

Runestone! A “Rock” Musical

Book and Lyrics by
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DEVELOPMENT HISTORY

Runestone! A "Rock" Musical was developed through private readings and public workshops at the Playwrights' Center of Minneapolis and the History Theatre. It was originally a play, and it had its first public reading as part of the 2002 Raw Stages Festival at the History Theatre.

Later the play was reconceived as a musical. The musical's first act and selected songs from the second act were performed as part of the 2019 Raw Stages Festival at the History Theatre. Act Two was later developed at the History Theatre through a 2020 Second Stage workshop.

FIRST PERFORMANCE

Runestone! A “Rock” Musical was first produced by the History Theatre of St. Paul, MN. The production ran May 7-29th, 2022.

The Creative Team:

Director.....Tyler Michaels King*

Music Director.....Brian Pekol

Choreographer.....Stephanie Anne Bertumen*

Scenic Designer.....Joel Sass

Sound Designer.....C. Andrew Mayer

Lighting Designer.....Karin Olson

Costume Designer.....Sonya Berlovitz

Properties Designer.....Abbee Warmboe

Stage Manager.....Haley Walsh*

Assistant Stage Manager.....Miranda Shunkwiler

The Cast:

Olof Ohman.....Sasha Andreev*

Karin Ohman, Professor Rygh, Ensemble.....Ivory Doublette*

Edward Ohman, Sam Sieverts, Ensemble.....Ryan London Levin

Amanda Ohman, Alexandria Reporter, Ensemble.....Kiko Laureano

John Gran, JP Hedberg, King Magnus, Ensemble.....Eric Morris*

Walter Gran, Captain Knutson, Ensemble.....Wesley Mouri*

Hjalmar Holand, Minneapolis Reporter, Ensemble..... Adam Qualls*

Johan Holvik, Elbow Lake Reporter, Ensemble.....Jon Andrew Hegge*

Understudies..... Peyton Dixon, Laurie Flanigan Hegge*, Elena Glass*, Ben Lohrberg

The Band:

Keyboard.....Brian Pekol

Guitar.....Gary Rue

Bass.....Colby Hansen

Drums.....David Rapheal

Understudies.....Jeffrey Willkomm (bass/guitar), Dave Schmallenberger (drums)

Due to COVID illnesses, the production would not have happened without the understudies!

*denotes a Member of Actors’ Equity Association

CAST OF CHARACTERS

OLOF OHMAN – (1854 -1935) A Swedish immigrant farmer who, along with his son Edward, unearthed the Kensington Runestone. Later he was accused of carving the runestone as a hoax, and the battle over whether he did or did not continues to rage.

THE RUNICS:

AR (ᚱ) (Plenty; Good Harvest) – Middle aged man who plays Mayor Hedberg, John Gran, King Magnus, and other roles.

ISA (ᚲ) (Ice; Destruction) – Young woman who plays Amanda Ohman, Alec Reporter, and other roles.

MADR (ᚱ) (Humankind; Mortality) – Middle aged woman who plays Karin Ohman, Professor Rygh, High Constable, and other roles.

OSS (ᚲ) (Mouth, Communication) – Middle aged man who plays Johan Holvik, Elbow Lake Reporter, and other roles.

REID (ᚱ) (Speed; Journey) – Young man who plays Nils Flaaten, Walter Gran, Paul Knutson, and other roles.

SOL (ᚲ) (the Sun) – Young man who plays Edward Ohman, Sam Sieverts, Cobber Student, and other roles.

THURS (ᚱ) (Power, strength) – Middle aged man who plays Hjalmar Holand, Minneapolis Reporter, and other roles.

THE STONERS – The rock band.

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ACT 1

ACT 1, SCENE 1 - Runestone

(AT RISE: The RUNICS enter. OLOF walks towards a large, gravestone-sized object covered with a worn cloth.)

OLOF

Uff-da.

(OLOF removes the worn cloth, revealing the Kensington Runestone. Drums, guitars, lights. A tarp behind OLOF drops away, revealing the STONERS rock band.)

(SONG: RUNESTONE *Olof, Runics*)

CH: RUNE STONE
OLOF: THE ROCK, WITH CHISELED RIDDLE
CH: CAUSES US TO MEET
WITH ENDLESS ARGUMENT
WE'RE GREETED BY THE RUNE STONE
RUNE STONE
OLOF: A MAN STUCK IN THE MIDDLE
CH: LEAVES US TO DEBATE
THE WHO AND WHY AND WHEN,
THE FATE OF OHMAN'S RUNE STONE

NARRATOR (AR)

Olof Ohman was a Swedish immigrant who claimed he found a runestone on his farm in 1898.

NARRATOR (REID)

Before he found the stone, Olof was a struggling, unknown Minnesota farmer.

NARRATOR (AR)

After he found the stone, Olof became a struggling, debated farmer.

OLOF

Edvard and I just dug up t'e stone. T'at's all ve did!

CH: THIS RUNIC ROCK THAT OLOF OHMAN FOUND

CH: BURIED DEEP BENEATH THIS VERY GROUND
 RAISED US UP WITH PROMISES OF FAME
 BROUGHT US DOWN ATOP A PILE OF CURSED SHAME

HOLVIK (OSS)

Academics, the press, and his neighbors were keenly interested in what Olof knew...

HOLAND (THURS)

And didn't know...

HOLVIK (OSS)

About runes.

HOLAND (THURS)

Some believed his runestone was an authentic Viking artifact.

HOLVIK (OSS)

But many others accused him of carving a hoax to fool the minds of the Learned.

OLOF

I carved no runes. T'is stone is real!

CH: THEY ARGUED AND THEY CLAMORED TOOTH AND NAIL
 EACH WITH DIFFERENT VERSIONS OF THE TALE
 WE DEFENDED OLOF'S HONOR THEN
 NOW WE KNOW THE TRUTH IS WELL BEYOND OUR KEN

OLOF

Nei!

NARRATOR (MADR)

After he died, Olof's friends and neighbors claimed he was honest, no matter what anybody said about him.

NARRATOR (SOL)

But for his children, the stone became a heavy, horrible burden.

NARRATOR (ISA)

And they all paid a tragic cost.

OLOF

Leave my family out of it! T'ey suffered too much.

CH: BUT DID OLOF REALLY CARVE THOSE RUNES

CH: FOR REASONS WE CAN'T COMPREHEND
ACCUSED BY URBAN CYNICS
AND THEIR THEORIZING FRIENDS
OR WAS OLOF OHMAN JUST THE HAPLESS HONEST
VICTIM OF THEIR ENDS?

CH: RUNE STONE
OLOF: THE ROCK, WITH CHISELED RIDDLE
CH: CAUSES US TO MEET
WITH ENDLESS ARGUMENT WE'RE GREETED
BY THE RUNE STONE

CH: RUNE STONE
OLOF: A MAN STUCK IN THE MIDDLE
CH: LEAVES US TO DEBATE
THE WHO AND WHY AND WHEN,
OLOF: THE FATE OF OHMAN'S RUNE STONE

ACT 1, SCENE 2 – Stone’s Background

NARRATOR (MADR)

The Kensington Runestone is one of Minnesota’s—

NARRATOR (AR)

Well, one of America’s—

NARRATOR (REID)

Greatest mysteries.

NARRATOR (ISA)

Is it a 14th century artifact?

NARRATOR (OSS)

Or 19th century hoax?

NARRATOR (MADR)

Some experts’ facts are other experts’ lies.

NARRATOR (ISA)

Now according to Olof’s account—

NARRATOR (SOL)

--he and his son Edward found the Kensington Runestone while clearing off a new field.

(The runestone is hidden under a tree stump.)

NARRATOR (THURS)

Olof was grubbing out tree stumps in November

NARRATOR (MADR)

Or August.

NARRATOR (ISA)

Most say August.

NARRATOR (OSS)

Not November.

NARRATOR (REID)

Yes, he was grubbing in August!

NARRATOR (SOL)

August 1898!

NARRATOR (AR)

Maybe.

OLOF

(Pulls on a rope. The tree stump doesn't budge.)

Huh, I don't understand.

NARRATOR (MADR)

Whatever the month, Olof's entire life changed.

NARRATOR (THURS)

Many witnesses signed affidavits, attesting to what they saw on that strange day.

ACT 1, SCENE 3 – Memory’s Full Bounty

(SONG: MEMORY’S FULL BOUNTY *Olof, Runics*)

CH: AT THE NOTARY, WE TESTIFY,
STATE WHAT WE SWEAR IS TRUE, NO LIE

OLOF: THESE FIVE HONEST SOULS AND I

CH: THROUGH OUR MEMORIES’ FULL BOUNTY
(IN) AUGUST EIGHTEEN NINETY-EIGHT,
NEARING HARVEST TIME
WHILE CLEARING LAND TO BUILD OUR FARM
OUR FAMILY HELPING STRIVING
AMERICA WILL BE OUR SALVATION

NARRATOR (ISA)

That day was like any other. Everyone in the Ohman family was busy doing something.

KARIN (MADR)

I’m Olof’s wife, Karin (Car-in). I attend Solem (So-lem) Lutheran Church every Sunday. Olof does not. I forgive him... most days. Olof!

(Joins scene.)

Lunch! Lunch! OLOF! Edvard, take lunch out to your father.

EDWARD (SOL)

That’s me! Olof’s ten-year-old son, Edward Ohman! Dad, lunch! Lunch break!!!

OLOF

The roots are stuck on somet’ing.

(OLOF smacks the axe against the hill; hits something hard.)

Ah. A stone! Help me, Edvard. Grab t’at branch t’ere.

(EDWARD pulls on tree stump; OLOF pulls on rope.)

CH: WITH THE WINCH PULLED TIGHT AROUND THAT TREE
CRANKING YANKING DOWN
WE TIPPED THE TREE STUMP, ROOTS EXPOSED
A CURIOUS STONE ENTANGLED
AND ON ITS FACE THE RUNE STONE INSCRIPTION

(OLOF and EDWARD (SOL) tip the tree stump back; the runestone is entangled in its roots.)

EDWARD (SOL)

Dad! Something’s carved on it!

OLOF

Carved? Vat? Nei.

EDWARD (SOL)

Yeah, Marks! See them? All over it!

OLOF

T’ere are.... Many marks! Edvard, stay by t’e stone. I get Nils, he’s yust over t’ere! Nils!

CH: AS OLOF’S SHOUTS ROSE FROM THAT HILL
WE RAN UP ITS SIDE
WE ALL SAW EDWARD JUMPING WILD
AND POINTING AT THOSE MARKINGS
CUT SQUARE AND CLEARLY MARKED WITH INCRPTION

NARRATOR (MADR)

The curious started showing up to look at the mysterious stone.

(The RUNICS examine the runestone.)

NILS (REID)

Nils Flaaten (Flah-tin), a farmer and Olof’s neighbor. I vas vorking in a nearby field while t’ey vere grubbing up t’at tree!

AMANDA (ISA)

Amanda Ohman. I’m Olof’s daughter. I’m six now.

JOHN (AR)

John Gran (rhymes with “fan”), Olof’s neighbor. I own t’e biggest farm in t’is township!

(MUSIC cuts out. The others look at JOHN.)

My connection with t’e runestone is, vell... complicated.

(MUSIC in.)

CH: WE DID NOT PAUSE TO CONTEMPLATE

CH: WHY OR WHOM OR HOW
A MYST'RY HERE TO THRILL US ALL
TO SPARK OUR AWE AND WONDER
WE SOUGHT A TRUTH WITHOUT CONTRADICTION

NILS (REID)

Olof, t'ey could be runes. Like from back home in Sveden!

OLOF

Could be, could be.

AMANDA (ISA)

There's more marks on this side!

EDWARD (SOL)

Yeah, all along this edge here!

JOHN (AR)

Clean out t'e dirt so ve can see t'e marks.

NILS (REID)

Here's some nails!

OLOF

A runestone, on my land!

CH: FROM THAT DAY ON WE'VE SHARED THIS FATE
WE STILL STAND IN AWE
BEFORE THAT RIDDLE YET CONCEALED
THOSE WONDROUS RUNIC CARVINGS
NEVER WOND'RING ONCE, FACT OR FICTION

NARRATOR (OSS)

Some of us signed affidavits at t'e courthouse in Alexandria, attesting to what we saw.

CH: AT THE NOTARY, WE TESTIFY,
STATE WHAT WE SWEAR IS TRUE, NO LIE

OLOF: THESE FIVE HONEST SOULS AND I

CH: THROUGH OUR MEMORY...

CH: WE SWEAR, SWEAR, SWEAR, IT’S TRUE
THROUGH OUR MEMORIES’ FULL BOUNTY

KARIN (MADR)

Goodness me, t’is stone’s somet’ing else, Olof.

EDWARD (SOL)

Look at all t’ose marks!

NILS (REID)

How do you suppose it got here?

ROALD (OSS)

Vonder vat t’ese carvings say?

KARIN (MADR)

I can’t read t’em, t’ats for sure.

SAM OLSON (THURS)

Nei, I can’t either.

NILS (REID)

But how do you suppose it got here?

AMANDA (ISA)

Dad, it looks really old!

SAM OLSON (THURS)

It’s been in t’e ground a long time.

ROALD (OSS)

Vay before ve started farming ‘around here, vay before.

NILS (REID)

BUT HOW DID IT GET HERE?

OLOF

Ja, I don’t hava clue! Somebody educated needs to look it over. Any of you got ideas who I should talk to?

ACT 1, SCENE 4 – Hedberg Arrives

HEDBERG (AR)

J.P. Hedberg, mayor of Kensington, Minnesota!

RUNICS

Him!

HEDBERG (AR)

Kensington is a rural town in West Central Minnesota barely three miles from Olof’s farm. It boasts a population of two hundred and seven souls, mostly hard-working Scandinavians.

GERMAN FARMER (REID)

Plus a few Germans!

HEDBERG (AR)

Yeah, them too. Now besides being mayor, I’m also president of the Kensington State Bank.

(Enters scene.)

Olof, those markings resemble runes from the old country! My home church has gravestones just like this. Used to play tag around those old stones.

OLOF

Ja, t’ere vere stones vit’ marks like t’ese vere I grew up too.

HEDBERG (AR)

Why is there a rune stone out here?

OLOF

Jag vet inte. [I don’t know.]

HEDBERG (AR)

You’re not pulling one over on me, are you Olof?

OLOF

Nei! Edvard and I just dug it up!

HEDBERG (AR)

Well, that settles it. Let’s bring it to the bank, it’ll be safer there. This could be great for Kensington. Maybe we’ll become the next Omaha!