

In the musical, a little girl named Marcella is dying of a mysterious illness. Her father makes her a rag doll to comfort her, and his stories of the doll come to life in her dreams to guide her through her grief and fear. Marcella and her new friends confront wolves, witches, and incompetent doctors on their way to outwit death and mend her broken heart.



**Chapter 2: the plot**

The musical was commissioned by Patricia Snyder for the Empire State Institute for the Performing Arts, after she heard Raposo's music in the 1977 Raggedy Ann movie.

While Gibson initially declined to write the book, he eventually accepted her request when he heard the legend of Johnny Gruelle telling the stories to his sick daughter.

The show played at ESIPA in 1984 and 85, and was then invited by Natalya Sats to a cultural exchange between the USA and the USSR. After a successful week in Moscow in January 1986, the show streamlined to Broadway, playing the Kennedy Center in August before transferring to NY.

**Chapter 3: the history**

Budget: \$2.6 Million\*\*  
 Total Gross: \$156,625 \*\*\*  
 Top Capacity: 51%\*\*\*\*

Raggedy Ann flopped, it flopped bad. To simplify, the critics were confused, the parents didn't want to pay enormous ticket prices, and the theater aficionados didn't want to see a show for babies.

Opening: Oct 16/Closing: Oct 19  
 Previews: 15 Performances: 5

Director: Patricia Birch  
 Book: William Gibson  
 Music/Lyrics: Joe Raposo

**Chapter 1: the flop**

**Chapter 4: the why bring it back?**

Raggedy Ann is a show that tackles difficult themes. Marcella is learning to confront grief when she hasn't yet been given the tools to do so, validating the feelings of young people in a world that often tells them they're too young to have real troubles.

Without saying, this isn't the show parents expected in 1986, and the Broadway-fication of the play muddled the themes behind a smokescreen of spectacle. Where this work thrives is in small, intimate settings, where the emotions of the characters - and the importance of telling stories despite the odds - are highlighted.

The very condensed (and still ongoing) story of a Broadway flop and a dedicated revival



In 2013, the musical begins to make a presence online. In 2021, the Raggedy Ann Revival Effort is created, an online group dedicated to learning everything we can about the show. Later that year, full footage of the 1984 ESIPA production is found.

With footage, scripts, photos, and cast interviews at hand, the idea of actually reviving the show becomes a reality. Through our lawyer, we obtained permission from the estates of Raposo and Gibson to revive and workshop.



**Chapter 5: the revival**

Learn more:  
<https://raggedy-ann-revival-effort.necocities.org/>



Newsletter  
 Website

**Chapter 6: whatever is next**

We want to do more workshops, more concerts, more events of all kinds!

By 2030, we hope to produce a landmark production that solidifies the best version of all our revisions and the hard work of the community.

But the main goal is to make the licensing available for anyone to produce. To us, both the doll and the musical Raggedy Ann represent creating meaningful stories from little to nothing, and that power belongs in every school, community theater, and youth group with a story to tell.

\*Aka "Raggedy Ann - the Musical Adventure" aka "Rag Dollly - The Raggedy Ann Musical"  
 \*\*Source: Joseph C. Koehnem, "British Imports bolster musical ranks on Broadway" Press and Jan Bulletin, 1988-09-12  
 \*\*\*Source: Playbill Magazine  
 \*\*\*\*Source: The Broadway League