the beginning of the show, but they eventually realize that their initial opinions of each other weren't entirely accurate. Think of a time that you misjudged someone. How did it feel to realize that they were different from what you expected? How did that change your relationship with them?
- Although Harold Hill's plan starts out as a selfish scheme, he ends up uniting River City around the power of music. What do you think it is about music that helps people look past their differences? How have you seen music bring people together?
- Winthrop's excitement about the band helps him overcome his shyness. Have you ever been afraid to do something? What helped you get past that fear?