

Tuesdays with Morrie Audition Information

Performance Dates

Thursday, April 16, 7PM

Friday, April 17, 7PM

Saturday, April 18, 7PM

Wednesday, April 22, 7PM

Thursday, April 23, 7PM

Friday, April 24, 7PM

Saturday, April 25, 2PM (strike to follow)

Characters

Mitch Albom

A successful man in his mid-thirties who is searching for meaning and purpose in his life.

Morrie Schwartz

A professor of sociology in his mid-70's at Brandeis University who is searching for meaning and purpose in his death.

Scenes for auditions

Bottom of page 11 "Mitch has a good brain" through the middle of page 13 "I promise to stay in touch"

Monologue for Mitch, page 13 "I didn't" through top of page 14, "and I couldn't help".

Monologue for Morrie, bottom of page 14 "Charlotte and I went outside" through top of page 15, "for as long as I have left"

MORRIE. Hey! Where are you goin'? (*Morrie freezes. Mitch turns to us.*)

MITCH. Spring, 1979. A hot, sticky Sunday afternoon in Waltham, Massachusetts. I am wearing a blue gown and a mortarboard and have just been graduated from Brandeis University.

MORRIE. (*Unfreezes.*) You thought you'd get outta here without a goodbye?

MITCH. (*To us.*) Morrie is my sociology professor. My favorite professor. In my four years at college, I have taken every class he taught.

MORRIE. (*To us.*) This is true. I remember: He was younger than the rest of my students.

MITCH. (*To us.*) But I compensated.

MORRIE. (*To us.*) He'd wear these old gray sweatshirts —

MITCH. (*Nods.*) Yeah —

MORRIE. — and drove this beat-up Mercury Cougar around campus, with the windows down and the music up.

MITCH. (*Nods.*) Yeah, yeah.

MORRIE. (*Smiles, mocking him.*) "Yeah, yeah." And what else did you do? Come on, tell us.

MITCH. (*To us.*) I walked around everywhere with a ... cigarette in my mouth.

MORRIE. (*To us.*) Unlit. He doesn't smoke. Such a tough guy.

MITCH. (*To us.*) The truth is, I almost never got to know Morrie. That first day, I come into class ... (*Light change. Morrie repositions himself.*) It's an intro course. I planned on hiding in the back-ground. (*Beat.*) There are only nine students in the room. Way too intimate. If I cut class, they'll know I'm not there.

MORRIE. You! With the gray sweatshirt and the three-month-old cigarette in your mouth. Where are you going?

MITCH. To the Registrar's Office.

MORRIE. (*To us.*) He was going to drop the class.

MITCH. (*To us.*) I was.

MORRIE. Albom, Mitchell. Is that you?

MITCH. Yeah? (*Mocking propriety.*) "Here."

MORRIE. (*Arm around Mitch.*) I have a question for you. Do you prefer — Mitch or Mitchell?

MITCH. (*Still trying to be Mr. Cool.*) "Uh ... Mitch ... is what my friends call me."

MORRIE. Mitch it is, then. And, Mitch? I hope one day you'll think of me as your friend.

MITCH. (*To us.*) So there was, like, no chance of dropping the

course.

MORRIE. Nope.

MITCH. After that first class, I enrolled in another and another.

MORRIE. And another. He practically lived in my office. He'd hang around for lunch, dinner —

MITCH. It's an unbelievable thing to watch Morrie eat. It's not that he lacks manners; it's just that he likes to talk while he's eating ...

MORRIE. I get so excited about what I'm talking about ...

MITCH. You forget to CHEW. Unfortunately, he likes eating egg salad. I'd sit across from him and have to dodge these little yellow projectiles. All the time I know him I have two overwhelming urges: to hug him and to give him a napkin.

MORRIE. Hug me!

MITCH. To everybody else he's "Professor Schwartz." Me, I call him "Coach."

MORRIE. (*To us.*) I loved that. Everyone should have a coach.

MITCH. (*To us.*) At Brandeis, Morrie was a bit of a campus celebrity. He taught all the big radicals, Jerry Rubin, Angela Davis —

MORRIE. First they'd take my class, then they'd get radical.

MITCH. During Vietnam, the word came down from the administration that any student who wasn't passing with at least a "C" average could lose his deferment and be drafted. So Morrie calls a meeting and makes a proposal.

MORRIE. "Give 'em all A's!"

MITCH. So I wind up majoring in sociology. Actually, what I major in is Morrie.

MORRIE. (*To us.*) Mitch has a good brain. *Shanu cup*. He was very good at writing, very good at sports. But where I think his heart was ... was in his music. I remember one day, I came down into the basement of the music department, and I saw him inside one of those little cubicles, the kind with the egg cartoons on the walls? (*Mitch plays a tune akin to "All the Things You Are."**) I knock on the door. (*He knocks — banging sound heard.*) — Mitch! Mitch!

MITCH. (*Stopping, annoyed.*) What! (*Sees it's Morrie.*) Oh — hey, Coach.

MORRIE. (*Clapping.*) Wonderful! Wonderful! Such a gift.

MITCH. Yeah, yeah.

MORRIE. Yeah, yeah.

MITCH. Whatcha got there?

* See Special Note on Songs and Recordings on copyright page.

MORRIE. Some books you'll need for fall semester.

MITCH. *Identity: Youth and Crisis, I and Thou, The Divided Self.*

MORRIE. A man who plays jazz should know about angst.

MITCH. Oh, I know angst.

MORRIE. (*Challenging*) What are you talking about? "You know angst."

MITCH. My parents and I were on the phone three hours last night about my "interest in music." They ... never mind ...

MORRIE. Come on. You can tell me. I won't give advice.

MITCH. They want me to be a lawyer.

MORRIE. Don't do it!

MITCH. I thought you said you weren't going to give advice!

MORRIE. Lawyers are the exception!

MITCH. Well, they prefer lawyers to starving musicians.

MORRIE. If your parents didn't want you to go into music, why'd they get you started in it?

MITCH. They didn't. My uncle did. My uncle Mike. At least he doesn't want me to be a lawyer. He *likes* music. He taught me the piano. Taught me football. Taught me how to drive. I was born on his birthday, so my parents let him name me. If I ever DO grow up, he's the person I'd like to be.

MORRIE. Look, your uncle may be your mentor, but your parents are your parents. So here's what you do: When you talk to them, be polite, be respectful, listen to their good advice ... and then PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE! (*Morrie pats Mitch on the back. Mitch smiles and goes back to tinkling a tune akin to "Body and Soul."**) *Morrie watches, then turns to us.* It is hard to find your way in life. The accidental journeys, the unexpected questions. We can't always do it alone. We need teachers. (*Tenderly*) *I and Thou.* (*Mitch stops playing. Light change. We're back at graduation. Mitch stands and comes to Morrie with a briefcase.*)

MITCH. (*After a beat, to Morrie.*) Coach, I ... I got you a present. It's a briefcase. (*Points out.*) "M.S." Your initials.

MORRIE. I got that. (*Tears up.*) Mitch, you are one of the good ones.

MITCH. Yeah, yeah.

MORRIE. "Yeah, yeah." I want to tell you something. "*Farhalisht deine licht unter a shorten.*"

MITCH. Morrie, I don't speak Yiddish.

* See Special Note on Songs and Recordings on copyright page.

MORRIE. You're a good student. Look it up.

MITCH. Coach ... Look ... I ...

MORRIE. You gotta go.

MITCH. I gotta go.

MORRIE. "You gotta go, you gotta go."

MITCH. I don't know how to say goodbye.

MORRIE. This is how we say goodbye. (*Morrie hugs Mitch. Mitch pulls away.*) Uh-uh. Extra credit. (*Mitch smiles and kisses Morrie's forehead.*) You'll stay in touch, right?

MITCH. Of course.

MORRIE. Promise me.

MITCH. I promise.

MORRIE. Say it in a sentence.

MITCH. Wha — ?

MORRIE. Say: "Morrie, I promise to stay in touch."

MITCH. "Morrie, I promise to stay in touch."

MORRIE. (*Satisfied, turns, walks, then ...*) Say it again, so you, I won't forget.

MITCH. "*Morrie, I PROMISE to stay in touch!*" (*Morrie exits. Mitch turns to us.*) I didn't. I proceeded to break that promise every day, every week, and every month for sixteen years. What happened? Life happened. After college, I moved to New York. Into an apartment building where my Uncle Mike and his family lived. And I started my career as a jazz pianist. (*Mitch sits at piano, plays jazz in a charming, lyrical way.*) I wasn't an instant star, but I was young, plenty of time, knock on doors, play some piano bars, come home and tell Mike about my adventures. "Don't give up!" he said, "You'll make it!" We'd play duets together. It was a fun time ... (*Stops playing.*) Then Mike got sick. Pancreatic cancer. Very painful. No cure. Mike was young. He had a family. He was bitter. He couldn't handle it. And I couldn't handle it either. I tried not to look when he doubled over or threw-up from the chemo. He was my hero; I didn't want to see him sick and weak! So I'd leave the room and sit at the piano ... by myself. (*Mitch plays a tune akin to "Fascinatin' Rhythm," now slightly too fast.**) And when he was in pain, which was all the time, he'd cry out. I didn't know what to do, so I just sat there and played. I just kept playing. (*Mitch plays even faster now.*) And as the cancer spread into his stomach and his bones and his skin turned yellow and his hair fell out, he'd cry out louder, and I'd play louder, and his family

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couldn't help, and the doctors couldn't help, and I couldn't help! (*Mitch plays crazy fast now, discordant, making mistakes. Then he suddenly stops and slams down the piano. Mitch stands.*) I stopped playing music. (*Piano strikes upstage.*) Mike was dead. He was forty-two. I was twenty-one. Half his age. I thought ... "I've got twenty-one years left!" It was time to get "serious." (*Mitch puts on a dress coat and tie.*) I sold my keyboard. I went back to school. Columbia this time. Master's Degree. Journalism. Got a job as a sports reporter. I worked hard. I hustled. And things caught on. And then they more than caught on. I was going to the Super Bowl, the World Series, the Olympics. I got a column, and a bigger paycheck, and a radio gig, and a TV gig, and a new house and an even bigger paycheck —! And one day I woke up and said: "*This was meant to be!*" I was hatched out of the egg, just like this. Whenever I got music magazines, mail from Brandeis, I threw it away. The past was the past; forget it. And so I forgot my teacher. I might never have spoken, or seen, or heard from Morrie Schwartz ever again had I not been surfing TV late one night when something caught my ear. (*We hear a snippet of Nightline theme.*) MITCH/TED KOPPEL. "Good evening, I'm Ted Koppel, and this ... is *Nightline*. Just who is Morrie Schwartz, and why, by the end of the night, are so many of you going to care ... about him?" (*A light upstage on Morrie.*)

MORRIE. (*To us.*) It started with little things. Long walks would leave me out of breath. Exhausted. Then I began to stumble — for no reason. One night, on the dance floor, I fell. And I never fall when I'm dancing. So ... I had tests. *Lots* of tests. And finally my wife Charlotte and I went to see this neurologist. The doctor says: MITCH/DOCTOR. Mister Schwartz, please sit down.

MORRIE. Good news they let you stand. Bad news ...

MITCH/DOCTOR. "Mr. Schwartz, you have amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, ALS, a degenerative disease of the nervous system — also known as Lou Gehrig's disease.

MORRIE. "Lou Gehrig's disease. But that's fatal."

MITCH/DOCTOR. "Yes, it is."

MORRIE. "I mean — it *used* to be fatal. There's a cure now, right?"

MITCH/DOCTOR. "No. There isn't."

MORRIE. "Well ... how many years do I have?"

MITCH/DOCTOR. "It's not a matter of years."

MORRIE. Charlotte and I went outside. It was a beautiful day, the sun was shining, the sky was blue, children were laughing, singing. *I wanted it all to stop!* I screamed, "Make the sun die, make

the sky black! No more laughter, no more singing! I'm sick. I'm gonna die!" But the sun stayed up there. The kids kept laughing. The world did not change, because the world doesn't cater to me. So I asked myself, "Am I going to withdraw from the world, like many people do, or am I going to live?" I decided I'm going to live, for as long as I have left. (*Nightline theme. Lights change. Mitch takes a cell phone from his pocket. Sound: phone ring. Morrie answers his phone. On phone:*) Hello?

MITCH. (*On phone.*) Uh ... Professor Schwartz?

MORRIE. (*On phone.*) ... Yes?

MITCH. (*On phone.*) I don't know if you'll remember me ... My name is Mitchell Alborn ...? I was a student of yours at Brandeis ...? In the seventies ...?

MORRIE. (*On phone, like he's unsure.*) Mitchell Alborn ...

MITCH. Yeah ... I was a sociology major ...

MORRIE. (*He grins.*) Why didn't you call me "Coach"? (*Lights change.*)

MITCH. The next Tuesday, I'm on a plane to Boston. I rent a car, I'm driving to Morrie's house. (*Sound of car radio: WINS news time sound. To us:*) The radio's on. All-news station. I'm trying to see the numbers on the mailboxes. Cup of coffee in one hand, a cell phone between my ear and shoulder. (*Into phone.*) "Listen, don't worry! I did my column last night, I recorded my radio gig this morning, my return flight is in two hours, I'll be back in time for the TV spot at eleven. When have I ever missed a gig? I'm doing a good deed today. Yes, occasionally, I do good deeds ... It's a quick sick call; get in, do what I gotta do, and get out!" (*Morrie appears upstage with a walker. Radio cuts off. Light change. Mitch looks up and speaks to us.*) I look up, and I glimpse a figure, a small old man under a Japanese maple. I know deep down I should drop the phone, run to Morrie, give him a hug. But I don't, I got work to finish. So I slide off the seat, like I'm looking for something. (*Into phone.*) "No, no listen —"

MORRIE. (*A quizzical rasp.*) Mitch? (*Mitch swirls to Morrie, hiding the phone.*) What are you doing on the floor?

MITCH. (*Blindsided.*) Oh. I was ... I was looking for my car keys.

MORRIE. Your car's running.

MITCH. ... My other car keys.

MORRIE. How many cars you got?

MITCH. (*Blathers.*) Well, this is a rental —

MORRIE. (*Happy still hugging.*) I'm teasing you. Let's go inside ... Mitchell Alborn. My old friend has come back. (*Lights change.*)