

Acting Edition

Axoloris

The Musical

by Sean Mendelson

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|| SAMUEL FRENCH ||

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www.concordtheatricals.com

www.concordtheatricals.co.uk

FOR PRODUCTION INQUIRIES

UNITED STATES AND CANADA

info@concordtheatricals.com

1-866-979-0447

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licensing@concordtheatricals.co.uk

020-7054-7298

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AXOLORIS: THE MUSICAL was first produced at the Historic Hoover Theatre by Playful People Productions in San Jose, California in July 2022. The performance was directed by Celia Scheuerman, with music direction by Sean Mendelson. The cast was as follows:

JULIANA	Alyria Suarez
LILLY	 Sophia DeVito
KATE	Felicity Nano
BRETT	 Steven Hawley
ROBOT RILEY/TAYLOR	Jillian Mendelson
RILEY/DREW/TRASH MINION	 Lila Seybold
OLD MAN THUNDER	 Logan Mendelson
RE-CYCLE/TRASH MINION	 Eryx Cooper
T-RASHER/TRASH MINION	 Eevy Luthman
AXOLORIS/MS. MORRIS	 Sophia Fazzio
LADY LABOT	 Sarah Rosales
VR-BOT/TRASH MINION	 Kimberly Blomquist
TRASH MONSTER/CHRIS	 Dahlia Nano
T-PORT/TRASH MINION	 Tessa Gregor
JULIANA’S MOM	 Liesl Winoto
JULIANA’S OTHER MOM	 Eleanor Venditti
CHICKY/RIGHT PINON MINON/ALEX	Rachel Wong

CHARACTERS

Principal Kids:

JULIANA – (Female, thirteen–sixteen.) – The lead, and a moral compass of the show. She isn't comfortable standing up for what's right because she is afraid of compromising her strong friendship with her four friends, Lilly, Brett, Kate, and Riley. Deep down, she is a loving and intelligent soul. As the story progresses, she starts expressing herself more freely and comes to love who she is.

BRETT – (Male, thirteen–sixteen.) – A know-it-all who likes being mischievous. He thinks he is pretty great. He is funny but also makes poor choices sometimes. He likes Juliana but may not fully know it. He has a younger sister named Lilly, who he is comfortable hanging out with. He enjoys confronting authority and isn't a fan of tradition. As time goes by, he starts to realize that he should care more for the people in his life and be less self-centered.

KATE – (Female, thirteen–sixteen.) – A popular girl in the virtual reality scene, which is pervasive throughout the community. She likes Brett and resents Juliana because she can tell she likes Brett. She is always trying to impress Brett but not much impresses her. She learns to be less callous and more helpful as the story progresses.

RILEY – (Any gender, thirteen–sixteen.) – They are more reserved and even-tempered than their friends. They are pretty smart too. During the first half of the show they are a Robot version of themselves as they stay at home most of the time. They rely on their Robot self and virtual reality and thus are a hermit. As their purpose to help their friends becomes more clear, the real Riley takes the place of their Robot self on the adventure in the second act. They realize that exploring the world around them has a lot more to offer than they initially thought. The Robot version of Riley should be played by a smaller actor in juxtaposition to the human Riley, who should be played by a larger actor.

ROBOT RILEY – (Any gender, thirteen–sixteen.) – Riley, but in Robot form. Has a variation on the VR headset and Robot-identifying makeup or costume like all other Robots have in the show. They also have different accents programmed over the duration of the musical.

LILLY – (Female, in middle school.) – Brett's little sister. She is adorable and often overlooked. She likes being a part of her older brother's friend group. She is quite empathetic and surprisingly breaks through Old Man Thunder's crusty exterior. She also has tremendous patience and she secretly has been working on a project with Lady La Bot for most of her life.

A note on age

Juliana, Brett, Kate, and Riley/Robot Riley should all be in the same grade, but they can be as young as eighth grade and as old as eleventh grade. Lilly can be as young as a fifth grader or as old as an eighth grader if the older kids are portrayed as high schoolers.

The Narrators:

RE CYCLE & T RASHER – (Any gender, any age.) – They primarily play **NARRATORS** who propel the plot, break the fourth wall with the audience, and specifically tell the story of Earth Day as local actors in the community. When they play **VILLAGERS**, their characters are in stark juxtaposition to the more conventional **NARRATORS**. Think, Krusty the Clown meets David S. Pumpkins meets “dad jokes.” These characters are optional Robots. If your production decides to make them Robots, they never act like Robots or allude to being Robots. However, they do have Robot-identifying makeup or costumes.

Robots:

LADY LABOT – (Female, any age.) – A glorified Robot servant for Juliana’s family. She is feisty and opinionated. She is mercurial and blunt. She feels taken for granted by the family but she has a fun, sarcastic wit. She also is protective of other Bots. She longs for adventure. She oddly has a crush on T-Port (the transportation bot). She is constantly cleaning, especially after the house chicken, Chicky. She also secretly has been working on a project that becomes vital at the end of the story. Has Robot-identifying makeup or costume.

VR BOT – (Any gender, any age.) – A Robot that has been programmed to police the community when they don’t follow laws. Mostly they pester folks about littering or other minor offenses. They give punishment in the form of penalties for virtual reality time usage (which is coveted by community members). Has Robot-identifying makeup or costume.

T-PORT – (Any gender, any age.) – Partly a transportation unit (the actor is connected from behind to either an electric scooter, a large dolly, or imaginary dolly). A level-headed Robot that transports the characters from one location to another. Has a short fuse when you least expect it, and sometimes gives subtle or passive-aggressive opinions of what’s going on. Has Robot-identifying makeup or costume.

Parents and Adults:

OLD MAN THUNDER – (Male, sixty-five.) – Starts out the show as a cranky old man who stays alone and has very little patience for most things but in particular the kids and the Robots who pester him. He also has little regard for the planet as he pollutes consistently. As the story unfolds we learn that he used to be a trailblazing environmentalist. We discover that an environmental catastrophe earlier in his life caused him to turn his back on the planet. His adventure with the kids leads him to make real connections with other people, and he rediscovers himself when he finds his purpose in saving the community.

JULIANA’S MOM – (Female, forties.) – Loves her daughter. She is an environmentalist. The subtext is that she is overprotective of her daughter who is trying to find her way. As a result, although she means well, she is suspicious of her daughter’s choices.

JULIANA'S DAD (or **JULIANA'S OTHER MOM**) – (Male or Female, forties.) – More passive and reserved than Juliana's Mom. Loves Juliana dearly. Tries to bring a different perspective to difficult situations. Sometimes plays devil's advocate.

MS. MORRIS – (Female, thirties to forties.) – The teacher. Helps encourage the children to be more invested in Earth Day. She is optimistic and supportive of her students.

Creatures:

AXELORIS (pronounced "Axeloris") – (Any gender, any age.) – The Earth Day Being is an amalgamation of awesome unique animals: based on the axolotl, an amphibian "Mexican salamander" that looks like a Pokemon and the slow loris from South Asia (which has doll like eyes). Adorable and foreboding all at once.

CHICKY – (Any gender, any age.) – A pragmatic chicken who lives with Juliana's family. They are always in the way but also provides eggs for the family. Lady La Bot is always following them around. Chicky proves to be vital at the end of the story.

TRASH MONSTER – (Male, any age.) – Comes to Juliana in a dream. He is full of dread and dark humor. He threatens Juliana with the help of a team of minions.

RIGHT PINION MINION – (Any gender, any age.) – Trash Monster's right hand monster.

Ensemble:

TRASH MONSTER MINIONS, KIDS (named **CHRIS, ALEX, DREW, TAYLOR**, and **CORY**), and **VILLAGERS** (additional **ADULTS** and **ROBOTS**) – The **KIDS** experience the Earth Day presentation in various ways. **MINIONS** help playfully terrorize Juliana. **VILLAGERS** discuss how to save their community from an energy crisis near the end. **ROBOTS** have Robot-identifying makeup or costumes that link all the **ROBOTS** (including principals) together in the show.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

This is a coming of age story in the vein of *Goonies* or *Stranger Things*. It has science fiction elements because it's the future and leans on Robots and Virtual Reality heavily. It's meant to be fun and uplifting, but there is real pathos in the characters' struggles to self-discovery. There is also an ethereal emphasis on dreams and the unconscious. It breaks the fourth wall with the audience, allowing them to participate in the direction of the story, in a first-of-its-kind, interactive experience. Ultimately, it hopes to inspire families in the audience, just like the characters in the show, to innovate and appreciate Earth on Earth Day and year round.

Notes on the Set Design

From Act One, Scene Two until the end of Act One, the middle of the stage has a fence toward the back and there are remnants what used to be a garden. Behind the fence is a raised platform outlined by a giant streamlined futuristic square, which will serve as the VR location for the show. Stage left is Old Man Thunder's house. Stage right is the VR education room.

In Act Two, the set can be different depending on each production. The hydroelectric plant might be a backdrop, a practical set, or a combination of both!

For the Dream Scene (Act One, Scene Ten), I recommend projecting prerecorded, slightly blurry footage of the images appearing in the **PRINCIPAL KIDS'** dreams through fog.

In keeping with the themes of the climate activism of this theatrical production, the author encourages production companies to use reclaimed wood and previous sets wherever possible for this show. Additionally, any opportunity for reusing props from previous shows or working with sustainably-sourced costuming is highly encouraged. And lastly, the author suggests that each member of your theatrical community takes on one climate action.

MUSIC NUMBERS

ACT ONE

01. 2020 (Intro) Instrumental
02. Banana Boat 1 Instrumental
03. 2020 Company
04. Banana Boat 2 Instrumental
05. Set in Our Ways. Old Man Thunder, Kate,
Brett, Lilly, Juliana,
Robot Riley & VR Bot
06. 2020 (Reprise) Juliana, Parents & Ensemble
07. Trash Monster Melee Juliana, Trash Monster
& Trash Minions
08. Earth Day Rap. Re Cycle, T Rasher, Chris,
Brett, Juliana & Kids
09. The Story of Earth Day Being. T Rasher, Re Cycle,
Ms. Morris, Alex & Kids
- 09a. Earth Day Rap (2 Beats) Instrumental
- 09b. Set in Our Ways (Reprise). Instrumental
10. Trash Monster Melee (Reprise). Juliana's Mom, Juliana's Dad
& Juliana
11. Dream Scene Brett, Lilly, Kate, Juliana,
Robot Riley, Axoloris & Company
12. Riley Gets Up Robot Riley, Brett, Juliana,
Lilly & Kate
13. Sorting Out (Intro) Juliana, Juliana's Mom
& Juliana's Dad
14. Crashing Down. Company

ACT TWO

- 14a. Crashing Down (Entr'acte) Instrumental
- 15. Banana Boat 3 Instrumental
- 16. Sorting Out..... Company
- 17. The Ballad of Thunder Thunder, Lilly, All
- 18. Puzzle Peace T Rasher, Re Cycle, Lady LA Bot,
Chicky, Narrators
- 19. Banana Boat 4 Instrumental
- 20. The Ballad of Thunder (Reprise).....Instrumental
- 20a. Dance Break.....Instrumental
- 21. Given the Seed Thunder, Axoloris, Chicky,
Robots & Children
- 22. Piandemic.....Instrumental
- 23. Banana Boat 5 Instrumental
- 24. What Can You Do? Company
- 25. Bows Instrumental

ACT ONE

Scene One

[MUSIC NO. 1 – 2020 (INTRO)]

(...The lights slowly come up on two characters who enter from two sides of the stage...music gets faded down after actors come center stage.)

(Curtain half-open revealing a portion of a hydroelectric plant and people passing by in the background.)

RE CYCLE

I am Re Cycle

T RASHER

And I am T Rasher

(Behind them, a flat, circular vacuum goes from one side of the stage to the other.)

That's Harold.

RE CYCLE

We're about to embark on an adventure.

T RASHER

(Wide-eyed.) ...The likes of which you've never seen.

RE CYCLE

Actually if you've seen the movie *Earth Ranger Rockers*, it's kinda like that.

T RASHER

(Displeased with their partner momentarily.) Of course *Re Cycle* would assume the idea is recycled. There's one important fact to know. You'll hear the name Axoloris a lot. *(Leaning in, as if to share a secret.)* This is a magical Earth Day being who visits people in their dreams.

RE CYCLE

It's been done is all I'm saying.

T RASHER

(Dismayed by their partner.) Yes...but not like *this*. Axoloris is an entirely new being that recently connected with all of us as a messenger for the planet. And it's not just part of the story, IT'S TRUE! *(To the audience.)* So, we welcome you to YOUR future! *(Addressing VILLAGERS walking by in the background.)* This particular group of people live in a small community where everything is powered by a hydroelectric plant in a lake nearby. This is not unlike other townships you would find in 2050.

(We see the plant working and VILLAGERS operating it. Or maybe it's miniature in the distance.)

In 2020, people tried to find the best sources of energy...

RE CYCLE

...Because humans used up so many resources, and climate change began to disrupt our way of life... There was a lot to deal with in 2020, so that's why it took a while to realize the light that was building in the shadows. There was a stirring, and then a collective understanding of how dreams connected.

T RASHER

...It was Axoloris who inspired us to build the plant.

(People are interacting with the plant.)

This plant uses the power of water's natural current to make the electricity for the community.

RE CYCLE

As the world got back on track, the leaders of the communities swore they would never disrupt the delicate balance with nature... Enter the Robots!

T RASHER

Right! They built Robots to monitor humans because they no longer trusted themselves.

*(The **ROBOTS** cross the stage. **HAROLD** comes back across the stage first. **LADY LAB OT** cleans the edge of the curtain, **T-PORT** moves people across the stage, and **VR BOT** reprimands **KIDS** for messing with the plant.)*

But as time passed, the youth started taking new technology for granted.

*(**KIDS** wearing VR sets bump into things and look oblivious. We see them emulate some **KID** doing acrobatics or karate. **ROBOTS** try to stop any disorder – i.e. keeping people from bumping into things or reprimanding **KIDS** for acting foolish.)*

The younger people stopped investing in the planet as they became reliant on technology. Without having seen the struggles of the previous generation, they became less interested in the world around them.

RE CYCLE

You, the audience, are part of our future community, so there will be opportunities for you to help navigate our story. Since virtual reality, or VR, is pervasive here, you will from this point on be referred to as **FUTURE VR COMMUNITY**. *(These words have an echo effect on them.)*

T RASHER

When we provide options for what will happen next in the story, you will clap for your favorite one.

[MUSIC NO. 02 – BANANA BOAT 1]

(**CHRIS** enters and holds up the sign “Don’t Clap Yet!”)

RE CYCLE

Let’s practice. If you want me to have the last word in this opening, you’ll clap for that option – (*Abruptly.*) – but don’t clap yet.

(**CHRIS** reemphasizes the “Don’t Clap” sign.)

T RASHER

(*Jumping in abruptly.*) If you want me to have the last word you’ll clap for that option.

RE CYCLE & T RASHER

If you want *us* to share the last word you’ll clap for that option

(**RE CYCLE** plays the güiro during the song and **CHRIS** holds up the “Clap for your favorite option” sign.)

T RASHER

If you want me to have the last word, clap now. (*Leaning towards audience to get more votes.*) (*Less enthusiastically.*)
If you want Re Cycle to have the last word, clap now.

(**RE CYCLE** brightens up.)

If you want us to share the last word, clap now.

(*Music out.*)

(**T RASHER** tallies claps and motions the results to **RE CYCLE**.)

If RE CYCLE Wins:

RE CYCLE

The last word.

If T RASHER Wins:

T RASHER

The last word.

Shared Ending:

RE CYCLE & T RASHER

The last word.

Scene Two

*(The **PRINCIPAL KIDS** are just beyond a door frame, but we see the interior room while they face the audience. They have light sensors on their temple that when lit up indicate they are experiencing VR.)*

[MUSIC NO. 03 – 2020]

COMPANY

THE YEAR IS 2050.
THIRTY YEARS WILL GIVE YOU TIME TO REFLECT.
VR IS WHERE IT'S AT NOW...
HUDDLED PEOPLE, BUT DO WE REALLY CONNECT?
TO FIND ONE'S PLACE, THE GOAL.
EACH WILL SEARCH THEIR SOUL.
IF HINDSIGHT IS 2020,
WE HIT THAT NAIL RIGHT ON THE HEAD.
LOOKING BACK ON 2020,
OF COURSE IT ALL COMES CLEAR.

KIDS

OUR PARENTS DREAMED THE SAME DREAM.
AXOLORIS CAME AND HELPED THEM STAY CLEAN.
THEY TALK UP OUR EARTH DAY.
BUT WE JUST WANT TO PLAY.

COMPANY

IF HINDSIGHT IS 2020,
WE HIT THAT NAIL RIGHT ON THE HEAD.
LOOKING BACK ON TO 2020,
OF COURSE IT ALL COMES CLEAR.

SOLO KID 1

*(To **PARENTS.**)*

THEY BUILT US UP.
IN THIS BEING THEY TRUST.

SOLO KID 2

GREW TO GREATER HEIGHTS.

SOLO KID 3

BUT TIME HAS PASSED.
WE'RE A DIFF'RENT CAST.

KIDS

WE'RE KIDS,
NOT IN THE FIGHT!

COMPANY

IF HINDSIGHT IS 2020,
WE HIT THAT NAIL RIGHT ON THE HEAD.
LOOKING BACK ON 2020,
OF COURSE IT ALL COMES CLEAR.

Scene Three

(Sound effect: School bell.)

(PRINCIPAL KIDS *[and the* **ENSEMBLE OF KIDS** *behind them]* *turn off their VR sensors. The PRINCIPAL KIDS leave a VR Education Room on stage right. We move from the interior of the VR room to outside. The* **ENSEMBLE OF KIDS** *is milling about in the background. They slowly make their way across from stage right to stage left and they are carrying art supplies and paint buckets. We notice* **KATE** *dramatically crumple some papers and throw them on the ground after reading something that bothers her on a paper she is carrying.)*

VR BOT

(Rapidly entering from stage left.) Hey there youngling,
(Scans her by methodically looking her up and down.)
Kate, from 661 Flynn Ave., could you pick that up?

(VR BOT uses a laser pointer, which is part of their anatomy, to point at the papers. Sound effect: Scanning.)

KATE

And why should I do that exactly?

VR BOT

You are littering and there are penalties for this action!

BRETT

(Mocking.) You are littering and I am twittering and frittering. Get *updated* Bot!

(BRETT walks past the VR BOT while mimicking the Robot's actions.)

KATE

Witty as always Brett.

(KATE laughs in an over-the-top flirty manner and follows BRETT. JULIANA looks annoyed by her.)

VR BOT

You have just received a penalty, Kate from 661 Flynn Ave. You have lost VR privileges for one week.

KATE

(Turning back abruptly.) What! Virus Scam!

(KIDS with VR sensors turned on walk by, running into the characters and the set but no one seems fazed.)

LILLY

Since when are the Bots so harsh!

JULIANA

It's Earth Day soon, Lilly, and all the grownups have programmed the Robots to crack down on *(Sarcastic.)* you hooligans laying waste to our planet.

VR BOT

(VR BOT scans JULIANA. Sound effect: Scanning.) Juliana, from 23 Bella Terra, this is a valid analysis. My policing levels have been increased *(To KATE.)* so don't test me. Your elders have programmed me to make you accountable for your actions.

KATE

Whatever... We gotta catch the T-port so we can start working on our boring Earth Day projects.

(VR BOT is standing in her way. She motions dramatically for them to step aside and they begrudgingly comply. VR BOT is seething through the duration of the scene.)

BRETT

(While continuing stage left.) I guess I'll do mine on different soil types.

ROBOT RILEY

(Sarcastically.) Sounds fascinating.

LILLY

Yeah, he's got different piles of dirt he bikes over in our backyard. *(Pointing at BRETT.)* This scientist learned that dry soil makes him do wheelies and wet soil slows his roll.

(BRETT nods along with self-approval.)

(KATE, LILLY, BRETT, and RILEY head stage left talking to one another as JULIANA lags behind to secretly pick up the crumpled papers. She hurries after them.)

VR BOT

(Hurrying up to KATE and pointing their laser pointer at her.) You are a disrespectful human...

(KATE ignores them. VR BOT turns towards JULIANA who is already embarrassed and shines their laser on the trash in JULIANA's hand. She quickly hides it out of view of her friends.)

You are a respectful human.

JULIANA

(Quietly, so as not to draw the attention of her friends.) You are...complimentary?

(PRINCIPAL KIDS walk over in front of Old Man Thunder's house. He is smoking and his vehicle is blowing gas, and his house is smoking for some reason. Other KIDS are leaning on his fence and snickering in the background.)

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