# Directing Tales of the Lost Formicans:

# A Journey Through Space

A Major Qualifying Project Portfolio

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# **Abstract**

In B-term of 2016, I directed Tales of the Lost Formicans by Constance Congdon for my MQP. Formicans was the major theatre production in the Little Theatre in B-term and produced by the Department of Humanities and Arts Division of Drama/Theatre. This project portfolio offers images and reflections on the production and serves as evidence of my accomplishments.

# Acknowledgements

While away on IQP in Cape Town, I received a string of emails asking me of my plans for senior year at WPI. While I was uncertain of the cause for interest in my future endeavors, I was certain it was something exciting. Upon my return to campus in January, I found my prediction to be true. I am forever grateful, humbled and honored to have been offered the opportunity to direct a major academic production. For this, I would like to thank Susan Vick, my advisor and Director of Theatre at WPI, for entrusting me with this task and for all of the guidance she has given me during my time here at WPI.

While the director is the driving force behind the creative side of the production, a few more people are needed to fill out the ranks to ensure a smooth production schedule is accomplished. My fellow management team members kept me on track and are the ones who made the show happen. I could never thank them enough: Ryan Herrmann as Producer, Rachel Rynazewski as Production Manager, Josiah Boucher as Assistant Production Manager, Holly Gagnon as Stage Manager, and Jacob Pickett as Assistant Stage Manager.

So many people worked on this show, making it the work of art that it was. To the techies who I pushed to the limit: thank you. I asked so much of you and I'd be remiss if I didn't acknowledge that you never said no. You took what I said and gave it your all, and that's all I could ask. The show looked magnificent.

Next, to my actors, I must admit you surprised me. I knew I had cast a talented group to go on this journey with me. However, I could have never predicted the dedication and brilliance with which you graced that stage. Each one of you delivered a performance that you should be proud of. I could not have had a better cast.

Finally, to Constance Congdon; you graced the page with your words and wove a masterpiece into the world of modern drama. Thank you for giving such vibrant characters and visionary scenes for the world to digest and for making us think. Not a single person left a performance without thinking of something you planted in their minds.

This journey is one I would do again in a heartbeat; Same play, same people, same place.

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# Part 1: A Journey Though Space

A photo journal displaying the thoughts and reflections of a director on the process and outcomes of the production



#### **New Beginnings**

Tales of the Lost Formicans is undoubtedly a unique show eliciting a unique opening. This beginning came in the form of the character Jerry stargazing mid-stage as house opened. On closing night, an audience member laid down next to him and asked what he was looking at. Jerry responded in character even though it was the only time someone engaged with him during the 90 minutes he was lying on the floor over all 3 nights. After curtain, Jerry would exit and the kitchen set would be brought on by the aliens and run crew while Voiceover (also an alien) would then explain the alien's presumed uses and purposes for the chair as Female Alien modelled it, Vanna White style. Thus, we began.





#### Alien Antics

Voiceover was situated in an observation window on the North side of the theater. He was joined by other alien ensemble members throughout the show. The antics of those in the window was often the highlight of some scenes in the show. One of the best examples of this was when Jerry flicks off the aliens that he suspects are watching and Voiceover declares, "There's that gesture again," and all in the window mimic giving the bird whilst trying to decipher its meaning. One of the joys of directing comes when your actors understand their characters so well that they direct themselves when they aren't your focus of the scene. The three aliens of the window did this, and it made the show infinitely better because of it.











### Say what?

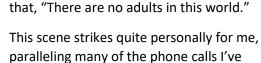
Tales of the Lost Formicans features many monologues by almost all of the characters. Cathy and Judy, shown above, had many of them. During one-on-one rehearsals, I like to focus on the diction and song of those passages. By focusing on the overall thought of the passage being presented, a certain rhythm and emphasis can be discovered to best convey the mood and character that the actor is trying to embody.





#### Worlds Apart But Close at Heart

One of my favorite scene elements to stage was when two separate locations were being portrayed on stage at the same time. The first occurance of this was Cathy's phone call home where Evelyn begs her daughter to come home to help her with her father. Cathy's son, Eric, protests stating he's "not going to live in any fucking suburb." When Cathy persists saying she is the mother, the adult, that she has decided they will be going and that what she says is final, Eric replies that what he's learned recently is



had with my mother and grandmother where we don't always get along. Having all three generations on one phone call

creates an interesting dynamic.

phone call.



Having both scenes on stage at the same time, the locations seperated by lighting, was a difficult thing for the actors to maintain. At points in rehearsals, I would have to remind them that the nature of the phone call would only allow for whomever was on the phone call to hear the person on the other line. You could only react to those in the same room as you or those you could directly hear on a



When Cathy arrives home, it is clear something is wrong with her father as he forgets to go to work.





#### Ground Control to Jerry

Another character who gave quite a few monologues was Jerry. His often centered around conspiracy theories and other off color topics. Knowing his theories are hard for the average person to grasp and accept as legitimate, he charged the audience to, "think about it," in the photo to the left.

#### Girl Power in Numbers

The chemistry between Cathy and Judy was one of the more important relationships and was a focus during the callbacks for the character of Judy. The relationship between Judy and Cathy manifests as that of two girls back in high school. This makes sense, as the

last time these two were in their home town together gossiping about boys and town folk was when they were that age.

In the scene depicted below, Judy is discussing hooking up with a man after separating from her husband. Specifically, she is embarrassed that she blurted out "I love you" during the event. This discussion makes Cathy realize that, seeing as she has also recently separated from her husband, she will be "starting from scratch" with men, too. Voiceover refers to this conversation as "The Female Bonding Scene," accurately describing how at this point in the play, the two women realize that they really only have each other for support and understanding as they try to rebuild their lives on their own.





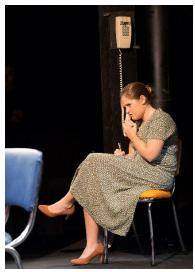
#### Trucking Through

The toughest scene to stage was the Truck scene in the first act. It takes place over the course of three days, but plays out on stage in 5 minutes. It's the first time we really see things from Jim's point of view and start to understand how confusing Alzheimer's is.

Evelyn starts in one outfit while Jim has a cup of coffee. He loses her on the way to the store and the run crew rushes on to remove the kitchen set as the lights change. Jim comes back into focus as a Truck, created with sound effects and flashlights Gerry-rigged as headlights, almost runs him over. The trucker enters the scene and Evelyn smooths things over. The same disorienting lights and sound effects came in again as the run crew replaced the kitchen set. This time, Jim has no coffee. Evelyn enters, in a different outfit, and reveals that it is the next day. However, Jim still believes that only seconds have passed. After

Jim sticks his hurt hand in his new cup of coffee, he lets Hank, an old friend from his younger days, enter. Jim's confused as Hank collects money for the paper. During the pictured handshake, Hank secretly removes a bandage from Jim's hand. When Evelyn reenters, a new dress shows it is a new day again. She's come to take Jim to the doctor for his hand and reveals that the person who Jim thought was Hank was actually the paper boy and Evelyn is upset that Jim has removed his bandage. When she leaves to wait in the car, Jim tries to find his insurance card and alien Hank returns to steal it.





#### Change of Scene

Formicans has scenes in many different locations. Creating these scenes with detailed furniture, but no actual set pieces, was one of my main focuses. This strayed from what the foreword prescribes. However, I wanted to create an abstract space with detailed "relics" that the aliens, as well as the audience, would be using in an attempt to understand the past lives of the "Formicans."

The scene pictured in these 3 images is another where the action is happening in 2 places at once. It was another tough one to stage, as the truck Cathy and Jim are in is meant to enter and back out of a construction site. The site was created with sound effects and by having the Trucker/construction site worker back out to symbolize the truck backing up. This scene proved the hardest for Lines, as the 2 scenes had little to do with each other, but the lines overlapped extensively. Evelyn's phone call to their doctor helps the audience feel how desperate Jim's confusion in the opposing action really is. It also provides a commentary on the state of the health care system in America, both in the 80's, but also "enfolded in the ever-present" as the foreword describes.







#### **Constant Motion**

The action of the show is meant to be fluid. The scenes depicted in the 7 pictures here flowed through the space with no down time or blue outs between scenes. A character would leave the lit area or the area of the stage that was lit would shift while the actors moved with it. These transitions kept the audience engaged.

#### A Rock and a Hard Place

What I found to be the funniest costume and prop were featured in the flow of action pictured above. The print out of the "Rock and a



Hard Place" joke was one of my favorite things about the play when I did my initial read through. It's such a light hearted, yet extremely accurate way to describe not only Jim's, but everyone's life at this moment. Eric hates his new school. Cathy imagines and dreams about how her family's situation came to be the way it is. Jim goes to get the rest of his tools from out of the truck after being fired, but ends up wandering off and getting lost. Evelyn lets out the rage she feels towards Jim's boss in front of Cathy over the termination of Jim's employment.

The costume for the Cartoon alein was executed very well. This always elicited a few laughs from the audience each night. While costuming is the one area I have the least experience in, my costume designer was able to grasp my meager vision and turn it into something that I loved. The color scheme of the 80's was perfectly captured by everyone's shirt patterns and all the denim.

The grandpa sweater worn by Jim towards the end of the show was one of my favorite pieces.





because of his constant theorizing, Jerry later attempts to prove to Cathy that he is a normal person by explaining how he's going to take out a few walls in the house to open up the place. The misunderstandings here between these two during their first scene together set up their relationship. Cathy and Jerry's interactions always intruged me.

### An Occupied Mind

Jerry's house was designed to feel a little outdated, as he would spend most of his time researching conspiracy theories. The UFO photos and marked up newspapers on the table as set dressings displayed this. While he might not have concerned himself with interior decorating





#### Sunglasses

To help maintain the theme that the aliens were causing the confusion and change in the characters' world, I had the run crew wear the same glasses that the actors wore when they were embodying aliens. The alien actors were also members of the run crew, allowing for the large changeovers in set to occur as quickly and quietly as possible. I often found myself frustrated with the speed and

efficiency with which the run crew was moving. They did improve as tech week progressed and different

scenic elements were cut down or struck all together.

#### **Dynamic Duos**

The skate board hoard, phone bill and dueling monologues scenes were some of my favorites. My cast truly shined during these moments, capturing the essence of the characters that we had developed during the first weeks of rehearsal. They also showcased some of my better moments in regards to staging. The sweeping sound cues symbolizing the skateboard hoard, Eric and Judy colliding as one entered and the other exited and the circling of the table while Evelyn and Cathy went at each other all came out really well. This is also some of the best writing in the show. The parallel between Cathy's conversation with her son and then moments later with her mother is a moment most are all too familiar with.





### A Tight Schedule

Being in any theatrical environment brings a certain level of restrictions with scheduling. The scene pictured below with the propane torches is one I would have loved to explore deeper had there been a team with the time to dedicate to making this specific scene great. I would have loved to explore methods with LED applications that would have created the glowing effect of the propane torches igniting and the Corvette bumper heating up and melting. Our scene ended up relying on sound effects and the suspension of disbelief due to student's schedules and our accelerated production schedule.





#### An Emotional Addition

The scene I find to be most emotional in the show is Eric's runaway. Eric physically wrenching himself out of his mother's clutches and then delivering one of the most awkward goodbyes I've ever experienced is the icing on the cake to Cathy's messed up life.

An element that is not written into the script that I decided to add was a small teddy bear that can be seen clutched to Cathy's chest below. I felt that this scene was missing something to help it reach a certain magnitude. The bear was the perfect solution. In his frenzy to pack and leave after being caught by his mother, Eric leaves behind a teddy bear that he clearly meant to bring with him as it was in his backpack when he entered the scene. As she stands there, stunned that her son just left, she sees the bear on the floor and it puts her over the edge. She falls to the floor, clutching the bear, letting the weight of everything bring her to tears. She only gets up when she hears the sound of the car horn that's whisking her son off to her ex-husband back in New York. The scene progresses even further as her father then mistakes her for being young again, assuming that her son is just a friend from school. She continues to clutch the bear as she in comforted by her father after she yells at her father. I truly believe that this entire proceeding was greatly elevated through the use of the stuffed teddy bear.





"Honey. My leg's fallen asleep. Isn't that funny?"

A scene that achieves a certain magnitude exactly as it is written is when Evelyn enters and tries to rekindle some form of romance with Jim. After dragging him off stage, she reenters, disheveled and visibly shaken. The moment was completed with the perfect TV sound effect that swelled as the only blackout in the show fell, leaving the audience to comprehend what they had just witnessed.





#### Judy Takes Center Stage

One of the few scenes Jerry has without Cathy is at the bar with Judy. Jerry tries to flirt the only way he knows how, with conspiracy theories. As seen here, Judy stole the scene with her unamused reactions even if Jerry had most of the lines. This is immeidiatly followed by a scene where Judy is looking for her kids and finds them off stage, a device written into the show that I loved. We created kids at play with a sound effect as Judy projected a string of hysterical lines off stage. She reenters after her kids run off, asking if any one has seen her son's skateboard, a moment that brakes the fourth wall.

For the past few scenes, the Aleins had taken a backseat role. The light on their observation

window had faded out to allow complete focus on some of the more intimate and emotional family moments that happened before this scene in the play. However, during the bar scene, the lights on the window slowly fade back in. They observe as Judy looks for her kids and their toys. And in the following scene as Cathy and Judy discuss melting the wrong Corvette and as Cathy and Jerry discuss interior decorating. As Jerry shows Cathy his photos of UFOs and his ad for a "Top-Risk Action Group," the aliens grow increasingly interested.





#### Missed Improvements

This scene involving the magazine article from Jerry's house with the young Basque terrorist was not one of my best. We ended up printing the monolouge and pasting it in the magazine to help Leah execute the scene. The staging for this scene was not my best work. Leah was doing exactly what I asked of her, but she couldn't properly execute my original idea. My direction was flawed so I should have changed it once I realized that.

This scene could have benefitted from more rehearsals, as most of live theatre could. Had I been in rehearsal for one more week, I believe I would have seen my error and restaged the monlouge in time for tech week. Alas, our inflexable, published deadline prevailed.





#### What an End to an Act!

The Final scene of act 1 starts with Judy singing a lullaby to her children. It then shows Jerry once again asleep at center stage. The entire cast, as aliens, kidnaps him and Voiceover gets their first adventure out on stage away from their Observation window, stating, "This looks lke a good place for an intermission." I loved how meta it was with an air of, "nothing to see here folks."





#### Second Beginnings

When one starts the show in such a unique way, the second act must start in an unusual way as well. Jim entered the stage during the house flash. Some noticed and sat down, others continued talking with those they'd come to see the show with. Regardless of how the audience responded to Jim's presence, I told the actor to wait and count out 60 seconds before starting to project his lines over the sounds of whatever was happening at that moment. Jim was the cue for the lights and sounds to start fading out



of house conditions and back into the show. Starting both acts of the show in ways that were different from the norm allowed the audience to grasp from the very start that this was not going to be a standard show.

#### **Recording the Moment**

After Cathy reminisces about the way her father used to be, her mother cuts in to say they're traveling west to try and bring back the old Jim. After we watched Eric's emotional runaway, Cathy is rightfully concerned about what to do if Eric tries to come back or call home, so they leave a message on the telephone machine. A time was set up with the sound designer to prerecord this message from the script. It became clear after a few trials, that the moment could only be accurately captured if the moment was acted out in the recording space. The recording session became a rehearsal, but the outcome was an amazing audio file that truly captures the moment.

#### You Can't Teach Crazy

Another moment that was particularly difficult to direct was the scene from the car ride west. Jim starts asleep in the backseat and Evelyn is discouraged that her plan isn't working. One of my favorite bits in the show happens here between Cathy and her mother when Jim awakes as asks where they are. The two women beautifully executed the moment from the first rehearsal, talking over each other with different states and then flustering to fix it while making it worse. That was a moment of classic comedy.

This moment of humor starts something turning in Jim's memories. The exact things that Evelyn claimed would come rushing back to Jim when she proposed this plan start to spew out. He recalls silly jokes, old songs, and memories.

The difficulty in this scene is the rapid change of pace from sentence to sentence for Jim's actor. He goes from cringing about old sounds he's hearing again straight into a tender moment, remember the cries were from the moment his daughter was born. Out of that moment comes a more upbeat nostalgia for the time he and Evelyn danced in a graveyard. Almost as quickly as he whipped Evelyn out of the car to dance, he wrenches away from her to experience childhood memories ending with him back in the car sleeping like a baby.

Christian struggled during the first one-onone rehearsal to capture the motion of this scene. However, the next run-through with the other characters took my breath away. While it wasn't perfect, I could see that Christian had found and dipped into his own personal bucket of crazy, delivering a performance that was the perfect amount of confusing yet relatable for the audience and for the other actors to respond to in time.



#### The Dustbuster

This Scene was of particular interest to anyone who read the show before the production started. I had a significant number of people who would ask me how I planned to stage the scene. To be honest, I only had a vague idea myself until the day of the rehearsal. I knew I had to approach it with a certain level of separation if I was going to get through it. At the start of the rehearsal, all the actors and I had a talk about approaching this situation professionally. Everyone in that rehearsal held up their part of the bargain and the scene was staged fairly quickly with little obstructions.

As seen in the fifth picture below, the Male Alien is holding the same contraption that he asked Jim to fix earlier in the play. This was a suggestion made by that actor himself and I instantly loved it. Sometimes the director can stand to learn a thing or two from their actors when an open dialogue is permitted between the two parties. This contraption is in fact the dustbuster. The Aliens use it as part of an experiment on Jerry. The stage directions put it best, saying the aliens should, "pet him roughly... like inept children stroking a dog."

I'll let the images speak for themselves.















Jerry remains on stage while the next scenes happen without the characters noticing him there.



#### **Pot Training**

The scene depicted on the left was one of my favorites to watch every night of tech week. Judy finds marijuana in her son's drawer and she indulges in some with Cathy, presumably, like old times, as if the two were back in high school.

At the first rehearsal for this scene, I asked if either of my actresses had smoked weed before. While Leah disclosed that she had never touched the stuff before, with only 10 minutes of direction, she was acting like a seasoned veteran of the stuff. The pride I felt for her ability to act through my direction was part of why I found this scene so enjoyable.

"Paradisical Kudzu- some mojo kudzu-" "-of Eternity" "No, not Eternity- don't say that." "Okeedoke."

These lines were where Leah's growth truly shined. "Okeedokee" was so beautifully delivered, I couldn't have done it better myself.

This scene featured a little toilet paper joint.
This prop proved to be a nuisance at first, but by show week, the two actresses where passing it back and forth with such ease that it was a completely natural exchange to witness every time.

At the end of the scene, Judy storms off from a comment made by Cathy. As she tries to follow her, Cathy's mother catches her. Evelyn is on her way to see Jim at a nursing home. I loved this parallel of Cathy being caught smoking as if she's back in high school with the fact that she is written as a woman in her early thirties, presumably an age when this sort of thing has stopped happening. Realizing she shouldn't be doing this sort of thing anymore, she shouts "Wake up!" This triggers Jerry to wake and shout about why he's in his driveway with his fly down.





#### **Making Cuts**

The run time of the show got away from me a little. The original production notes state that the show can be produced with only one table and a set of four chairs. As previously stated, I opted for more set pieces. The Run time for the show sat right over the 2 hour and 30 minute limit imposed by the Terms of Use of the Little Theater. I was not willing to tell my actors to rush any of their scene work. They had all worked so hard and achieved so much, I wanted the audience to experience the full depth of the characters they had all so carefully crafted.

The place to find more time was in reducing the amount of time that no action was happening while set furniture was being moved. Some scene changes were cut entirely, leaving the park bench on stage for intermission and a better part of the second act. It was left unlit and the stage space wasn't needed during that time for other scenes, so the adjustment was easy. The side counter table, needed in act one to supply coffee for the truck scene, was unnecessary for act two, and as such was cut from the act.

Other cuts were not made so lightly. I made an executive decision to cut down the Corvette bumper to be a more manageable size. The Technical Director did not agree, claiming it was a waste of such a beautiful piece, but the fact was that it was just too big. Other scenes in the show were re-staged to exclude chairs so the run crew could make the shift from scene to scene faster.

Each colored chair had a significance as well. Each character in the main family only sat in one color of chair. Jim's was blue, Cathy had red, Evelyn and Eric shared the yellow, and Judy puts her feet on the purple chair in the first act. This made the run crew take extra time to place the chairs properly, but again, this was not cut because this detail was intentional and part of the show I wouldn't change.



### Big Boy, Big Challenge

The scene takes place in Evelyn's Day Dreams.
This is hard for an audience member to understand after only watching it once. I personally only understood this plot point after reading through it a second time. It is revealed through the scene that Evelyn is actually holding a straw for Jim to drink through at the Nursing home

while gazing into a mirror. The scene we are seeing is what Evelyn wishes was happening. She is reliving a memory of her and Jim eating at the Big Boy restraint in what feels like a past life. Jim points at a couple who looks a lot like them (because it is the real them on the other side of the mirror). I choreographed a mime-like routine for the actress to portray the cliché mirror-check-dance that people do. This scene never really reached the level of clarity I wanted for it. The actors did their best and did everything I asked of them. I have concluded that this is a rare occasion where the scene in the play is better read than it is seen.





"This segment of our presentation is about masochism"

A major plot mechanic that Constance Congdon uses that I really appreciate is the misinterpretation of modern life by the aliens. It's how the show starts, with the female alien displaying the chair while the voiceover explains how the hole in the back of the chair, "was, perhaps, symbolic. A breathing hole for the spirit of the sitter, or even the ever present eye of God." This is obviously not the reason for the hole but it makes the audience consider why we make things in a certain way. It even speaks volumes to why people from different cultures around the world today might not fully understand why someone does something a certain way, or does it at all.

This theme is even more present in the masochism scene in the second act. Jerry is masturbating to the mental image of Cathy. However, the scene elegantly portrays this in a very nonaggressive fashion through the guise of the aliens' misunderstanding of the situation. Referring to Cathy as a worship object, the female alien narrates the entire encounter. Constance's mastery of the English language in these moments makes the diction of this play fabulous.

The formal definition of Masochism is as follows: the tendency to derive pleasure, especially sexual gratification, from one's own pain or humiliation. This clever use of the word becomes evident when the scene ends with the real-life Cathy walking in on Jerry. Jerry flusters to find words to speak, but merely emits squeaks and incomplete sentences, confirming what the Female Alien said about the situation.



#### Coming Clean

The Laundromat scene was forgotten when the rehearsal schedule was created. The individual monologues delivered throughout the scene by Jerry were rehearsed without Evelyn at the start of production and adding additional rehearsals to include Evelyn never happened. This was brought to mine and my stage manager's attention during an Act 2 run-through when we got to this scene and had to stage it on the spot.

While this scene could have benefitted from more rehearsals, I do believe the final performance didn't suffer from being missed initially. Jerry and Evelyn share a moment in this laundromat that is so beautifully written that it wasn't hard for my actors to pick up what was going on

There was some struggle to find the right sound cue to create the proper atmosphere. The initial cues sounded like toy fans or plain white noise. Eventually, the sound designer recorded his own shoes rumbling in his dryer and that was used in the final performance. The laundromat was completed with Evelyn's laundry prop. I think she might have folded those same 3 shirts 50 times.





# Abruptly Ended Sleepovers

At this point in the show, two of the characters end up sleeping in places where they should not have been. Evelyn cheats on her husband with his boss, Jack. She wakes up in the shower in her underwear and proceeds to put on Jack's clothes by mistake. A note in the script that I missed in the final performance of this scene is that Evelyn is meant

to be drunk as evidenced by the burps in the stage directions and the errors of trying to dress and figure out where she was. It was portrayed in a more matter of fact manner, Evelyn being more tired. This made the scene much sadder when she realized what she had done and runs home.

A few scenes later we find Eric sleeping in what he thinks is a dead mall. A voice on a PA system (what I believe to be a security guard but is never revealed in the script) kicks him out. Eric acts very tough while packing up to leave but falters at the door. I love the change of pace we see here for Eric's character. He turns from the door and starts to cry claiming he's lost. The double meaning for his character in that moment is so strong and Ben portrayed it so well.





## Maps

I wish I had a director's GPS that would have yelled at me with flashing lights to not stage the living room scenes in the direction that I did. While these photos are great because of it, there was an entire seating bank behind the couch that missed out on the fantastic facial expressions of these two women throughout one of the funniest scenes in the show. At the same time, I couldn't imagine these scenes done any other way. When I try to mentally see this scene turned 90 degrees facing the south bank, the scene just doesn't work. I

don't even remember what made me turn the action in this direction in the first place.

"Look at this! This is America. How did it get so enormous?" "We took it from the Indians."

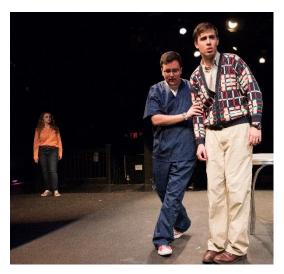
I always got excited when this scene came up in the show. Both Leah and Meghan really shined throughout this scene. The physical comedy of the maps was sublime. The exit where Cathy compliments her mother's boots without putting 2 & 2 together is a testament to how consumed she is with her son missing.





## **Unexpected Exit**

The first piece of staging I knew I wanted to do was to use the fire door in the stairwell during the nursing home scene. My grandmother was in and out of nursing homes my entire childhood until her death when I was a senior in high school. As I was reading this portion of the script the first time through, I instantly recognized that the door in the stairwell reminded me of the doors I had been trained to open at a young age. This scene struck a chord with me every night of performance, as it took me back to a time when my frustration with my grandmother made me feel hopeless. Can you really be mad at someone who can't help themselves?



In an attempt to create a moment that reflected how deeply I wanted to run away from dealing with my grandmother, I wanted Cathy to make a run for a door that no one would expect her to take. I asked for special permission to use the fire door in the stairwell as an exit. Each night she ran at the door, hit the crash bar, and exited, leaving the audience hanging. I could feel everyone's breathe catch each night as if to say, "no one uses that door. Can she use that door? She just used that door..." It also allowed for the performance to drive home the fact that something wasn't the same with Jim. He was a mechanical genius at his prime but struggled to open a door that his daughter opened later with no trouble.

## **Awkward Encounters**

After it was established that
Jerry was in fact a person with a
real job as a nurse, Cathy found
comfort in him while at the
nursing home, so she explores
finding comfort in him outside
the connection with her father.
This provides one of the
weirdest seductions I've ever
witnessed. Most would agree
with me as Jerry's request for
Cathy to remove her blouse was
met with laughter at every



performance. This paralleled the struggle my actors had staging this scene with a straight face. Every run would end in laughter until finally I just had them sit in the position for a while as they spoke to each other about anything and everything to normalize that situation for them.

## **Angel Meat**

Once Cathy runs away from Jerry, she returns to her mother with milkshakes to find that her father had died. After her mother exits, her father appears to her speaking from beyond the grave. The monologue he delivers here is so craftily woven, that you might miss it if you aren't paying attention. He analyses his trip to "heaven" to realize he's angel meat in the afterlife. I'm not sure why, I really loved this scene.





## Pity Food

There's a little moment towards the end of the show where Evelyn and Cathy examine a Jell-O salad that Judy's mother gave them after Jim's death. This prop was made on Monday. By Saturday night, the green mass looked a little sad from being kept in the freezer each day between shows and then thawing during the performances. It was kind of gross by the last run, but this couldn't be seen by most of the audience so it was okay.

## Happy Reunions

Eric returns home after his grandfather's death and after the initial excitement, Cathy gets mad that he wasn't there. I wanted this switch in attitude to be as drastic as possible. It's easy to tell an actor to get mad, but creating the high before the storm was a little harder. While most of the cast disagreed with my choice, I stuck to it. I wanted Eric and his mother to have a spinning-pick-up hug. While some argued that it was out of place for a mother and son to do, I felt it fit Cathy's character trait. She would often revert back to childish habits when certain situations would elicit strong emotions from her. This moment would be no different.



### One Last Dance

The Last scene between the remaining family members was one of my favorite stagings. I knew the moment had to be done with a certain level of care to deliver the emotions of the moment properly. If the actors just stood there, statically delivering the lines, the moment would be lost. The actors circled around each other, strutting between each other on certain lines where the moment felt natural. This scene required a lot of rehearsals to get just right, but in the end was exactly what I wanted.



## Pound it

Another moment inspired by the actors was the fist bump. Eric and Evelyn have been at odds this whole show, but here at the end, they share a moment to prove that maybe things really will get better. Eric learns a lot about himself and comes home. Evelyn has been changed by the death of Jim. Together, they realize they are family and the fist bump symbolized this.



## The Final Stand

While the previous scene was filled with motion, this second-to-last scene was meant to be stoic. The three women stand at the top of the hill overlooking the city as it goes up in flames. My favorite light cue happens at this moment when the audience was lit up like it was on fire with rotating red and orange color tones. I enjoyed lighting the audience. It fit well because the town was meant to be on fire all around them and at this



moment, the audience is all around the actors.

The part of the show that still makes me think to this day is the moment after the women on the hill put on their alien sunglasses and instantly turn into aliens. I still ask myself whether the aliens were real or if the family and friends were real. Drawing that line throughout the show was always a hard distinction, but I did love having the three aliens in the window at this moment to parallel the three, now aliens, on stage. It created a fabulous moment captured below.



### Curtain Call

Both acts start in a unique way. They both end in a unique way as well. Both times Judy sings a lullaby "O Crocodile Night." This song perplexes me. The first time, I like to think she's singing her kids to sleep, making up words as she goes, singing about any object she sees. However, at the end, as alien Judy, I can't find a motive for her to sing.

The first verse of the song at the close of the show is also a playful metaphor. "O dinosaur light, how death becomes you, and oozes from you, red as Mars. O dinosaur light, the sky is turning, each night you're burning, with the stars." I believe this to be a metaphor for oil, but why the aliens would be singing about this still befuddles me.

The final moments of the play show Voiceover outside of his observation window for the third time. After the rest of the cast comforts Jerry and prevents his suicide as he falls asleep, Voiceover wanders around inspecting the work his minions have done.

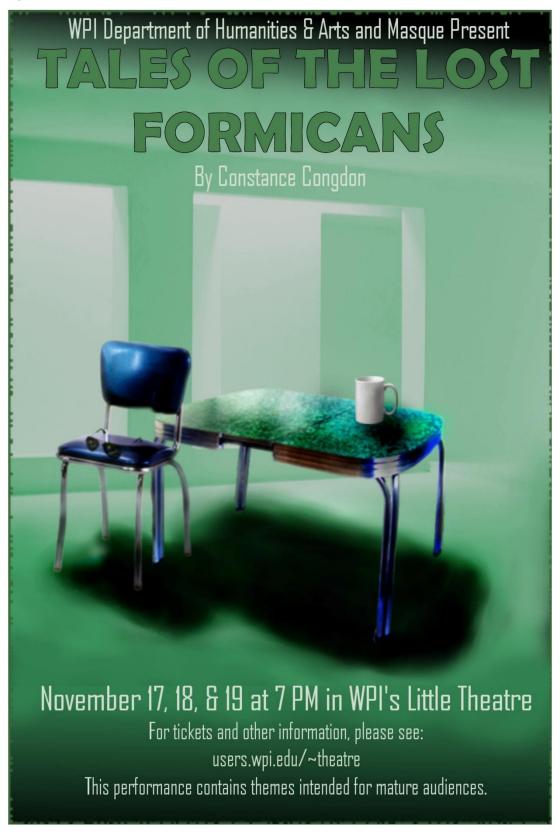
The final line of the play is "Goodnight." Some might say he is saying it to Jerry, and that would be one way to interpret the way I staged it. However, the play starts with Cathy addressing the audience, saying, "You are here." I believe the final line of the play is also directed at the audience. It's nice to think that the actors are trying to guide the audience through the play, like tour guides on a trip to imagination land.

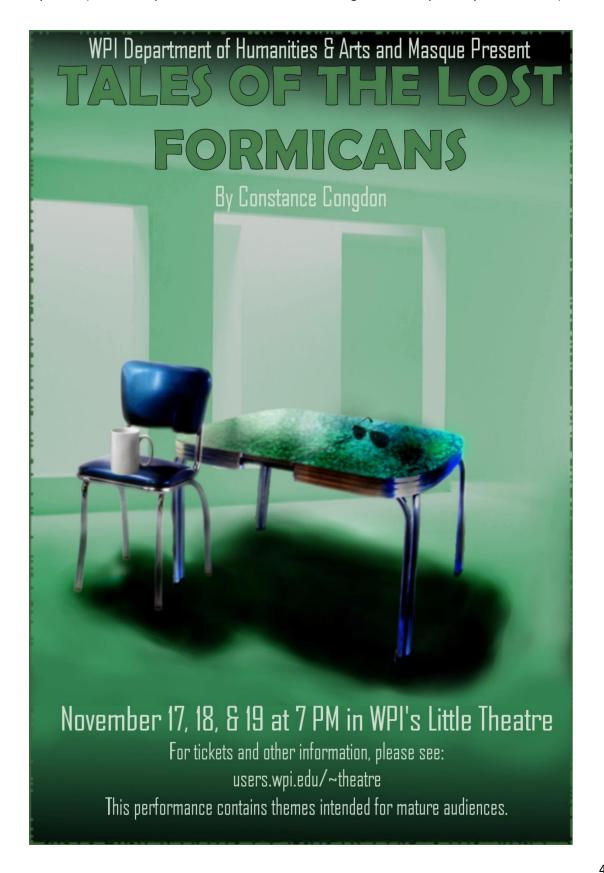
While staged in haste after the final dress rehearsal, the positioning for bows was very deliberate. If you look closely, there is a chair from each of the scenes that used the table. I believe that a curtain call should complement the show that was just watched. If you have a fun curtain call after a devastating tragedy, you've done a disservice to the atmosphere you just spent a few hours creating.



## Part 2: Appendices

A compilation of documents providing evidence to the work of the director on the production





## TALES OF THE 10ST FORMANDE

# Coming Soon The 14th Annual AYO Show in 24 Hours

December 10th, 2016 at 7 PM Little Theatre

VOX: The Addams Family

January 12-14, 2017 Alden Hall

Masque C-Term Show February 16-18, 2017 at 7 PM

Little Theatre

April 12-15, 2017 at 7 PM Little Theatre New Voices 35

## AYO Inductees

Monique Desnoyers President Nick Shannon Emily Aldrich Erika Hanlan Vice President **Business Manager** Advisor

The Rho Kappa Cast of Alpha Psi Omega is pleased to announce the inductees of the B-term 2016 class:

Rachel Rynazewski Ryan Herrmann Dylan Mahalingham Sebastian Espinosa

The induction ceremony will be held after Friday night's performance. All are invited to attend.

WPI houses the Rho Kappa cast of AYO. New members are Alpha Psi Omega is the national dramatic honor society. inducted twice a year, at the end of B and D term.



## Please Note

There is no food or drink allowed in the Little Theatre. Please make sure all mobile devices are shut off or silenced during the performance.

For the safety of the audience and the actors, we ask that you stay clear of the aisles during the performance.

Latecomers will be seated at the discretion of the House Manager.

Camera use is prohibited. The cameras you see in the theatre are not being used to record the performance. They are being used to transmit a feed of the performance to our overflow audience in Riley Commons.

The door used to enter the theatre will be covered by a curtain for the duration of the show. Please take note of the other two uncovered exist in the theatre in case of emergency.

THIS PERFORMANCE CONTAINS THE USE OF PROP WEAPONS AND MINOR STROBE EFFECTS.

THIS PRODUCTION INCLUDES MATURE CONTENT INCLUDING THE USE OF STRONG LANGUAGE, DRUGUSE, AND SEXUAL ELEMENTS THAT MAY NOT BE SUITABLE FOR CHILDREN.

Cathy	Cast	Leah Steigerwald
Eric		Ben Child
Jim		Christian Roberts
Evelyn		Meghan Flynn
Judy		Katie Sibley
Jerry		Gavin MacNeal
Voiceover		Robert Boulanger
Ensemble		Lucius Park
		Sarah Bucknam
Understudy for Eric		Nick Longo

## Director's Note

If you wanted a night at the theatre, enjoying a nice plot that made perfect chronological sense, you should have gone to see Wicked. The production you are about to see is one that implores the viewer to think outside of the realm of reality that you thought you knew. Have you ever returned to the kitchen to find that your keys were, in fact, not where you could have sworn you placed them? Perhaps your world really is influenced by "little elves," or whatever permutation of imagination those beings may hold.

At the root of this confusion is an undeniable fact of life: the ageing of those we love and the straining of life's relationships along the way. Jim's battle with Alzheimer's is something many have seen paralleled in their own life through the struggle of a loved one attempting to remain lucid as old age grapples with their memories. What is home, if the people who helped define it are no longer they same as you remember them. Perhaps the scariest realization is knowing that the home you once knew and loved no longer exists.

Every character entertains a search for home. After separating from her husband, Cathy returns home at the call of her mother in an attempt to find herself again. Eric, after being wrenched from the only home he knew, struggles to learn the lesson that home isn't necessarily a place, but a person. Evelyn, refusing to accept the fate of Jim's metal health, tries to cope with the fact that the person whom defined home for her isn't the same anymore. Likewise, Judy, Jim, and Jerry are all on a quest of their own to find where they fit in this world, if they fit at all.

The Tales of the Lost Formicans, beautifully written by Constance Congdon, is an eye opening expose of the human condition. We as humans cannot observe human life with a completely unbiased eye. The aliens in this show allow us, to some extent, to do just that, and to witness human life through their eyes.

Directing this show was a journey with many lessons along the way. No show is produced without its challenges, whether tangible or intangible. From production members being sick to technology not always being on our side, I am so proud of every member of this production.

The intangible challenge was figuring out where to draw the line between reality and imagination. And then, once that line had been drawn, deciphering which side of the line reality was actually on. So, I'll leave you with one final question as you sit back, relax, and enjoy the show. Which side of the line are you on?

# Production Staff

Producer	Ryan Herrmann
Director	Alicia Weber
Production Manager	Rachel Rynazewski
Stage Manager	Holly Gagnon
Assistant Production Manager	Josiah Boucher
Assistant Stage Manager	Jacob Pickett
Dramaturg	Shanel Chisholm
Squad Liaison	Monique Desonyers
Technical Director	Nicholas Shannon
Lighting Designer	Caroline Warchol
Master Electrician	Richard Cole
Assistant Master Electrician	Jarrett Sarnell
Sound Designer	Peter John Smith
Assistant Sound Designer	Bernardino Garay
Sound Engineer	Bernardino Garay
Props Designer	Erik Langberg
Props Coordinator	Dennis Bergsman
Wardrobe Designer	Katie Pelissari
Wardrobe Coordinator	Kat Peter
Graphic Designer	Kyra Bresnahan
Publicity Coordinator	<b>Emily Aldrich</b>
Assistant Publicity Coordinator	Nafisat Salman
House Designer	Katie Sibley
House Manager	Alisa DaSilva
Box Office Manager	Maria Rainero
Backstage Coordinator	Pat Trant
Vestibule Manager	Nick Longo
Lighting Board Operator	Jonathan Berry
Sound Board Operator	Caz Kruczynski

# **Production Staff**

Richard Cole

Mentor to Stage Manager Mentor to Production Manager

Mentor to Producer

Katie Pelissari Nicholas Shannon Shannon Healey

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tage Manager	Jacob Pickett			Katie Sibley
	Shanel Chisholm	Mentor to Props		Robert Boulanger
non	Monique Desonyers			Katie Sibley
irector	Nicholas Shannon		Scenic Crew	
signer	Caroline Warchol	Christopher Grier	Madelyn Mitsark	Jacob Pickett
trician	Richard Cole	Nicholas Pingal	Sebastian Rodriguez	Ben Schade
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gner	Erik Langberg	Nicholas Shannon	William Sullivan	Niang Than
dinator	Dennis Bergsman		<b>Graphics Crew</b>	
Designer	Katie Pelissari	Angela Calvi	Ben Schade	Drew Wethern
Coordinator	Kat Peter		Wardrobe Crew	
signer	Kyra Bresnahan	Chloe Adler-Mandile		Rachel Smallcomb
oordinator	Emily Aldrich		Run Crew	
ublicity Coordinator	Nafisat Salman	Lila Acevedo		Shine Linn Thant
gner	Katie Sibley	Alowondno Millon		Townott Comoll
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Manager	Maria Rainero		Ospers	
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ald Operator	Caz Kruczynski	Niang Than		Drew Tisdelle
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## Masque Officers

President	Shannon Healey
VP Scenic	Ryan Herrmann
VP Lights and Sound	Rachel Rynazewski
VP Props and Costumes	Monique Desnoyers
VP Publicity	Katie Pelissari
Treasurer	Richard Cole
Secretary	Jacob Pickett
Masquot	Alicia Weber
Advisor	Susan Vick

# Little Theatre Squad

Squad Lead	Nicholas Shannon
Green Room Manager	Heather Selmer
Installation Specialist, Scenic Studio Manager	PJ Smith
Squad Associates	Monique Desnoyers
	Josiah Boucher

# Drama/Theatre Office

Susan Vick	Katie Sibley	Rachel Rynazewski	Katie Pelissari
Director of Drama/Theatre, Professor of Drama/Theatre	Assistant to Director of Drama/ Theatre	Peer Learning Advisor	Resource Librarian

## Special Thanks

Dean Karen Oats

Professor Kristen Boudreau Janet and Jeffery H. Pollak Margaret Brodmerkle Kenneth J. Danila Margaret Schmidt Andrew Hansford Liz Tomaszewski James P. Hanlan JoAnn Manfra Karen Hassett Diran Apelian Mary Cotnoir Paul Girard

Helen G. Vassallo Terry Pellerin Penny Rock

WPI Chapter of Alpha Psi Omega, Rho Kappa Cast WPI Department of Humanities and Arts WPI Lens and Lights Michael Knapp WPI Mural Club WPI Facilities

WPI Student Activities Office WPI Office of the Provost

WPI Office of the President

Habitat for Humanity ReStore of Metrowest/Greater Worcester WPI Events Office

## Appendix D: Hour Log

Name:	Alicia Weber				
<b>Production Title</b>	:	Tales of the Lost Formicans			
Activity on the F	Production:	Director Term and Year of Production:		B-16	
Date	Hours	Explanation			
a day in C '16	1	Met with adviso	or, offered direct	or position	
C'16 & D'16	20	Read plays as ac	dvisor gave them	to me	
a day in D '16	1	Met with adviso	or, discussed Forn	nicans	
a day in D '16	4	Read Formicans	script		
a day in D '16	3	reread script			
a day in D '16	1	confirmed play	and annoucment	with advisor	
4/15/2016	1	annouoced play to community			
6/1/2016	3	read script for staging ideas			
7/1/2016	3	read script for design ideas			
8/20-9/17 2016	10	meetings with producer, advisors, prep for show			
9/28/2016	2	Exec meetings			
9/29/2016	4	Audition prep			
10/5/2016	4	Exec meeting and auditions			
10/6/2016	6	Auditions and callbacks discussion			
10/7/2016	8	Callbacks and casting			
10/8/2016	4	cast acceptance correspondence and planning			
10/9/2016	2	Rehearsal Prep			
10/10/2016	4	Exec meeeting, rehearsal planning			
10/11/2016	3	Read through			
10/13/2016	2	Read script for design intent			
10/14/2016	2	prop, costume, scenic design thinking			
10/16/2016	3	lighting, scenic, staging prep			
10/17/2016	3	reread script for clarity			
10/18/2016	3	Talking with stage manager and scheduling			
10/19/2016	5	Show prep			
10/20/2016	6	Show prep			
10/21/2016	4	Check-in prep			
10/23/2016	5	Check-ins, desig	n meetings		
10/24/2016	5	Check-ins			
10/25/2016	4	Rehearsal			
10/26/2016	5	Rehearsal, exec	meeting, producti	on meeting	

Date	Hours	xplanation			
10/27/2016	4	Rehearsal and a check-in			
10/29/2016	3	Rehearsal			
10/30/2016	1	Rehearsal prep			
10/31/2016	3	Rehearsal			
11/1/2016	6	Rehearsal, sound meeting			
11/2/2016	7	Rehearsal, exec meeting, production meeting			
11/3/2016	4	Rehearsals			
11/4/2016	2	Rehearsal, sound meeting			
11/5/2016	6	Rehearsals			
11/6/2016	4	Backstage meeting, sound meeting			
11/7/2016	12	esign meetings, rehearsal			
11/8/2016	4	ehearsals			
11/9/2016	7	ech preveiw			
11/10/2016	4	Rehearsal			
11/11/2016	5	Rehearsal and prep			
11/13/2016	13	Q2Q			
11/14/2016	9	Fech run			
11/15/2016	8	Oress rehearsal			
11/16/2016	7	Preview show			
11/17/2016	7	Opening night			
11/18/2016	7	Second show			
11/19/2016	7	Closing night			
12/1/2017	3	Post show reflection			
a day in Jan	1	Discussed report with advisor			
2/12/2017	5	Sorted photos			
2/15/2017		Act 1 Journal			
2/17/2016	3	Met with advisor and made edits			
2/19/2017	7	Act 2 journal			
2/23/2017		Edits to paper			
2/27/2017		Met with advisor and made edits			
2/28/2017	10	Finalize paper			
Total	305				

## Appendix E: Positions Held in Theatrical Productions at WPI

	Jekyll and Hyde	Usher		
A '13	The Awakening of Spring	Actor: Frau Gabor		
B '13	Inherit the Wind	Actor: Mrs. Blair		
D 13		Actor: Ensemble		
	Next to Normal	Lighting crew		
C '14	The 39 Steps	Assistant Sound Designer and Engineer		
	boom	Sound Designer		
		Musical Director: On The Way: the		
D '14	New Voices 32	Musical		
	Unsung Broadway Cabaret	Actor		
	Les Miserables	Actor: Ensemble		
A '14	The Beams Are Creaking	Sound Designer		
The Gorilla: Not So Improv		{Empty Set} Actor: Gorilla		
_	·	Sound Engineer		
B′ 14	An Enemy of the People	Usher		
C '15	Eurydice	Actor: Big Stone		
D '15	New Voices 33	Director: The Rower		
E' 15	Frontiers: Property Rights	Understudy: Robot 3		
		Box Office Manager		
. /45	Assassins	Scenic Crew		
A '15	The Real Inspector Hound	Sound Engineer		
	The Game-Show Game: The Show	{Empty Set} Actor: Improviser		
C '16	How I learned to Drive	Actor: Female Greek Chorus		
	Now Voices 24	Scenic Design Team		
	New Voices 34	Director: Oops, I Smoked Crack Again		
D '16	Around the World in 80ish Minutes	Actor		
	Cabaret	Actor		
	The Comedy Olympics Festival	{Empty Set} Actor: Improviser		
	Legally Blonde	Actor: Margot		
A '16	Legally Biolide	Scenic Crew		
A 10	The Taming of the Shrew	Sound Designer		
	Empty Set Makes it Rain: an Origin Story	Actor: Improvisor		
B '16	Tales of the Lost Formicans	Director		
D 10	The 9 O'Clock News in SL 115	{Empty Set} Actor: Eric Storm		
	The Addams Family	Actor: Grandma Addams		
C '17	The Addins Fulling	Scenic Crew		
C 1,	A Spider's Web	Props Designer		
	Black Dragons: a live film dubbing	{Empty Set} Actor: Alice		
	The Showcase	Scenic Designer		
D '17		Director		
Chillin' with the Villains Cabaret		Actor: The Mad Hatter		

## Appendix F: Play List

Anderson, Douglas
Aristophanes
Barlow, Patrick
Bean, Richard
Beckett, Samuel
Broslawski, Casey

Brown, Jake Lee, Amy Castonguay and Michael

Hyde

Cafarelli, Emily

Ciaraldi, Michael J., Michael Gagliano and

Lindsey Prudente Christie, Agatha Congdon, Constance

Cyganski, Nicholas C.

Gardinier, Sarah, Arianna Nitzel and Lena

Pafumi

Gibson, William Giapoudzl, Despoina

Giapoudzl, Despoina, Angela Simpson and Mark

Swanson

Goodrich, Frances Haehnel, Alan Healey, Shannon

Healey, Shannon, Tim Jones, and Dan Murray Hewgley, Nicolas R. and Michael Goldman

Ibsen, Henrik Ionesco, Eugene

Keough, Ryan, Carol Sutherland and Andrew

Wilkins

Lawrence, Jerome and Robert E. Lee

Loehle, Victoria

Maitland, Ian and Mark Swanson

McCluskey, Maeve

Medeiros, Nicholas

Miller, Arthur

Murray, Dan Murvihill, Dolan The Beams Are Creaking

Lysistrata The 39 Steps

One Man, Two Guvnors
Waiting for Godot

Psych 117

The Sixth Experiment

AYO 24 hour show: Criminal Misintent

Oops, I smoked Crack Again

AYO 24 hour show: The Cleanse

A Spiders Web

Lips

Tales of the Last Formicans

Foxtrot Delta Romeo

AYO 24 Hour Show: The Review

The Miracle Worker

Red Hair

AYO 24 Hour Show: Spell Casting

The Diary of Anne Frank

Property Rites
Repudiation

AYO 24 Hour Show: Three Drinks Deep

Exit

An Enemy of the People

Exit the King

AYO 24 Hour Show: Paralel [Sic]

Inherit the Wind

Are There Trees in Heaven?

The Rower

Glass Adam's Day off

The Global Wish Fulfillment Agency

Here Be Pirates

Me, Moi Meme, and I Quantum Madness

The Crucible

Death of a Salesman Fur Heaven's Sake I'll See You Tomorrow Nachtrieb, Peter Sinn

Orwell, George (adapt. By Icke & MacMillan)

Putke, Hunter

Roberts, Christian and Dan Corwin

Rose, Reginald Ruhl, Sarah

Shakespeare, William

boom 1984

Three Ways From Here

Pre-Planning 12 Angry Men Eurydice

A Midsummer Night's Dream

The Comedy of Errors

Hamlet King Lear

Love's Labour's Lost

Othello Richard III

Romeo and Juliet

The Taming of the Shrew

The Tempest Titus Andronicus Twelfth Night The Winter's Tale

Tea Time

45 Seconds from Broadway

The Good Doctor

A Promise

Silence Speaks for Me The Real Inspector Hound

The Apathy Fairy War Stories

A Month in the Country How I Learned to Drive The Awakening of Spring

The Importance of Being Earnest

Our Town

Sibley, Katelyne Simmon, Neil

Smith, Andrew Stanway, Kimberly Stoppard, Tom Swanson, Mark

Teatum, Andrew Turgenev, Ivan Vogel, Paula

Wilde, Oscar

Wilder, Thornton

Wedekind, Frank

## Musicals:

13: The Musical

42<sup>nd</sup> Street

A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder

A Little Night Music

Annie

Annie Get Your Gun

**Anything Goes** 

Assassins

Avenue Q

Beauty and the Beast

Brigadoon

Cats

Carousel

Chicago

Cinderella

**Curtains** 

Fun Home

Grease

Guys and dolls

Hamilton

Heathers

If/Then

Into the Woods

Jekyll and Hyde

L'il Abner

Legally Blonde

Les Miserables

Little Women

Mamma Mia

Newsies

Next to Normal

Oklahoma

On the Town

On The Way: the musical

Once

Pippin

Rent

Showboat

Suessical the Musical

Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street

Tarzan

The 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee

The Addams Family

The Book of Mormon

The Fantasticks

The Last Five Years

The Lion King

The Music Man

The Phantom of the Opera

The Sound of Music

The Wizard of Oz

Tick, Tick, Boom

Urinetown

Young Frankenstein

West Side Story

White Christmas: The Musical

Wicked