Harold and the Purple Crayon

Story by
Crockett Johnson

Adapted for the Stage by
Myron Johnson

Music by
Roberta Carlson

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Cast of Characters:
- Narrator
- Harold
- Mother
- Mr. Smudge
- Ensemble members (playing the Stick Figures, Announcer, Fat Lady, Clown, Romeo, Juliet, Singer, etc.) Minimum of Five

Scene Breakdown:
1. Harold Voice-Over/Mother
2. The Circus
3. Mother/The Desert
4. Harold Watches Television
5. T.V. Studio
6. Mother/Bathtub/Island
7. Underwater
8. Transition to Club Smudge/Smudge Comes Out of the Water
9. Club Smudge/The Chase
10. Outer Space
11. Harold Goes to Bed

Note:
This play was originally conceived largely as a dance and movement piece with many lighting, sound and technical effects. As said by a writer of the Pioneer Press during the premiere production, “Harold and the Purple Crayon is actually a major achievement of technical stagecraft...It’s extraordinarily imaginative.” Because of this concept, the script contains minimal dialogue, and much room for creativity.
**NARRATOR:** Harold? Harold? Harold... One evening, after thinking it over for some time, Harold decided to go for a walk in the moonlight. So he took a crayon – a purple crayon – and set off on his walk, taking his big purple crayon with him, of course.

**HAROLD:** (Sung) Even when I’m all alone
I don’t have to feel lonely
Long as I’ve got my imagination
I can make up dreams
And I can take those dreams
And turn them into wings.
I can see the moon from my window
Anytime I want I can see the moon
It’s out there past the fence and just above the trees
I can always see the moon
It’s just outside my window

**NARRATOR:** Now, Harold wanted to play a game. He felt games were more fun when you have friends to play them with. So with crayon in hand, he set off to work.

**HAROLD** draws five stick figures. As he draws each successive figure with greater ease, he notices that the first ones are coming to life (actors in white are revealed within the stick figure shapes). They step through the scrim and dance down the ramp with **HAROLD**.

**NARRATOR:** Harold? Harold? Now we’re going to meet Harold’s mother.

**MOTHER** appears on the projection screen. She talks in gibberish about going shopping and buying **HAROLD** some tennis shoes that he can wear to Grandma’s house. As **MOTHER** exits, slamming the door, the scene reappears.

**NARRATOR:** Now back to the new playmates!

*(Song while **HAROLD** plays with his friends)*

For every action there is always a reaction
Got to keep it movin’, got to keep on movin’
Positive or negative, there’s always a reaction
Got to keep on movin’, got to keep on movin’
Down the street or standin’ on the corner
Uptown, downtown, I just can’t stop
(Lyrics repeat throughout until fade.)

MR. SMUDGE appears on the TV (a scrim face of platform).

NARRATOR: There’s Mr. Smudge. Excuse me Mr. Smudge – you’re not in this story. This is Harold and the Purple Crayon.

MR. SMUDGE: I’ve got crayons – blue, yellow, green, red, orange, purp...

NARRATOR: And the purple crayon?

MR. SMUDGE: I’ve got crayons – blue, yellow, green, red, orange, purp...

NARRATOR: Believe me, Mr. Smudge

MR. SMUDGE: Are you sure?

NARRATOR: I’m definitely sure.

MR. SMUDGE: Positive?

NARRATOR: Absolutely positive.

MR. SMUDGE: Who are you?

NARRATOR: Now, Mr. Smudge, why don’t you go back to your TV show?

MR. SMUDGE: Well, I’ll be back! (The TV screen turns off.)

We hear in the distance the sounds of a circus. HAROLD returns looking for the circus, but he can’t find it. A purple helium balloon rises to HAROLD.

NARRATOR: Harold? Uh, oh, it looks like Harold’s friends went too fast for him to keep up. I wonder where they went? A balloon! Listen, Harold – it
sounds like a circus. Harold imagined his friends must be there. So, here we go to the circus!

**HAROLD decides he’ll make his own circus. Accompanied by the STICK FIGURES, HAROLD races up the ramp where he draws the RINGMASTER. As HAROLD draws, another ramp appears with an outline, its outer curves continuing the line of a circus ring.**

**NARRATOR:** Harold loved the clowns very much because they make the audience laugh. Every circus needs a ringmaster to keep everything in order, Harold thought.

*Spotlights swirl. A puppet contortionist is operated. Three puppet showgirls dance with a horse. A very FAT LADY and CLOWN enter. A vendor crosses by. A rope drops, and one of the STICK FIGURES does tricks hanging from it. HAROLD has exited with his balloon.*

**NARRATOR:** High above the crowd!!

*A ‘dummy’ trapeze artist works high over the audience.*

**NARRATOR:** Ladies and gentlemen, may I call your attention to the center ring!

*A HAROLD DOUBLE descends vertically, drawing the leg of the tall man. The other leg enters and sets foot up on the platform. On the shoe is the small man (puppet). Tall man taps foot to the music as the small man dances. HAROLD appears on a stool, drawing a lion. Large teeth appear as the lion roars, scaring away the tall man, small man and RINGMASTER.*

**NARRATOR:** Thrills and chills! Music please…

*HAROLD and stool are lifted to the higher platform where HAROLD gets off and draws a tightrope. He performs on it and then loses his balance. We see the tightrope rise into the loft. HAROLD escapes and we see HAROLD DOUBLE descending as he draws the curve of an elephant’s trunk and lands on it. People cheer as the rest of the elephant appears and flings HAROLD double high above. The circus performers are below with a blanket. As HAROLD DOUBLE descends, lights change and HAROLD appears in the blanket. They toss him a few times.*

**NARRATOR:** Ladies and gentlemen, could we have absolute silence please? The amazing Harold will now be shot out of a cannon! That Harold is one brave boy if you ask me…
A cannon is wheeled out, and HAROLD is fitted with a crash helmet and he crawls in (and out the back). A drum roll, then a big bang. A balloon bag over the audience is tripped, releasing purple balloons. Spotlights search the house for HAROLD as the scene is dismantled. HAROLD DOUBLE is discovered in the balcony, then he runs off.

MOTHER: Harold? Harold?! (Mother continues in gibberish.)

HAROLD appears onstage. HAROLD draws a horizon line, barren except for a cactus. The STICK FIGURES are with him, acting like cowboys. A tumbleweed rolls in.

NARRATOR: Just then, Harold remembered that the government likes to play in the desert, too. So after thinking it over for a while, he decided to erase it. The noise frightened his friends. They had never heard such a sound.

HAROLD remembers that the government works in the desert as we see a small ‘poof’ in the distance and the scene erases itself as HAROLD, the STICK FIGURES and the tumbleweed exit.

NARRATOR: Harold thought that now might be a good time to watch some TV. I wonder what’s on?

ANNOUNCER: Stay tuned for the Mr. Smudge show. Today’s program will be brought to you by the colors blue, yellow, green, red, orange and purp... By the colors blue, yellow, green, red, orange and purp...

Harold is in his rocking chair, watching TV (a scrim face of platform). He is watching an ‘Electric Company’ type show starring Mr. Smudge, a villain who has a box of crayons. Mr. Smudge draws a red apple, an orange and a banana. He starts to color in his grapes and realizes he has no purple crayon.

NARRATOR: Oh no! We know that Mr. Smudge doesn’t have a purple. I wonder what he’ll do?

He reaches out of the screen to grab Harold’s purple crayon. Harold runs off to tell Mother.

MR. SMUDGE steps out of the TV and hides, pretending to be HAROLD’s chair. HAROLD returns and sits on MR. SMUDGE. When MR. SMUDGE tries to grab him, HAROLD jumps into the TV with MR. SMUDGE in pursuit (this causes ‘technical difficulties’ on the TV.). They run through a news show, a game show, a cop show, and ‘Solid Gold.’ We see this on a larger TV screen (a black cut drop). MR. SMUDGE gets the crayon and comes out of the TV below. As he goes
upstage, the Stick Figures follow him, as does Harold. Mr. Smudge draws a stage door and all exit through it.

Announcer: Today’s program will be brought to you by the colors blue, yellow, green, red, orange and PURPLE!

Narrator: Oh, no. This won’t be much of a story if Harold doesn’t have a purple crayon. I wonder what he’ll do? It looks like Harold has an idea. Into the TV? Be careful, Harold.

Two pair of purple lines fly in: one acting as a portal and the other as the show curtain tabs. A Conductor appears and an Actor is in the midst of his performance. Harold walks around in the wings looking for Mr. Smudge. The Stick Figures are acting as stagehands and others. (Note: all performers are wearing colors from Mr. Smudge’s crayon box).

Narrator: Oh dear, being in a TV was different than Harold had imagined, but he had to find Mr. Smudge and get his purple crayon back.

They looked in one studio door (Tarzan). No, Mr. Smudge wasn’t there.

They looked in another (cowboy show). Not even Mr. Smudge would go in there.

Finally they came to a door with a big star on it and they spotted him.

Mr. Smudge: Now I’ve got it – a purple crayon. It smells purple, it tastes purple, it looks purple. It IS purple and I’m gonna use it in my show, ‘The Mr. Smudge and the Purple Crayon Show.’ Ralph! I’ve got some changes to make in the script. That Harold kid – he’s out. It’s gonna be Mr. Smudge and the Purple Crayon.

Crew: Roy! Light check. Let’s check color balance, stand by. (Various ad-libs continue among Mr. Smudge and the TV people.)

Announcer: Hey kids – are you there? It’s time for the Mr. Smudge show. Brought to you by Crayon – in different, brilliant colors. We’ve got blue, yellow, green, red, orange and today’s special color, purple. And now here’s Mr. Smudge...
**MR. SMUDGE:** Hiya kids. Now we’re gonna take you to the magic drawing room, but first let’s see if Miss Blot is home. There’s Mr. Smear – good morning Mr. Smear. We’re going to Miss Blot’s house. Why don’t you come with us? Hello Miss Blot, so nice to see you. What a wonderful day. Now, let’s move on to the magic drawing room to look at my latest creation.

Now, whenever I’m drawing ballet dancers, for instance, I always like to save my favorite color for last. And can you guess what my favorite color is? That’s right – it’s purple and don’t you forget it! Now we’ll just put this into the magic box and see what we’ve got!

*BALLET DANCERS enter the stage.*

**MR. SMUDGE:** And now for a glimpse at the lost art of ballet.

*BALLET DANCERS begin to perform.*

**MR. SMUDGE:** I said a glimpse – cut it! Actor...live actors!!

*ROMEO and JULIET enter the stage.*

**MR. SMUDGE:** And now for a look at the ancient art of live acting...

**ROMEO:** But soft! What light through yonder window breaks? It is the east and Juliet is the sun. Arise fair sun and kill the envious moon, who is already sick and pale with grief, that thou, her maid art far more fair than she.

**JULIET:** Ay me!

**MR. SMUDGE:** Ay me!

**ROMEO:** She speaks.

**MR. SMUDGE:** Oh great, I can’t wait.

**JULIET:** Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo? Deny thy father and refuse thy name; or if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love and I’ll no longer be a Capulet.
ROMEO: Shall I hear more, or shall I speak at this?

MR. SMUDGE: Blah, blah, blah.

JULIET: What man art thou?

ROMEO: By a name I know not how to tell thee who I am.

MR. SMUDGE: Mr. Boring, that’s who thee are – cut it!

And now for a rare treat- a look at grand opera. Singer!

NARRATOR: Harold was having a good time being in the TV, but he decided it was time to make a plan to get his crayon back. I wonder what he’ll do? If I know Harold, it will be something imaginative...

HAROLD hides under the SINGER’s skirt. The SINGER goes onstage (with HAROLD still under the skirt) and sings an aria from a popular opera (i.e. Aida, Tosca, etc.). While she sings, MR. SMUDGE puts on a costume and goes onstage, with purple crayon in hand. After a few lines MR. SMUDGE interrupts.

MR. SMUDGE: What time is it? Cut it!

The SINGER hits a very high note; HAROLD grabs the crayon back from MR. SMUDGE and runs out of the TV back into his home.

MOTHER: Harold? Harold? It’s time to take a bath! (MOTHER continues talking in gibberish.)

HAROLD is in the tub upstage and begins dreaming about being on an island. Lights change and we see HAROLD DOUBLE on a hammock strung between two palm trees. Three of the STICK FIGURES are playing in the ocean with a beach ball and the other two are fanning HAROLD. The beach ball gets thrown offstage and HAROLD runs off to get it. While he is offstage, MR. SMUDGE rises out the ‘ocean’ in a frogman suit. HAROLD runs in with the ball and accidentally drops his crayon in the water.

NARRATOR: Oh no! Harold dropped his crayon! Into the water, said Harold. And down they went, not knowing that Mr. Smudge and his gang were always nearby.