

PHONY

A TeleMusical

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PLOT SUMMARY

PHONY is a technological musical about a pair of old friends: a burner phone and a flip phone. Burner cannot hold their secrets any longer. Flip tries to rekindle their friendship after their abandonment. They live in a world that communicates through telepathy. PHONY packs some imposter syndrome-related themes from identity, real/fake friendships, and social interactions.

As teenagers, Burner and Flip often made ruckus at Mute Theatre. The staff eventually had enough and chased them down. They catch Flip, who snitches. Burner runs away and soon is taken in by Smart @. Due to Burner's ability to keep secrets and block out any telepathy, @ trains them to be a confidante for their new religious movement, Smart Operating System (SOS). The Smart family has long been the "voice" of the Tech Giants.

In the present day, @ is succeeded by their child: Iota. Iota initiates "the Phone Plan" which has SOS going viral, a computer virus-level sensation. An informant soon obtains insurmountable evidence of SOS's frauds. If revealed, the government will legislate an update that will put a pause on SOS's operations. Because Burner is untraceable, Iota tasks them with hosing down this informant at a gathering called "Group Text." When Burner approaches the informant on a balcony, they realize it is their childhood friend. They reconnect. Soon, a cop approaches this uninvited guest. Flip pushes Burner into the waters below.

In the following act, the Tech Giants tower over Burner and voice their disdain for SOS's bastardization of their morals. Elsewhere, Flip is conflicted and does not provide full details of their findings to any journalist. Soon, Burner wakes up in rice. Rotary saved their life. Rotary revisits a friendship in their life with Push-Button, who pushed their buttons too many times. Burner decides to go find Flip before Smart does.

Meanwhile, Smart assumes Flip has killed their longtime family friend. Smart sends their crazed followers after Flip and news outlets, setting the world ablaze with hotlines. Burner gets their antenna in the alert system and relays the message of SOS's corruption to everyone. Many followers realize they have lost everything due to Smart and their associates. As a mob prepares to crack Burner, Flip saves them. However, Flip gets their backs broken in the process and permanently turns off.

In the end, Burner spends time behind low bars or poor signals. They then turn their life around and become a defense attorney. Elsewhere, as the arbiter of truth, Flip becomes a Tech Giant.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

BURNER, adult, a confidante for Smart Operating System (SOS)

FLIP, adult, an informant for news media

SMART IOTA / ☉, adult, the "voice" of the Tech Giants

ROTARY, older adult, a hermit who speaks dead languages

LIGHTNING, an eel, SMART's pet

Ensemble

TECH GIANTS, the supposed Gods that SOS followers worship

CHATTERS, clownish politicians who legislate patches into updates
◦ Named: Congressperson Fisher Price

METAS, followers of SOS

FAXS, journalists

RADIOS, law enforcers

CHARGERS, domesticated eels

BROADBAND, the orchestra of the show, while during intermission:
a (Off-Off) Broadway cover band
◦ Named: Conductor Player

○ Androgyny Technology: Each character resembles the androgynous nature, with open-ended vocal requirements

○ People of the Global Majority most represent the experiences of this universal family; cast accordingly

MUSICAL NUMBERS

Act I

1. "Silence Your Phones" Burner, Flip, Player, Radios
2. "Call to Action" Burner, Flip
3. "Tell You (What)" @, Burner
4. "The Phone Plan" Smart, Lightning, Metas, Chargers
5. "End of the Line" Flip, Chatters
6. "(Send a) Direct Message" Smart, Burner
7. "Group Text" Flip, Faxes, Chatters, Radios
8. "On the Other Line" Burner
9. "Breaking Up" Flip, Burner

Act II

10. "Keep in Touch" Burner, Tech Giants
11. "I Don't Have the Facts" Flip, Faxes
12. "Crack Under Pressure" Rotary, Burner
13. "Cut Off" Smart, Lightning
14. "Hotlines" Smart, Burner, Flip, Faxes, Metas
15. "Leave Me (on Read)" Flip, Burner
16. "Hang Up" Burner, Smart
17. "Take the Call" Company

ACT I

SCENE 1

MUTE THEATRE

BROADBAND sits patiently.

BURNER and FLIP find seats in the audience. They are teenagers.

PLAYER, an iPod-like maestro, walks in, preparing to conduct BROADBAND.

BURNER & FLIP

Ring ring ring!

PLAYER

Silence!

BURNER & FLIP

Ring ring ring!

PLAYER

This is Mute Theatre. Be courteous to your neighbors. They paid for these seats.

BURNER & FLIP

Ring ring ring! Except the comps!

PLAYER

Compliments to them for taking the time to be here. Now, would you all like to hear the opening number of tonight's musical?!

BURNER & FLIP

Ring ring ring!

PLAYER

Silence! Or we will hose you!

BURNER

Ring...

The RADIOS enter from behind the audience. They hold water guns.

BURNER and FLIP disperse.

The RADIOS give chase.

1. "SILENCE YOUR PHONES"

The theatre erupts with the melodic ringtones of cell phones.

PLAYER & RADIOS

SILENCE, YOU PHONES!

End of "SILENCE YOUR PHONES"

RADIOS drag in FLIP.

RADIO

We confiscated this phone.

FLIP

Get your signal off me, Radios! I cannot be tracked and arrested!

PLAYER

So, you're the phone who has been unmuting Mute Theatre. Where is your friend?

FLIP

My real friend is long gone. In fact, they ran off to an undisclosed location in their colleague's *Pho* restaurant in *New York*. They can kick all your antennas as they are over six inches tall and over three inches wide. You would not be able to find their name in your database because their name is so uncommon. Have you even heard of—

BURNER

(Narrating)

Burner. My name is Burner now. And my "friend" there. Their name is Flip. What a snitch. A fake friend. A faker phone. A phony...

BURNER disappears, without a signal.