

Synopsis



Oprah Winfrey Presents The Color Purple is a saga of hope, inspiration and triumph, centered around Celie, a woman who endures insurmountable hardships within her own family and struggles to find her identity and love. Alice Walker's diverse and unforgettable characters come vividly to life on stage, blending dance with blues, gospel, jazz, swing, rural roots and African music.

1909. One Sunday morning in rural Georgia, Celie, a 14 year old girl who is pregnant for the second time, plays a clapping game with her beloved sister, Nettie (HUCKLEBERRY PIE). When she comes to church with her sister and their Pa, Celie goes into labor before the service ends (MYSTERIOUS WAYS). Later, Pa takes Celie's baby from her arms (SOMEBODY GONNA LOVE YOU) saying he is going to get rid of it, "same as the last one," and that she better not tell anybody except God what happened. Celie asks God for a sign, something that will let her know what is happening to her. A few years later, when a local farmer, Mister, needs a wife to take care of his children, Pa says Nettie is too young, but offers him Celie instead, and throws a cow into the bargain. Although the girls vow never to be parted (OUR PRAYER), Celie goes with Mister to save Nettie's dreams of becoming a teacher. As the local Church Ladies cluck their disapproval (THAT FINE MISTER), Mister's field-hands introduce Celie to her life of hard work at Mister's home (BIG DOG). Nettie arrives one day, fleeing from Pa's lecherous attentions, and asks if she can stay. Mister agrees, but then attacks Nettie on her way to school. When she fights back, he throws her off his property, swearing that the girls will never see each other again (LILY OF THE FIELD). Nettie has promised to write, so Celie tries to check the mailbox, but years go by, and Mister won't even let her open it.

Mister's son, Harpo, grows up and brings home Sofia, a strong-willed woman whom he loves and marries (DEAR GOD - SOFIA). But eventually, Harpo can't take being bossed around by Sofia. Mister tells him he has to beat Sofia if he wants her to mind. Even Celie agrees this is the only way to make a woman "jump when he says to." But Sofia gives as good as she gets (A TREE NAMED SOFIA). Not long after that, Sofia's sisters arrive to take her away (HELL NO!). Sofia tries to convince Celie to come with her, but she can't. Left alone, Harpo turns their house into a jukejoint, and hires a new waitress, Squeak, to work there (BROWN BETTY). Squeak soon moves in with Harpo. The whole town prepares for the arrival of Shug Avery, a sexy singer who is Mister's longtime lover (SHUG AVERY COMIN' TO TOWN). But when Shug arrives, she is in such bad shape that in spite of local disapproval (ALL WE'VE GOT TO SAY), Mister brings her home where Celie nurses her back to health (DEAR GOD - SHUG). As Celie takes care of Shug, she begins to experience feelings of affection and tenderness for the first time, as Shug befriends her (TOO BEAUTIFUL FOR WORDS). When Shug sings at Harpo's Juke Joint (PUSH DA BUTTON), Sofia returns with her new boyfriend and gets into a fight with Squeak (JH OH!). In Mister's house, Shug and Celie explore their newfound love for each other (WHAT ABOUT LOVE?). Shug gives Celie a letter she has found from "someone in Africa, goin' by the stamps." Celie recognizes Nettie's handwriting and knows instantly that her beloved sister is alive (ACT I FINALE).

Celie finds the rest of the letters Mister had hidden over the years, and learns that Nettie went to Africa with the missionary family who adopted Celie's babies, and that they are all now in Africa in a refugee camp (AFRICAN HOMELAND). In Georgia, Sofia has been beaten and thrown in jail for punching the mayor - his wife had invited her to be their maid, and wouldn't take no for an answer. Celie goes to the jail to comfort her, and learns that Sofia will have to serve out her sentence in the custody of the Mayor's wife, as her maid.

Twelve years later, Sofia and Shug both return home for Easter. Shug discovers the extent of Celie's anger toward God (THE COLOR PURPLE) and invites her to come live with her and her new husband in Memphis. After Easter dinner (CHURCH LADIES' EASTER), Celie tells Mister she is leaving. He protests and she finally confronts him about the way he treated her (I CURSE YOU MISTER). Squeak is off to Memphis too, saying she wants to sing. Harpo defends her choice to his father, then, after they leave, he invites Sofia to come back and live at the jukejoint. Mister soon feels the effects of Celie's curse. He's drunk all the time and is shunned by everyone. Harpo challenges him to make things right with Celie, and Mister tries to understand what that would mean (CELIE'S CURSE). At Shug's house in Memphis, Celie discovers she has a gift for making pants. When she inherits the house she grew up in, she goes home and starts a business selling her unique designs (MISS CELIE'S PANTS). Mister tries to help Sofia's sickly youngest child Henrietta, and even Celie has to admit that Mister is trying to change. Harpo and Sofia are spending a pleasant night at home (ANY LITTLE THING) when Mister comes to tell them that he has found Nettie, but she is having some trouble getting home from Africa. Shug tells Celie she has fallen in love with a young flute player, and asks Celie to let her have a fling with this boy (WHAT ABOUT LOVE? - REPRISE). Walking home, Celie realizes she isn't destroyed by this, and feels a deep love for herself for the first time (I'M HERE).

1949. As the whole community is gathered for a Fourth of July picnic at Celie's house, Celie hears a car door slam, then a familiar song from her childhood. Nettie runs up to the house, with Celie's grown children behind her. Mister and Shug have made this reunion possible, and Celie thanks them, and God, for the safe return of her family (THE COLOR PURPLE - REPRISE).