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Belle Frahm

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Honors Thesis

HATTIE'S ECHO!:
A DRAMATURGICAL EXPERIMENT OF
INTERDISCIPLINARY CONTEXT IN THEATRE

by
Belle Frahm

Submitted to Brigham Young University in partial fulfillment
of graduation requirements for University Honors

Theatre and Media Arts Department
Brigham Young University
April 2024

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Honors Coordinator: Dean Duncan

ABSTRACT

HATTIE'S ECHO!: A DRAMATURGICAL EXPERIMENT OF INTERDISCIPLINARY CONTEXT IN THEATRE

Belle A. Frahm

Theatre and Media Arts Department

Bachelor of Arts

Written by fellow TMA student Charlotte Westover, *Hattie's Echo!* explores the stories of two faithful families, one Mormon pioneer family and one modern family, both at intense turning points in their lives. These families deal with death, hunger, emotional abuse, and pornography addictions. This new musical featured sensitive religious, historical, and biographical topics. My work aimed to understand the most effective way to provide context to all stakeholders of the production (the design team, the actors, and the audience), in each of these topic areas. While a dramaturg's work is often focused on engaging *one* of these member groups with the script, my method was to expand the traditional dramaturgical work of "New Play Development" and "Production Dramaturgy" to form an inclusive hybrid of the two. I did this by deliberately creating religious, historical, and biographical connections to each of the member groups.

Throughout the run of the show, I found that I needed to adjust the frequency of my dramaturgical engagement with the actors and design team, or shift them from one area of focus to another. Additionally, I increasingly found that my work with the

playwright proved to be the most fertile area of engagement with the script. Lastly, I found that by deliberately focusing on all three contextual areas in the lobby display, I received a deeply personal response from the audience, unlike any other I have seen before. By using *Hattie's Echo!* as a theatrical experiment of combining “New Play Work” and “Production Dramaturgy” to share interdisciplinary context, I found that all stakeholders of the production had an increased intellectual and emotional connection to the show. However, my results were qualified by the audience’s clear increase in engagement following viewing the performance. While my work was effective, the most important work I did was bolstering the script itself, because that was the transformative piece of art.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my family, my fiance, and my mentor throughout my entire college career, Professor Shelley Graham. I hope you will see this paper as a culmination of all the research, community, creative, and personal skills that you have taught me.

Thank you.

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I. Introduction

Student playwright Charlotte Westover had been developing the musical *Hattie's Echo!* for about 5 years when she was approached by the TMA department chair, Megan Sanborn Jones. Jones invited Charlotte to produce it as a Senior Directing Project (colloquially known as a 536 project in the department) to be performed at the end of the Fall 2023 semester, where a group of senior students would apply to work on the project. Immediately prior to this offer, Charlotte had just workshopped the musical in a class called WDA (Writers, Dramaturgs, Actors) Workshop, a class specifically designed for developing new student scripts. As the final project for WDA, the script was performed as a concert reading, with many of her family members reading and singing the parts, as they had done in other church readings before. I attended this WDA reading in December 2022, and I can attest to the power of the script. I felt moved in a way I hadn't before, and I knew I wanted to work on this musical if I ever had the chance.

Luckily for me, Charlotte and I began working together as dramaturgs for BYU Theatre on *The Secret Garden* musical that also opened in Fall 2023. Because of this association, she asked me to be the dramaturg for *Hattie's Echo!* I excitedly told her that I already loved the show and wanted to work on it, and thus our work began.

Production meetings for the show began during the summer of 2023, and rehearsals began in August 2023. The work that I detail in my thesis is specifically designed for this 536 production of the musical. However, I find it necessary to understand the long timeline of previous development of the show in order to grasp my work and how it will continue to grow in the future.

II. Review of Critical Literature

Role of a Dramaturg

If you don't know what "dramaturgy" is, you're not alone. The role of a dramaturg can be difficult to define because the role changes based on the needs of each production. However, there are three common ways of categorizing the dramaturgical work one does on a production.

The first and most common is Production Dramaturgy: working on scripts that have already been produced and performed many times. These are common in local or regional theatre, like *The Secret Garden*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, and *A Doll's House*.

The second is Adaptation Dramaturgy: working with a script that is being altered from one form of media, like a book or movie, to the stage. Examples of this are *Mean Girls the Musical*, *Frozen the Musical*, and *Pride and Prejudice onstage*.

Lastly is New Play Dramaturgy: developing a new work with a playwright that has not been produced before.¹

Hattie's Echo! falls into a hybrid of the first and last. It is a new play, never having been staged before, but it also had a script that was workshopped enough to get to the point of this 536 production. Because of this, the skills of both types of dramaturgy need to be employed.

New Play Dramaturgy

When developing a new script, it is imperative to give feedback properly. In this case, I'd be giving feedback to Charlotte Westover about a script that she has been

¹ Barnette, Jane. *Adapturgy: The Dramaturg's Art and Theatrical Adaptation*. Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale, 2018.

working on for nearly 6 years, and one that is extremely close to her family. How does a dramaturg give constructive critique?

American Choreographer Liz Lerman has developed a process of giving feedback that is now implemented by many professional dramaturgs. The process is “designed to leave the maker eager and motivated to get back to work.”² Lerman advises four steps in her approach of giving constructive feedback:

1. **Statements of Meaning:** Responders state what was meaningful, evocative, interesting, exciting, striking in the work they have just witnessed.
2. **Artist as Questioner:** The artist asks questions about the work. After each question, the responders answer. Responders may express opinions if they are in direct response to the question asked and do not contain suggestions for changes.
3. **Neutral Questions:** Responders ask neutral questions about the work. The artist responds. Questions are neutral when they do not have an opinion couched in them...
4. **Opinion Time:** Responders state opinions, subject to permission from the artist. The usual form is “I have an opinion about _____, would you like to hear it?” The artist has the option to say no.

While previous methods of giving critical theatrical feedback were often considered destructive, there is a greater emphasis on building constructive and positive atmospheres of creation.³ Dramaturgy, in this regard, represents “...a line of inquiry meant to strengthen understanding rather than criticize.”⁴ The feedback given to a playwright can determine the tone of the entire show and is just as important as the Production Dramaturgy work done, if not more.⁵

² Lerman, Liz. *Critique is Creative*, edited by John Borstel, ProQuest (Firm) Wesleyan University Press, Middletown, Connecticut, 2022.

³ Orr, Shelley. Dramaturgy: A Revolution in Theatre (Review). *Theatre Journal*, 2007.

⁴ Proehl, Geoffrey S. *Toward a Dramaturgical Sensibility: Landscape and Journey*, edited by D. D. Kugler, Mark Lamos and Michael Lupu. Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, Madison N.J., 2008.

⁵ Barnette, Jane. *Adapturgy: The Dramaturg's Art and Theatrical Adaptation*. Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale, 2018.

Production Dramaturgy and Context

In addition to giving feedback to the playwright, a dramaturg's job is to establish the world of the play as it already exists. An important step in doing this is considering multiple perspectives when looking at the script. This is the primary teaching in Elinor Fuchs' foundational essay *EF's Visit to a Small Planet*. Fuchs uses the metaphor of a play being like a planet. In order to understand the world, we need to understand its space, time, tone, mood, music, and more. By using these "theatrical mirrors," we can situate the play in its historical, cultural, religious, and even biographical context, thus fostering further dramatic analysis.⁶

Theatre professors Amanda Dawson and Scott C. Knowles support this point in their article *Dramaturging Script Analysis* when they say, "We believe dramaturgical analysis will help answer additional important questions such as: *How might it fit into an important history? Should this play be produced, and for what audience or purpose? How might we work as a co-creator with a text?* We value the questions of audience, community, and artist, not just text."⁷ In order to fully understand the script, every topic it touches must be properly situated in its context.

In Magda Romanska's *The Routledge Companion to Dramaturgy*, she includes a section on "Dramaturg as Mediator and Context Manager," where contributors argue for the importance of context - "sociological, cultural, and linguistic context" as a foundational component of dramaturgical analysis. She says, "Dramaturgy provides the opportunity to explore and identify context. But creating and discovering dramaturgical

⁶ Fuchs, Elinor. *EF's Visit to a Small Planet: Some Questions to Ask a Play*. *Theater*, 2004.

⁷ Dawson, Amanda, and Scott C. Knowles. *Dramaturging Script Analysis*. *Theatre Topics* 2023.

context relies on both facts (research) and creativity.”⁸ Romanska is arguing that through both traditional research methods and non-traditional ones, a dramaturg finds new discoveries.

Dramaturgs Karen Jean Martinson and Nicola Olsen expand on mixing research and creativity. They argue that creating tangible displays of dramaturgical research is vital in order for the audience to digest it. This includes lobby displays, program notes, actors’ workshops, and more.⁹ Another example of a common creative actors’ workshop is a site-specific trip that encourages historical engagement. Theatremakers Rachel Bowditch, Daniel Bird Tobin, Chelsea Pace, and Marc Devine write about four pillars to site-specific theatre:

1. Exploring Unique Spaces and Architecture
2. Being in Conversation with the Elements of Performance
3. Differentiating between Augmenting and Transforming Found Space
4. Creating Presence and Performance Energy in Site-Specific Work

Bowditch et. al, take their performers throughout the Las Vegas strip to embody a carnivalistic persona into their work.¹⁰ This enhanced the performers’ connection to the piece. Their amount of creativity depended on informed experimentation. Presenting research needs to be engaging, and this is where the creativity shines forth.

One of the biggest challenges in production dramaturgy is determining what context to focus on. A dramaturg’s job is to “Construct and develop questions that identify essential elements of a play that matter to all stakeholders.”¹¹ Through the

⁸ Romanska, Magda, editor. *The Routledge Companion to Dramaturgy*. Routledge, London; New York, 2015.

⁹ Martinson, Karen Jean, and Nicola Olsen. The Total Theatre Eye: A Conversation about Dramaturgy and Creativity. *Theatre Topics* 2021.

¹⁰ Bowditch, Rachel, Daniel Bird Tobin, Chelsea Pace, and Marc Devine. Four Principles about Site-Specific Theatre: A Conversation on Architecture, Bodies, and Presence. *Theatre Topics* 2018.

¹¹ Dawson, Amanda, and Scott C. Knowles. Dramaturging Script Analysis. *Theatre Topics* 2023.

methods of script analysis in new play development mentioned previously, I decided that the areas of historical, religious, and biographical context would be the most important to this production of *Hattie's Echo!*

III. Methodology

In order to evaluate which form of contextual background is most beneficial to the stakeholders of the production, I focused on three areas of context to guide my efforts: historical context, religious context, and biographical context. I chose to focus on these particular types of context because of two reasons. The first was the nature of the play itself.

Because *Hattie's Echo!* deals with stories of the Mormon pioneers and their exodus west, I thought it important for all groups involved to learn about the history of the pioneers.

Additionally, because the play addresses issues of pornography, faith crises, and again, the Mormon pioneers, religious context was important to establish. (I count pornography addiction under a religious context because of the Latter-Day Saint guidance to abstain from pornography in any form.)

Lastly, because the play is a new work written by a student and about her personal life, the biographical context was a vital element to establish.

In order to satisfy the need to establish context for each of these areas, I will do each of the following, acknowledging that many of them bleed into another area, or all three:

Historical Context

- Actor's Workshop in SLC Cemetery
- Journals
- Research
- Lobby Display (maps, journals)

Religious Context:

- Actor's Workshop at This is the Place monument
- Resources on Pornography and Faith
- Journal Prompts Themselves
- Lobby Display (Informative posters)

Biographical Context

- Documentary
- Actor's Workshop with Playwright's family
- Lobby Display (Videos, Interactive Prompts, Website)
- Post-show Discussions

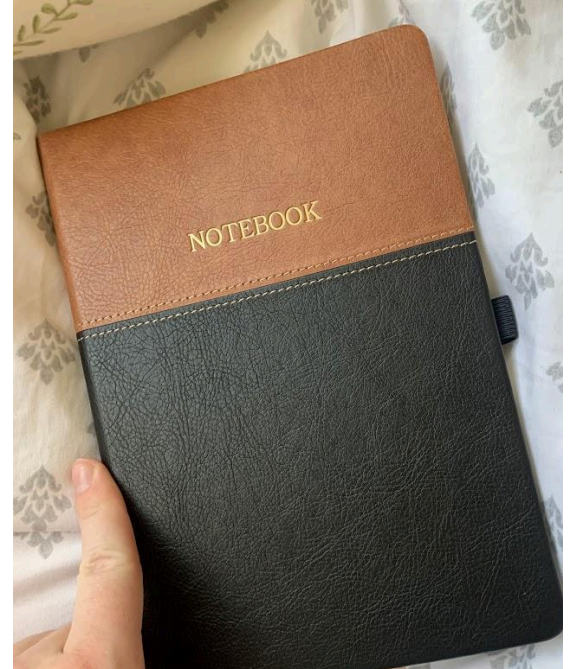
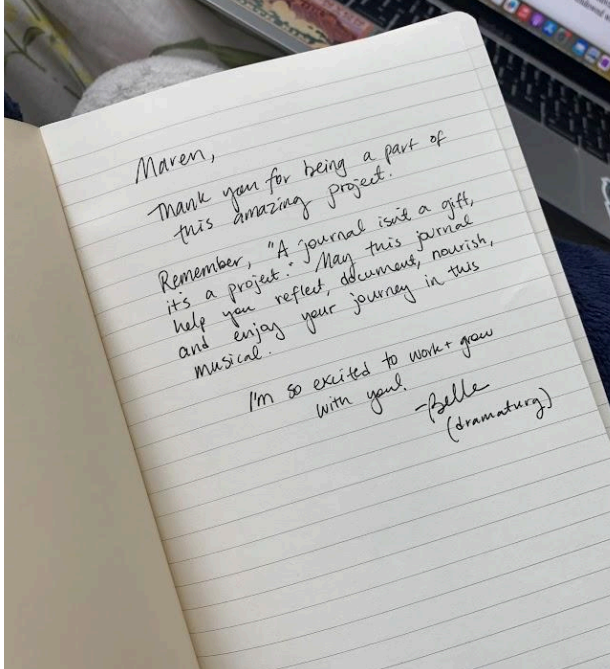
In order to gather feedback on my work from the actors and production team, I created a survey with several questions for them to answer. I cite these responses in almost every section of my Project Presentation and Results. (As a note for this paper, I don't list the questions themselves before their responses. The majority of these questions asked which of my methods helped them connect most with their work. I have underlined some parts of their responses for the purposes of clarity in this paper. [See the full survey results in [Appendix 1](#)]).

In order to gather audience feedback, I carefully observed how the audience interacted with the lobby display, noting which areas were most trafficked. Additionally, there was a form for feedback regarding the script itself that included details regarding their interactions with the dramaturgy.

Because of the long timeline of my project, I have found it best to present pictures of my work with a description and the results of the specific activity in chronological order. Next to the title I include which type of context, or contexts, it may fall under.

IV. Project Presentation and Specific Results

I. Journals (Historical and Religious)



During the summer, I discussed with the directors the idea to help the actors engage with the world of the play both historically and spiritually through journaling. They loved the idea and encouraged me to move forward with it. Seen above is an example of one of the journals given to each cast member. I wrote personalized messages in each of the journals, but most of them followed this pattern. It read,

“(Actor name),
 Thank you for being a part of this amazing project.
 Remember, “A journal isn’t a gift, it’s a project.”
 May this journal help you reflect, document, nourish, and
 enjoy your journey in this musical.
 I’m so excited to work and grow with you!
 - Belle (your dramaturg)”

I felt that this handwritten message was a necessary step in order to introduce and connect with the actors. As dramaturg Jane Barnette teaches, it is imperative to advocate

for the role of a dramaturg in a production to those who might not understand its role.¹² I saw this connection really cement within that first rehearsal because of the personal note that I wrote to them. While the actors would have probably understood my role by the end of rehearsals even if I hadn't done this, this formal introduction and gift proved extremely beneficial to making space for dramaturgy from the start.

Once rehearsals began, I gave the actors prompts at the end of each day to respond to in their journal. The prompts can be seen on my website under "Actor Behind the Scenes." Many of them were tied to religious and historical themes. This helped the actors take time to connect with concepts from the show on a personal level.

At the end of the production, I asked the actors and members of the production team to fill out a survey for me after the run of the show. Multiple members of the cast cited the journals as a helpful activity for connecting them with their character. Read some of their responses below:

"I liked the journals, I really wish I had written more in my journal so it could have helped me even more."

"When you gave us each a journal for this semester. I feel like the powerful experiences of Hattie's Echo would have drifted away if I hadn't been prompted by that activity to keep a record. And in connection to the show, I feel like my journal was more meaningful when I considered it could touch my descendants."

"I loved when we got to do the journal prompts. They really helped me feel the spirit as I reflected on my experience during that rehearsal. It also helped me grow closer to my Heavenly Father."

I also learned through their feedback that it would have been more effective if it was more consistent:

¹² Barnette, Jane. *Adapturgy: The Dramaturg's Art and Theatrical Adaptation*. Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale, 2018.

“I think the journal prompts were such a great idea. Unfortunately, I didn’t end up using them very much just due to time constraints. I think if the directors had been able to set aside more dedicated time during rehearsals to answer the prompts, I would have been more likely to do it. So, not your bad, just my bad and just lack of time in the rehearsal space.”

“I failed to involve you more in the rehearsal space by asking you to provide the actors information regarding historical context to help bring the story to life. I wish we could find a way to help the actors more in the amazing research you found. We failed to have them go to your website and the journal prompts we were inconsistent with. Overall, you helped more than you know in being consistent in feedback and the world of the play.”

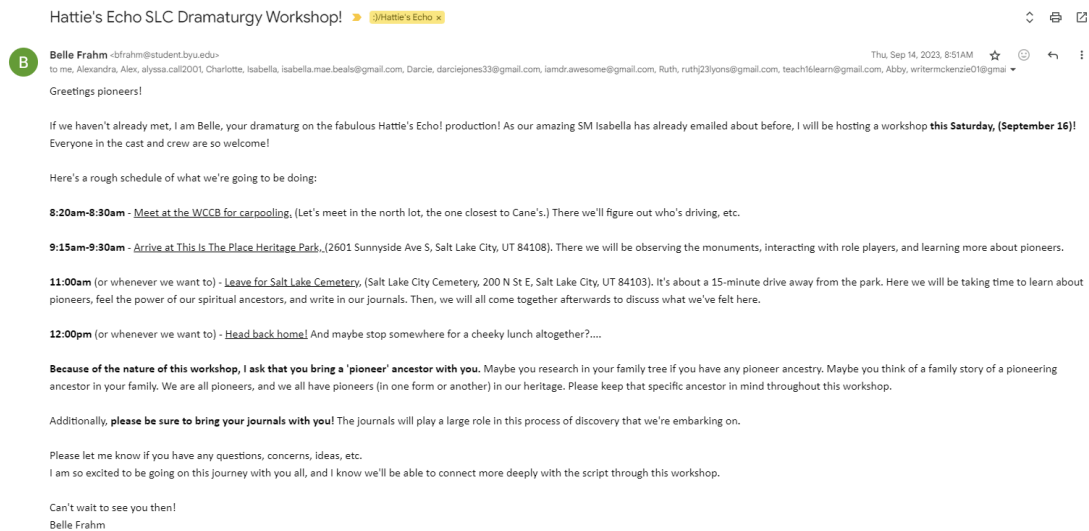
I learned that consistency really is key for any long term method that I have for a dramaturgy principle. As with most things, long term can be the most challenging, but the most rewarding if done well. Due to time constraints and other reasons that are inevitable in productions, especially student productions, the long term engagement method was not the most effective.

II. Actors' Workshop #1: This is the Place Monument and the Salt Lake City Cemetery (Historical and Religious)



Early on in the process it became clear that a workshop was needed to help the cast connect with deeper themes of the script. At this same point in time, I had been working with the playwright, Charlotte, about her journey in creating this

play. She confessed that a lot of the motivation that she felt to keep writing stemmed from visiting the This is the Place Monument in Salt Lake City. This, and a recommendation from my family history professor to visit the Salt Lake Cemetery made these two options seem perfect for our needs on a Saturday morning. I invited the cast to bring the story of an ancestor with them to share our experience, (you can see the image of the email I sent them below).



When our group arrived first at the monument, I gave everyone time to walk around and explore different aspects of the site. I tried to follow Bowditch et. al's 4 pillars to site-specific theatre in this workshop. First, we all spent time observing the unique architecture of the monuments and statues found in the area. I observed that some actors quickly lost interest and began to talk or wander in groups, while others probably could have spent hours reading stone plaques. allowing them to be in conversation with the elements of



their space.¹³

Next, we all gathered indoors at a statue of a modern family and a pioneer family, a statue that perfectly resembled our play. We sat and analyzed the piece of art and connected it to our work on the play. Lots

¹³ Bowditch, Rachel, Daniel Bird Tobin, Chelsea Pace, and Marc Devine. "Four Principles about Site-Specific Theatre: A Conversation on Architecture, Bodies, and Presence." *Theatre Topics* 28, no. 1 (2018): E-5-E-19. <https://doi.org/10.1353/tt.2018.0016>.

of the cast members made connections to the script that I hadn't considered. Even with minimal guidance they were following the second pillar, being in conversation with the elements of performance. I was surprised at how easy it was to transition from simple observations to analysis. It became clear that they were beginning to think about the work in ways that they hadn't before.

For the third pillar, our group journeyed to another part of the park outside and sat around another monument as we shared stories of our pioneer ancestors. In this way, I attempted to augment the space that we found, acknowledging the pioneer origins of the location. Again, the cast began naturally making connections from their ancestors to characters and themes in the play that surprised me in their depth.



Lastly, we ventured up a small ridge and sang a hymn while looking out over Utah Valley. The fourth pillar is "Creating Presence and Performance Energy." I invited the cast members to imagine themselves being the pioneers seeing this place for the first time. There was a reverence that came over the cast that I hadn't experienced before, and I knew that they were becoming more connected to their characters and each other. This pillar was probably the most effective, but I believe it was only because of the historical foundation that the previous ones established. If we had jumped into singing a hymn, the cast would not have taken it as seriously. Every step was necessary in the process.

After the monument, we made our way to the Salt Lake City Cemetery. I invited



everyone to walk around and find a spot to sit and journal quietly for about 20 minutes. I prompted them to write about their ancestors and their descendants. I really wanted to focus on the power that a journal can have to connect generations, a prevalent theme in the play. When we came back

together, many actors shared the feeling of peace they found in the graveyard. I

encouraged them to bring it with them into the rehearsal space as they honor those who came before us with our work.

After this workshop, there was a distinct difference in behavior at rehearsals, especially regarding the treatment of ancestral stories. The directors implemented a new warmup where an actor would share a family story as the spiritual thought and connect it with their character each day.

Here are some of the responses I received about the workshop. Many cited it as the most beneficial way that they connected to the history of the show.



“The “This is the place” trip. It will always have a special place in my heart now ❤️”

“I think the Salt Lake workshop really helped me connect with my character - specifically the fact that my character was an echo of people of the past and

would be echoed by people in the future. The statue at the monument with both generations was a really helpful visual that stuck with me.”

“I think during the first few rehearsals you told us to think about our ancestors while we were developing our characters. You said we could base our character off multiple ancestors or someone in our lives who is a pioneer. This helped me connect to both my character and my ancestors.”

“The Salt Lake workshop was very helpful in connecting with pioneer ancestry, finding stories about my ancestors and hearing about others. The sites we visited were also helpful.”

“Preparing and sharing my own ancestors' story.”

“I think the invitation to connect with our ancestors and find a pioneer family member to connect to really helped me connect with what we were supposed to portray. It made the whole experience more meaningful for me and hopefully for the audience as my acting became more genuine because the root was in my heart.”

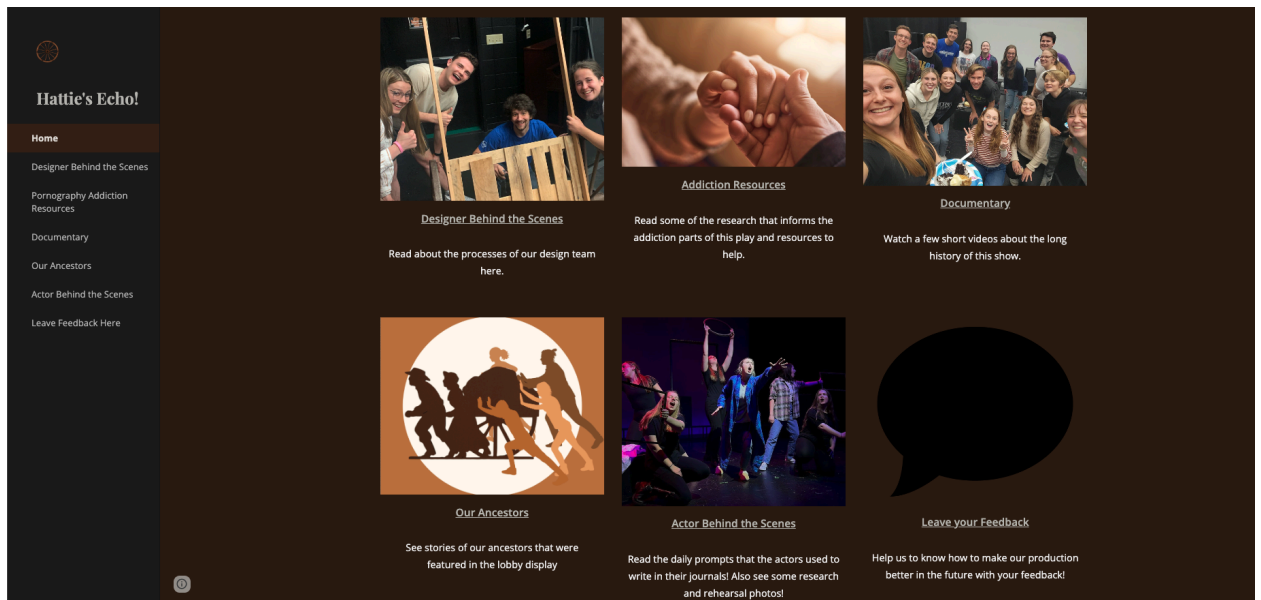
“My favorite activity we did was go to This is the Place. It was fairly early on in the process that we went, so I still didn't feel super close to the cast, however it set the precedent that I needed. What I mean by that is that this activity reassured me that this project, this show would be a spiritually refining process, no matter the hardship we would face. This was one of my most difficult semesters for a number of reasons, so having a community and a place to feel the spirit (despite the stress that comes with putting on a show as well) was just so special.”

“I loved going to This is the Place! I know it was even close to the beginning of the semester when we weren't entirely familiar with the script and each other but I felt so loved when we went. I'm someone who isn't big on pioneers and family history but the workshop really helped me tap into that and become more invested in those that came before us.”

“I loved the trip to This Is the Place and the graveyard, I felt like I was closer to my ancestors and understood more about the sacrifices the pioneers made.”

“The workshop in salt lake was so uplifting and the spirit was so strong as we were together in the very place that the pioneers stood.”

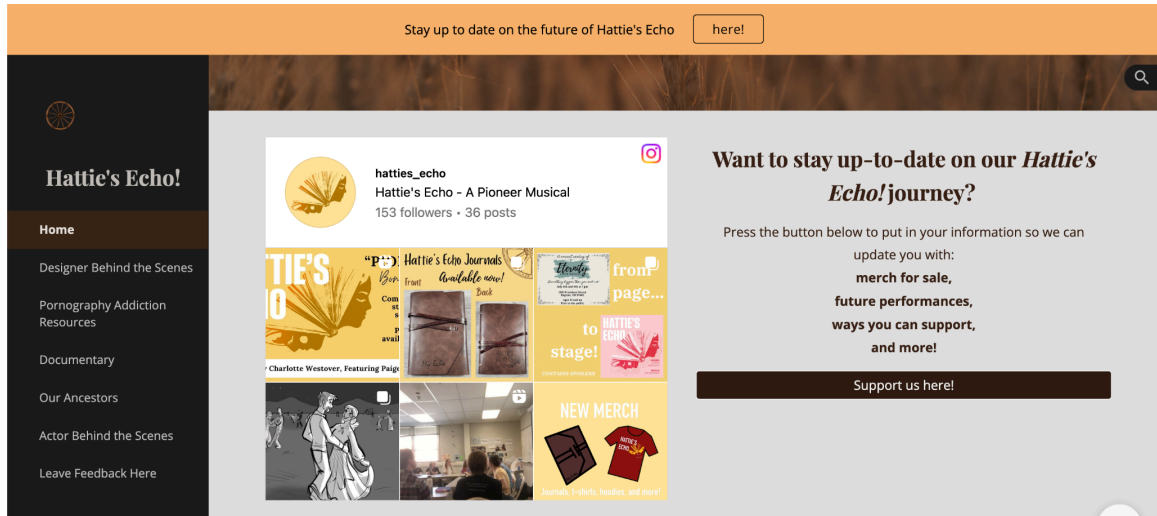
III. Hattie's Echo! Dramaturgy Website (Historical, Religious, and Biographical)



In order to engage the audience in the world of the script, I found that a website was necessary to compile the large amount of information that would be too much for a bifold program or lobby display. The website initially began as a way to communicate with the actors for their journal prompts. It then grew to be more audience-oriented.

You can view the website here: <https://sites.google.com/view/hattiesecho/home>.

This website proved especially useful after the post-show discussion that I hosted following each performance. The audience was so moved after seeing this beautiful show that they would always ask me how they could support future productions. As a result, I adjusted the website from being purely informational to being a vital way that people could pledge their support, and also submit their feedback on the show to help grow future drafts. I added links to the show's instagram and support document on the landing page so that the future productions would be at the forefront. See below the change of the website.



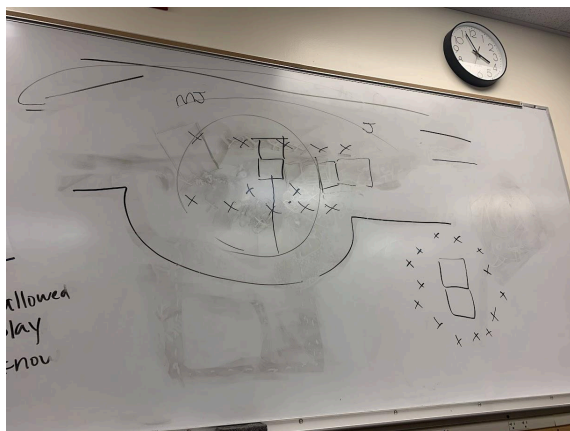
While the update to the website helped with the feedback and engagement with the site, it wasn't as popular as any of the in-person artifacts that I created. The actors struggled to visit the website for their journal prompts, and the audience was more interested in the lobby display. I wouldn't count it as a loss at all, but the dramaturgy would definitely suffer if I relied solely on digital resources.

IV. New Play Development (Biographical, Religious, and Historical)

I spent most of my time in rehearsals with the playwright and composer, Charlotte Westover. A big part of my job as the dramaturg on this production was to help the directors understand and communicate Charlotte's goals to the audience. I acted as a sounding board to both groups, Charlotte and the directors, and gave them feedback on their creative choices



- essentially being a stand-in audience. With the stress of putting on a new play, especially as senior students who had other courseloads, I really focused on making sure the development process left everyone “eager and motivated to get back to work,” as Liz Lerman says.



I also acted as the notetaker many times in our meetings, taking pictures of the blocking plans that the directors made and disseminating them afterwards, as seen here.

I had lots of practice giving feedback to scripts in development in classes before, but not in a setting where no authority figure was found. While practicing Liz Lerman's methods of giving feedback, I found that my statements were best received when I started with “I observe,” “I wonder,” or “What I love about this.” Coming to these statements

took some trial and error with my creative team until we were able to establish a language of giving feedback that we all understood and felt comfortable with. To this day, I continue utilizing these starts of sentences when workshoping with Charlotte. It is our decided, cultivated, shared language.



As a result of my work, there were around 20 lines of small rewrites that helped clarify the story to the audience. The directors also had me block and choreograph parts of the show when they were running out of time because they felt I had a great understanding of their vision and how to communicate it to the audience. I choreographed a large ensemble song at the end of act one, and I also blocked multiple small scenes throughout the play.



I am in the yellow shirt at the left, counting the actors in for the number we choreographed.

Here is what some of the actors had to say about my workshopping work in rehearsals:

“I think feedback in any and all production meetings or rehearsals helped me understand the script a LOT better than I would’ve! I loved your insights that you had — you knew the script so well and was able to take that and be able to offer these pieces of information that helped me know what I should be doing and what was going on.”

“You would be able to answer all questions that I had involving the script and clarity which was so amazing! If I ever had a script question I would always come to you before turning to the directors because of your understanding of the script.”

I was not expecting this part of my dramaturgical work to be as fruitful as it was.

Charlotte and I quickly realized how useful my feedback was to her and it became a main way for me to support the project. Because it still remains a new play, Charlotte and I are continuing to work on the script, even to this day. I have helped her with the feedback that was given from the audience and others, and we have met multiple times since the close of the show to think about how future productions are going to go.




V. Actors' Workshop #2: Discussion with Casey and Andrea Westover (Biographical)


All Files > Hattie's Echo Workshop Footage

UPDATED ↓


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Oct 26, 2023 by Belle Frahm




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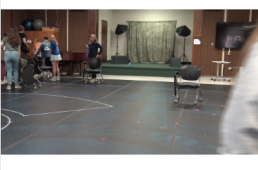
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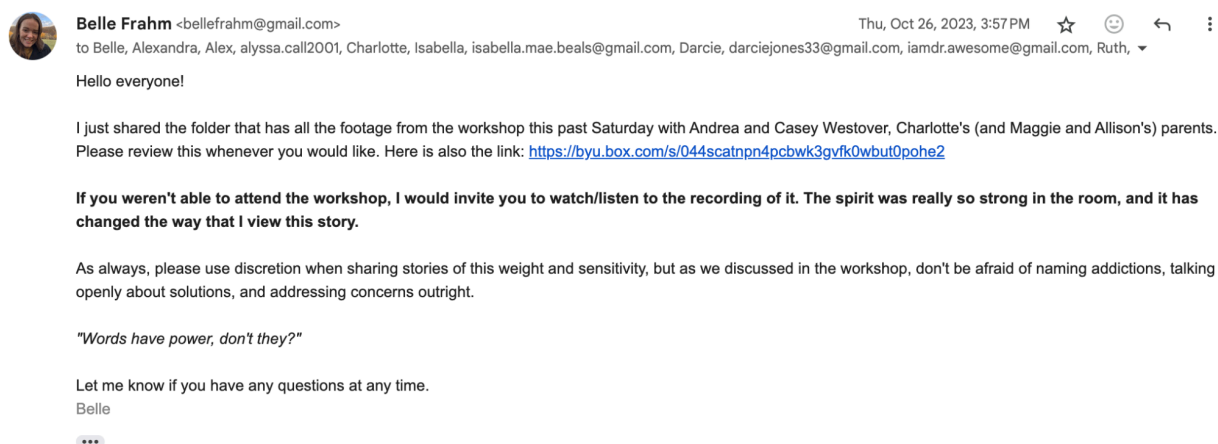


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Oct 26, 2023 by Belle Frahm

One of the foundational questions that dramaturgs are trained to ask is “Why this play *now*?” We need to answer this question with every script to help it connect with the actors and audience. By the middle of October, roughly halfway through the rehearsal process, this question kept on coming up as a roadblock to the actors and production team. The biographical context of her story needed to be reflected back to the actors so that they could better understand the world. I discussed it with Charlotte, and we decided that this would be the right time to have a discussion based workshop with her parents, Andrea and Casey Westover, to help answer that question.

On a Saturday morning almost the entire cast and many members of the production team gathered around to listen to the Westovers’ story. We all learned about

the realities of addiction in ways that most had never experienced, and their words brought a newfound respect to the actor's portrayals. This workshop provided a lot of the very needed context for the show. Casey and Andrea gave me permission to record their discussion and send it to the actors who were unable to be at the meeting, as seen in the email below.



Like the last workshop, this proved to be really useful. Many actors commented on this in their feedback as well:

"The activity where we had Charlotte's parents Andrea and Casey come in to talk about their experience of which the modern family's story was based on was incredibly helpful for me. For the longest time I thought that my character was perfect, just the ideal man, husband and father. So you can imagine how hard it was being an imperfect young man who is still learning to be a good husband, and only dreaming of becoming a father, to portray this ideal pioneer man. However, the workshop Belle put on helped me to realize that my character is not perfect, even if his flaws are not obvious from the script. As I realized this, it became so much easier and more natural to play this character and feel worthy to fill his shoes."

"I think the workshop that you did with Charlotte's parents helped me with my character the most. Because it was so focused on the modern day family, I not only got to hear what my "mom" was going through, but I also got to hear what the girls had to say and their own experiences and how I could incorporate that in my own character."

“During the workshop with Charlotte's parents I was able to connect with my character the most! To be able to talk and speak with the real Marjean was inspiring and helped me to understand everything that she was going through as well as the things that my son is going through.”

While this workshop was a positive experience, I also received feedback that the workshop was hard for one particular actor. They said,

“Honestly the workshop with Charlotte's parents was hard for me, it brought up feelings about stuff from my past that I wasn't super comfortable with. I know it was helpful for many people, but it was just difficult for me.”

This workshop dealt with difficult things, and this feedback made me realize that maybe I didn't communicate that fully with the cast ahead of time. I want to improve on communicating the goals and activities before they occur with actors specifically. Finding the most effective way to communicate with all the actors has always been a challenge.

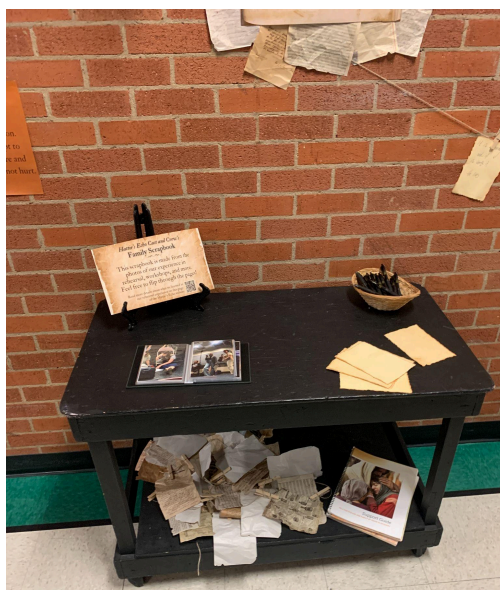
VI. Lobby Display (Biographical, Historical, Religious)

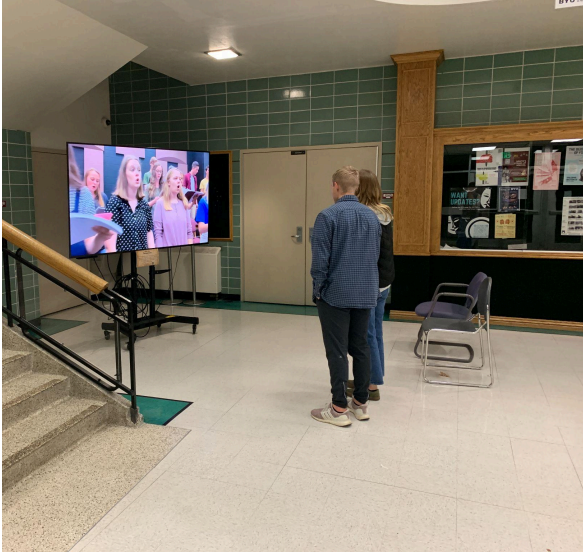
See [Appendix 2](#) for close ups of the designs included in the lobby display. Seen below are pictures of the lobby as it was before I installed my display. Following these pictures, are pictures of my display and people interacting with it.









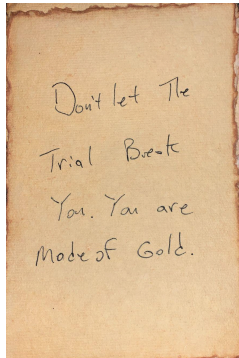


Because this was a new musical, and I knew it had the ability to be picked up for future productions following this student run, I wanted the lobby display to appear especially professional. This would also help the audiences to take the show seriously before they even entered the theatre, something that doesn't always happen with a student work. The

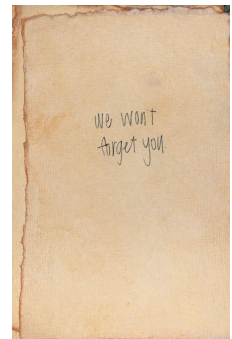


professionalism of the lobby display helped to prepare the audience for the serious themes that are discussed in the script, as well as apply it to their lives.

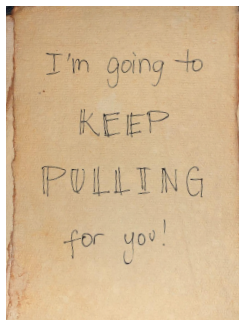
The interactive element of the lobby display invited the audience to write a message to their descendants in 10 words or less. Here are some highlights of what people wrote. See the full list of quotes in [Appendix 3](#).



"Don't let the trial break you. You are made of gold."

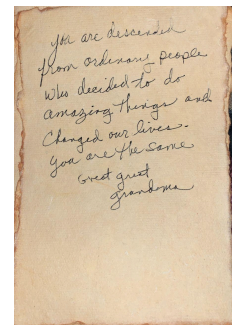


"We won't forget you."

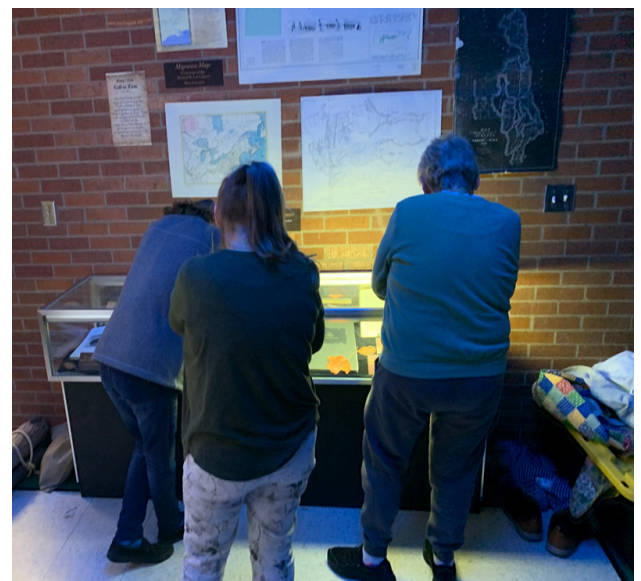


"I'm going to keep pulling for you!"

"You are descended from ordinary people who decided to do amazing things and changed our lives. You are the same. - Great great grandma"



As you can see, these interactions with the lobby display, though short, were very meaningful. Quantitatively, this wasn't the most amount of interaction I've had in a lobby display. However, qualitatively, the interaction was the greatest I've ever had. Multiple people came up to me after the shows and said they were inspired by



what others had written. Not only was the prompt engaging those who participated with it, it was always engaging onlookers.

The power of the lobby display came from merging the research that I had done behind the show with a creative display form. While my research was beneficial to identifying the background of the world of the play, I acknowledge that the atmosphere that I created with my design of the lobby was even more powerful. By having items that weren't research related as part of the display, ie. hanging small pieces of paper on twine in the lobby and throughout the theatre, hanging frames on fishing line in front of the informational posters, these items helped to create the world of the play for the audience.

The lobby display also included short documentary videos about Charlotte, her family, and how this musical came about. I began working on material for the



documentary during the summer. My original plan was to have four parts, called the “Origins of Hattie’s Echo,” “New Play Work,” “Family Connections,” and “Future Productions.” As we got closer to opening night, I quickly realized that this was not going to be possible with

everything else that needed to get done. To compromise for time, I instead created two segments: “Family Connections” and “New Play Work.” This ended up working well to combine the information into two shorter segments, and



also because the future of *Hattie's Echo!* is still very unknown, even to this day.

Other aspects of the lobby display included a display case of old books from the library about pioneers, (as well as Charlotte's grandmother's original journal) and historical maps depicting the pioneers' journeys.

Here is some of the cast and crew feedback about the lobby display:

"I just want to say that the lobby display was just incredible! It was so interesting to see the journals and books in the case and the wall was just amazing. What I really loved was that there was a place where you could write a message. It was so inspiring to see what other people wrote."

"The lobby display where we got to read the things people wrote to their descendants was really awesome to see."

"Honestly the lobby display helped so much! It was so neat to see the real journal and to picture the trail the saints walked. Even during the show, I would look at those materials between scenes and ponder about their journey and how it is different, yet similar to the journeys we face today."



Note: The blue light seen here was not a part of the lobby display design, but the standard lobby lighting during the performance of the show. This photo was taken during intermission, when the blue lighting was still in effect.

VII. Post-show Discussions (Biographical)

Hattie's Echo! ran for 5 performances over 3 days. Because it was a limited run, I was able to attend every performance and I felt it necessary to hold a post-show discussion following each one. Four out of five of the post-show discussions were held with Charlotte (playwright), Alex (co-director) and Alyssa (co-director). When anticipating the audience's questions for the discussion, I felt that they were going to be Charlotte's inspiration for writing the piece. This instinct was correct.

Some of the actors asked me if they could be in a post-show discussion, so for the third one I brought out the 6



main actors onstage. However, while the audience did engage with the actors, I soon got questions that only Charlotte could answer. She soon joined everyone onstage, and that reminded me that my priority should be the audience, not the actors at this point in the process.

In addition, I found that the audience reaction to the show was overwhelmingly positive, and by hosting a post-show discussion, every stakeholder could see the results of their work. Actors could hear the comments made about their performances, Charlotte could hear about the script and its impacts on other people's lives, the production team

was able to share more about their design choices, and the audience themselves understood the deep resonance that this work had for everyone. This was a moment of reflection each night that solidified the power of this new work into everyone's minds, and promoted the further development of the show.



V. Conclusion

Out of all my methods, I learned that physical artifacts were more effective than online ones, consistency was key for the actors, and that the audience really connected to the personal prompts in the lobby display. However, I observed a distinguishable increase in interaction with the display following the performance they watched, not before. The trend that I observe is that the most effective method of engaging anyone with the script is when they are able to personally invest in the activity. Whether it is spending time in a specific location or writing a personal detail of their life, the more they put into it, the more they got out of it.



I also learned that the show itself was the main transformative artifact. My work with the playwright was the most important work I could do for any stakeholder. The time I spend on a lobby display, actors' workshops, or a website

does not compare to the dramaturgical resource I could be to the playwright

With that being said, my work that was more considered to be "Production Dramaturgy" on this script was still beneficial. This excerpt from one actor below shows

to me how beneficial the impact of my work can be on the individual, more than just a group of people.

“Even with such a spiritual play as Hattie's Echo, sometimes it is tempting at least for me to separate a show I am in from my own life, justifying that doing so will help me to better be in the moment and become the character I need to be. Your work, Belle, helped me a lot to realize that this show isn't just for fun, it isn't even just for the audience, it's for me. I realized that the show can be a reason to reignite my passion for the gospel, and start a new flame of passion for family history. This personal connection I formed with the show helped me so much to better resonate with my character and the rest of the characters in the show, and to make my portrayal more real and meaningful.”

My role of new play dramaturg and production dramaturg needed to be combined into one that expanded. While my initial hypothesis was that every stakeholder of the theatre experience would benefit from every form of context that I provided, I learned that this was not the case. The needs of each member varied throughout the process, but the feedback that I gave to my playwright was constantly needed to clarify the actual piece that transformed all stakeholders of the production.



P.S. Charlotte is now one of my best friends and one of my bridesmaids!

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Appendix 1

The link to the raw spreadsheet of the dramaturgy responses from the cast and crew of the show.

 Thesis Hattie's Echo Dramaturgy Response Form (Responses)

Appendix 2



“Representing heaven, eternity, or a wheel, circles in squares (signifying the four corners of the earth) convey motion, but with stability. Ancient cultures sometimes referred to the circle in the squares as ‘the spark’ - the light from heaven that energizes and animates earth.”

- BYU’s Education in Zion Exhibit

Keep your eye out for circle and square combinations within the show.
What do they represent?

Hattie's Echo! The New Work



BEING PRODUCED

The playwright, Charlotte Westover, was asked to apply to be produced as an Advanced Directing Project (a “536” in colloquial terms) here at BYU, where more funds and students could be involved in the process.

1



THIS IS A NEW WORK

This is a new musical. That means that it's never been fully produced before. We've had staged readings in Oregon and Utah, but nothing like this.

2



STUDENTS

This meant that only students were going to be working on this project. Student directors, design team, and actors. All the work that you see here is done by students.

3

HOW YOU CAN HELP!

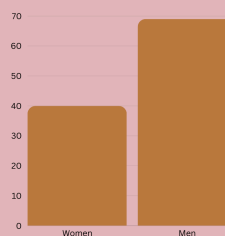
4

All of this also means that we're still figuring out what works in the show, and what questions we still have about the script. You, as an audience member, are so important to helping us improve the show for the future. Please react during the show and stay for a post-show discussion after each performance to give your feedback! Also, feel free to leave written feedback by scanning the QR code here:



While this play focuses on the struggles of handcart pioneers, it also focuses on modern day struggles, such as pornography addiction.

Pornography exists on 12% of all websites₁ and is viewed by approx. 69% of American men and 40% of American women in any given year₂.



1. Faraz Ahmed, M. Zubair Shafiq, and Alex X. Liu, "The Internet is For Porn: Measurement and Analysis of Online Adult Traffic," 2016 IEEE 38th International Conference on Distributed Computing Systems (ICDCS), 2016, pp. 88, <https://doi.org/10.1109/ICDCS.2016.88>.

2. Mark Regnerus, David Gordon, and Joseph Price, "Documenting Pornography Use in America: A Comparative Analysis of Methodological Approaches," *The Journal of Sex Research* 53, no. 7 (2016): 879–82, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2015.1096886>.

There is hope.
Reaching out for help
can be the first step.

Review the addiction recovery books at
the table below, as well as more studies
and resources featured on the
Hattie's Echo website:



Hattie's Echo Cast and Crew's
Ancestor Mosaic

This mosaic is made from the photos of
our pioneer ancestors. Whether pioneers
on the plains or in their own lives, they
remind us what we're made of.

Read more details about who they were
on the "Our Ancestors" page
of the Hattie's Echo website.



Hattie's Echo Cast and Crew's Family Scrapbook

This scrapbook is made from the
photos of our experience in
rehearsal, workshops, and more.
Feel free to flip through the pages!

Read more details about what we learned in
our rehearsal experience on this page
of the Hattie's Echo website.



Hattie's Echo Documentary

This documentary explores the creation of the
musical, the origins of its characters, and our
process in creating this specific production.
Each segment is just a few minutes
long for easy viewing!

See more content about the show on
the "Documentary" page of the
Hattie's Echo website here:



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Hattie's Echo
Call to Zion



The 1856 family in this musical is answering the “Call to Gather” and making their journey to Utah to gather in Zion. This call was placed by Church Leaders in the early days of the church in the hopes to establish a unified home of Saints from all over the world.

Stories of the Pioneers

Take a closer look at the various books about
different types of pioneers.

What is new to you?

Migration Maps

Courteous of the
Howard B. Lee Library

Please do not touch

1960

*The Mormons:
Their Westward Trek*

by Kate B. Carter

1848

*The Latter-day Saints'
Emigrants' Guide*

by William Clayton

1963

*Mormon Emigration,
1840-1869*

Daughters of
Utah Pioneers

1991

*Mormon Pioneer
National Historic Trail*

by Stanley B. Kimball

1855

*Route from Liverpool to
Great Salt Lake Valley*

by Fredrick Piercy

1912-2012

*Book of
Remembrance*

by Beatrice Petersen
Westover

2004

*Tragedy and Triumph:
Your Guide to the Rescue of the
1856 Handcart Companies*

by Howard and Cory
Bangerter

Appendix 3

Here is what the 39 audience members who participated in the interactive lobby display wrote:

"The Lord believes in you. He is proud of you."

"Thank you for sharing a powerful testimony through this musical. Pioneers reaching each other is powerful."

"It is a journey and it is worth it. He lives."

"Believe. Hope. Love."

"Family is more important than anything."

"Don't eat chocolate. It's addicting."

"Don't let the trial break you. You are made of gold."

"You are known and loved beyond comprehension!"

"Continue leaning on prayer"

"Actions speak louder than words. Never be too clever you forget to be kind, never be too kind you forget to be clever. (T.S.) Know that your soul's worth cannot be measured.

Create, rather than consume! XOXO. <3"

"Have faith and be brave! Know that there are generations that went before and others to come that are pulling for you!"

"It is all going to be okay. I'm thinking of you! <3"

"Stay true to yourselves & your beliefs!"

"Thank you! Your teachings helped me find the true Gospel. -KY"

"The Lord is so aware of you! He loves YOU!"

"Find joy as you're working hard. <3"

"We won't forget you."

"Never forget that God knows and loves you."

"You are my family. You are also God's family. You are also Abraham's family. I pray each of you will always be exemplary disciples of Christ."

"The Saints are our heritage. Thank you for telling OUR story. <3"

"We all need your story. Take it through eternity!"

"I'm so proud of you - nothing will change that. <3 - Julie L."

"Trust yourself, Trust God, Have Fun!!! <3 You are loved"

"Remember who you are!!"

"You can get through this"

"I'm going to keep pulling for you!"

"There is an end. Never stop leaning on God."

"You are loved and enough."

"I am inspired by all you have done. I love you."

"Did I make you proud? Did I carry the legacy?"

"Choose joy!! -> Choose Christ!!"

"We've got your back, just like you had ours. Remember Christ."

"Thank you for your bravery, faith, and love for God!"

"You are descended from ordinary people who decided to do amazing things and changed our lives. You are the same. - Great great grandma"

"May we have faith to pull the handcarts in our day and not judge others for what they are pulling. <3"

"God sees you! It will all be fine as you trust Him!"

“Rainbow after rain, my friend. There are more stories to tell. <3”

“Thank you! Don’t abandon hope in me. ‘Till we meet.”

“Heaven will miss you if you are not there. The struggle is real... but worth it!”