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# NebraskaLand!

## the New Nebraska History Themepark

a Theatre In Education play for 3 actors (2m/1f)  
by Brian Guehring

Draft # 2.21

NebraskaLAND! the New Nebraska History Theme Park is a Theatre In Education (TIE) play. Theatre In Education combines theatrical elements with interactive moments which audience participants (in or out of role) work with actor-teachers towards an educational or social goal, using tools of theatre in service of this goal. NebraskaLAND! places the student audience in role as investors, politicians, and historians who must help the planners of the new Nebraska history theme park decide which famous Nebraskans should be honored first. The production of NebraskaLAND! and its accompanying educational materials introduce upper elementary school students to 16 famous Nebraskans (such as Standing Bear, Gale Sayers, Willa Cather, Father Flanagan, and Malcolm X) and hope to stimulate discussions and further explorations of these figures.

### Cast of Characters:

Ms. Natalie Armstrong

CEO of America Thrills, a giant amusement park corporation

Mr. Bartholomew Hummelsback

President of Nebraska Historical Society

Mr. Jack Linstrom

Long-time State Senator from Omaha

actress playing ARMSTRONG also portrays Bess Streeter Aldrich actress, Willa Cather actress, Judi Dahl (a Northern Ponca tribe member), and animatronic statues of Robert Blumkin and Grace Abbott.

actor playing HUMMELSBACK also portrays David (LaFleur's assistant), Casimir Ziolkowski (Crazy Horse monument sculptor), and animatronic statues of J. Sterling Morton and Malcolm X.

actor playing LINSTROM also portrays Simon LaFleur (sculptor), John G. Neihardt actor, and animatronic statues of Father Flanagan and John J. Pershing.

Audience in role as investors in NebraskaLand, state politicians, and members of the Nebraska Historical Society.

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NebraskaLand! The New Nebraska History Theme Park was first produced by the Omaha Theater Company for Young People as a touring show into the schools in the winter of 1999 with the following cast and production team:

*director:* Kevin Barratt  
*dramaturg:* Michael Miller                      *set designer:* Rich Haponstall  
*costume design:* Sherri Geerdes      *sound design:* Kevin Hill and Kevin Barratt

ARMSTRONG: Tracy Iwersen  
HUMMELSBACK: Kevin Ehrhart  
LINSTROM: Nils Haaland

NebraskaLand! The New Nebraska History Theme Park production continued to tour with Omaha Theater Company for Young People into the schools every year from 2000-2004 with the following changes:

*director:* Kevin Ehrhart (starting in 2004)  
*graphic art:* Kai Wilken (added in 2004)

ARMSTRONG: Amanda Kibler (starting in 2003)  
HUMMELSBACK: Kevin Barratt (during parts of 2002 & 2003) ,  
Michael Wilhelm (2004)  
LINSTROM: Brian Guehring (starting in 2000)

### ***Before the Production:***

Ideally the theatre company will conduct a workshop for the students least one week before performance. The workshop will help prepare the students to enter this drama in role, introduce the students to NebraskaLAND!, and help build excitement and anticipation for the performance. The workshop will help the students understand the difference between investors, historians, and politicians and how that will affect their role at the meeting.

The actor/teacher will also bring to the classroom an **InvitationPoster** (a large, colorful poster for the teacher to place in the classroom inviting the investors, politicians and historians to the meeting) and a **Study Guide** (a short information packet for the teachers including an explanation of Theatre in Education, a list of famous Nebraskans covered in the play, and a worksheet for the students to fill out to help them get into role before the play. This workshop will include time to start filling out a resume for them to fill in for the character they will portray and to create a name tag for the students to wear for the production. (*The name tags will be color coded so the actors can immediately tell which role the child is portraying.*)

If a pre-show workshop is not possible, the Study Guide should be mailed ahead of time and one actor can lead a quick 5 minute pre-show session to help the students get into role. That script would be something like this:

ACTOR 1:

Good morning, students. How are you doing today? Good. My name is Brian and this is Tracy and Kevin. We are actors from the Omaha Theater Company at the Rose.

Raise your hands if you have ever been to a play at the Rose? Well, today's play is going to be a little bit different from the plays you see at the theater. Normally, when you see a play at the theater, what are some rules the audience must follow? (*Actor takes suggestions such as being quiet, applauding to show appreciation, listening closely, etc.*) Well, for most of today's play we are going to ask ya'll to be regular audience members and sit quietly and pay attention.

However, for parts of today's play we are going to ask you to participate. There will be sections of the play where we will ask you to talk to your neighbors about the play, sections where you can ask questions to the characters, and sections where you might talk to the entire audience. Another important part of today's play will include times where you will mark the ballots you have in front of you.

But the first thing we need you to do is to create a character. So for the next hour you are going to use your imagination and pretend that you are no longer a 4th grader watching a play, but rather an adult attending an important business meeting about a new amusement park. Now there are four groups of people invited to today's meeting. The first group are politicians. Does anybody know what a politician is? (*Actor takes answers from the audience*). Great. A politician is a person who works in politics and is elected to work for the government. Can anybody name any politicians? (*Actor takes answers from the audience*). Exactly. So maybe you want to pretend for the next hour to be the mayor of Omaha, the governor of Nebraska, or even a U. S. Congressman from Nebraska. If you were the mayor of Omaha and they were building a new amusement park near your city, would you want more information about the park? (*Audience answers*) That's why they are here. Tracy, who is the second group of people invited to today's meeting?

#### ACTRESS

Investors are the second group of people invited to today's meeting. Does anybody know what an investor is? (*Actor takes answers from the audience*). Great. An investor is someone who takes some of their money and puts it into a project like this rather than put it in a bank. They invest money into a business in hope that the business will do well and they will get even more money back. So maybe you want to pretend for the next hour that you are very rich and you have invested money into NebraskaLand. And if you put your own money into this amusement park, would you want to find out more information about it? (*Audience answers*). That's why investors are here. Kevin who is the third group of people invited to today's meeting?

#### ACTOR 2

Historians are the third group of people invited to today's meeting. Does anybody know what a historian is? (*Actor takes answers from the audience*). Exactly. A historian is someone who studies history. They may work at a University or a school or a museum. They are at today's meeting because this amusement park is based on Nebraska's history. The historians are experts helping to plan the park. So maybe you want to pretend for the next hour that you are extremely smart and you are a historian.

#### ACTOR 1

The last group of people invited to today's meeting includes employees of Thrill America, which is the corporation that is building this amusement park. For the next hour, your teachers will pretend that they work for corporate America making big bucks (even more money than teachers get). They can choose to be graphic artists, roller coaster designer or vice presidents of marketing. You all need to choose to be either a politician (like a mayor or governor), an investor (with lots of money) or a historian (who are very smart).

When you have chosen which of those three groups you would like to be, please stand up.

*(When all students are standing the introduction to the play starts)*

# NebraskaLAND!

a new Nebraska history theme park

## **SECTION I: Introduction and the Grand Unveiling**

*(Auditorium is covered with Welcome! banners, helium balloons, and other party paraphanelia. The stage area has a podium with the NebraskaLAND logo emblazoned c the front. There is a large timeline that is empty at the start of the play. Stage Left is a la poster that is covered at the beginning of the play.*

*When the students arrive in the auditorium they are immediately greeted enthusiastically Ms. Armstrong, Mr. Hummelsback, and Mr. Linstrom. The actor-teachers introduce themselves in role and improvise individual conversations with the audience members to help them enter into role as adult historians, investors, or politicians. For example:*

*ARMSTRONG: It is so good to finally meet you, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. I'm Natalie Armstrong, CEO of ThrillAmerica, the Company Behind The Theme Parks that Make You Scream!. We've talked on the phone many times. We really appreciate you last million dollar investment in the NebraskaLand Theme Park and are thrilled you found time in your schedule for our unveiling. Tell me again, how did you ma all of your money? Are you a doctor, or athlete, or singer? (student answers in ro. Here is a ballot you'll need later. Don't fill it out now. I'll explain it later. Tell your I say hi. (seeing someone else) Oh, Ms. \_\_\_\_\_. You look fabulous.....*

*All students will receive the following ballot:*

\*\*\*\*\*

When students enter the auditorium they will receive the following ballot:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Check one:  Politician  
 Historian  
 Investor

## **NebraksaLAND!**

the New Nebraska History Theme Park

Help us choose which of these Famous Nebrakans we should honor first:

### **SPORTS HEROES**

Check two: \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Louise Pound  
\_\_\_\_\_ 2. Grover Cleveland Alexander  
\_\_\_\_\_ 3. Gale Sayers  
\_\_\_\_\_ 4. Bob Gibson  
\_\_\_\_\_ 5. Tom Osborne

### **AUTHORS**

Check one: \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Willa Cather  
\_\_\_\_\_ 2. John G. Neihardt  
\_\_\_\_\_ 3. Bess Streeter Aldrich

### **NATIVE AMERICANS**

Check one: \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Standing Bear  
\_\_\_\_\_ 2. Crazy Horse

### **NEBRAKSA LEADERS**

Check three: \_\_\_\_\_ 1. John J. Pershing  
\_\_\_\_\_ 2. Malcolm X  
\_\_\_\_\_ 3. Rose Blumkin  
\_\_\_\_\_ 4. J. Sterling Morton  
\_\_\_\_\_ 5. Grace Abbott

\_\_\_\_\_ 6. Father Flanagan

\*\*\*\*\*

*When all of the students arrive and are seated, Ms. Armstrong bangs the gavel of the podium to attract everyone's attention.)*

ARMSTRONG

Ladies and gentlemen, (*banging gavel*) Ladies and gentlemen, may we please be quiet so we may begin this meeting.

*(HUMMELSBACK and LINSTROM finish handing out ballots and join ARMSTRONG on the stage)*

ARMSTRONG (cont'd)

We would like to thank you all for taking time out of your busy schedules in order to take a first sneak peek of the roller coasters, thrillrides, themeshows and innovative attractions in NebraskaLAND! the New Nebraska History Theme Park.

HUMMELSBACK (*to Armstrong*)

And to help make important decisions about the historical installations at the park.

ARMSTRONG

Yes, yes, we also will ask for your votes later to help us make final decisions about the park planning.

LINSTROM

Let's not get ahead of ourselves. I think we should first introduce ourselves to our lovely crowd.

ARMSTRONG

Of course. For those of you who don't know me, my name is Natalie Armstrong, Chief Executive Officer of ThrillAmerica, the company behind the Themeparks that Make You Scream. I am personally overseeing the planning of NebraskaLAND! the new Nebraska History Theme Park. I would especially like to welcome to our meeting all the wonderful men and women who have invested their millions of dollars into this project. Please stand and be recognized.

LINSTROM

I'm sure you all recognize me, Jack Linstrom, Nebraska State Senator from Omaha's great district 7. I would like to welcome my fellow politicians here from the NebraskaLAND committee (*waving to a crowd member*) like Senator Miller. If all of the politicians will please stand and be recognized.

HUMMELSBACK

I'm Bartholomew Hummelsback, current president of the Nebraska State Historical Society. I'd like to especially welcome all of my fellow Historical Society members. If the historians will please stand and be recognized.

ARMSTRONG

Finally, I'd like to recognize all my employees of ThrillAmerica. These are the men and women who have worked so hard to make this meeting a success. (*leads applause for teachers in role as employees*) I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Linstrom for sponsoring the state bill to give NebraskaLAND! money from the state treasury..

LINSTROM

Without raising taxes.

ARMSTRONG

And all the other politicians here for voting the bill into legislation. And I'd like to thank Mr. Hummelsback and the members of the Historical Society for raising a million dollars for the building of the new park.

HUMMELSBACK

This is an exciting opportunity to introduce thousands of people to the rich history of Nebraska.

ARMSTRONG

As you all are no doubt aware, NebraskaLAND, the new Nebraska History Theme Park will open the summer of 2005. Less than two years away.

LINSTROM

We've selected a site halfway between Omaha and Lincoln and we are expecting to bring in millions of tourism dollars to our state economy.

ARMSTRONG

So for the first time ever, we will now unveil our vision of NebraskaLAND, the new Nebraska History Theme Park.

*(Drum roll builds as HUMMELSBACK and LINSTROM remove curtain from poster, revealing a huge, colorful artist's rendering of the planned themepark. NebraskaLAND! theme music is heard. )*

ARMSTRONG(cont'd)

I would like to highlight some of our primary, state of the art attractions. My personal favorite is The Tornado! The first standing roller coaster with three loop-de-loops forwards and backwards.

*(ARMSTRONG points out Tornado on map)*

HUMMELSBACK

Representing the effect tornados have had on our history.

LINSTROM

And the Mammoth Coaster, an old-fashioned wooden roller coaster, with four 100 foot dips.

HUMMELSBACK

In our pre-historic section of the park representing the woolly mammoths who used to roam these plains.

ARMSTRONG

The Cattle Stampede 3-D Movie Adventure that will make you feel like you're about to be run over by 200 cattle!

HUMMELSBACK

Representing the importance of beef to the state economy. We will also have the Lewis and Clark River Adventure. A flume water ride highlighting their historic travel along the Missouri River.

LINSTROM

My personal favorite is the authentic Wild West Buffalo Bill Theme Show. With simulated cowboy and Indian battles, gun tricks and even an Annie Oakley impersonator.

ARMSTRONG

Which brings us to where we need your help. As you know, we have the opportunity to not just celebrate Nebraska's great history, but to also honor some of the famous Nebraskans who inspire us to this day.

LINSTROM

Unfortunately, due to time constraints and budget issues, we won't be able to construct all the Famous Nebraskan installations in time for the opening. So we would like your help in deciding which of the famous Nebraskans we should honor first.

HUMMELSBACK

This is an exciting opportunity to teach thousands of people about our role models. Remember to consider how important each of these men and women were to our state and our nation's history. Which of these Nebraskans still inspire us today?

ARMSTRONG

So if everyone will look at their ballot, the first thing we need you to do is to check off which group you are with tonight.

LINSTROM

If all of my fellow politicians will please check off the first blank.

HUMMELSBACK

All members of the Nebraska State Historical Society check the second blank.

ARMSTRONG

And all of the wonderfully rich investors check the third blank. There is also a space for y  
name.

HUMMELSBACK

Or you can leave it blank. This can be an anonymous vote.



## **SECTION II: Sports Hall of Fame Statues**

*(students begin filling out top of ballot as HUMMELSBACK and LINSTROM prepare for statue work)*

ARMSTRONG

Our first issue we want you to vote on is for our Nebraska Sports Heroes Hall of Fame. *(Slides show Hall of Fame)* Our Sports Hall of Fame will have interactive sports such as baseball radar tosses, football accuracy games, simulated hockey slap shots, and 100 yard dash timings. It will also be loaded with plaques, game balls, uniforms, and photos of the great moments in Nebraska Sports History. We have also commissioned the great artist Simon LeFleur to sculpt huge 20 foot statues of two famous Nebraska sports heroes to mark the entrance to the hall. And I believe he is here today for our meeting. Mr. LeFleur?

*(SIMON LeFLUER enters)*

LeFLEUR

Thank you. Yes, I am certain it is an honor for you all to meet me.

ARMSTRONG

The leaders of this project have nominated five Nebraska sports heroes and we need your vote for the two biggest sports heroes in Nebraska sports history. Mr. LeFleur, I understand you brought some clay models of these five nominees?

LeFLEUR

No, at this part of the process, I sculpt with the mind, the creativity, and with David. *(LeFLEUR claps and DAVID, LeFLEUR's young assistant comes on stage.)*

ARMSTRONG

Welcome David.

LeFLEUR

He cannot talk. He is becoming one with clay.

*(LeFLEUR claps and DAVID creates Louise Pound pose.)*

ARMSTRONG

This pose must be Louise Pound, the first woman named to the Lincoln Journal Sports Hall of Fame.

*(ARMSTRONG places Pound photo on timeline)*

LeFLEUR

The Louise Pound statue shows her winning both the women's and the men's tennis state championships in back to back years.

*(LeFLEUR claps and DAVID creates Alexander pose.)*

ARMSTRONG

This statue must be Grover Cleveland Alexander, the first Nebraskan elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame.

*(ARMSTRONG places Alexander photo on timeline)*

LeFLEUR

This statue captures the confidence of Alexander as he helps the Cardinals win the 1926 World Series against Babe Ruth and the New York Yankees.

*(LeFLEUR claps and DAVID switches to create Gale Sayers pose.)*

ARMSTRONG

The third nominee is Gale Sayers, the famous Chicago Bear elected to the Pro Football Hall of Fame.

*(ARMSTRONG places Sayers photo on timeline)*

LeFLEUR

The Gayle Sayers pose illuminates the flashy, entertaining playing style of the running back taking the league by storm his rookie season.

*(LeFLEUR claps and DAVID creates Bob Gibson pose.)*

ARMSTRONG

This must be the Omaha native Bob Gibson: a dominating pitcher in the 1960's with the St. Louis Cardinals.

*(ARMSTRONG places Gibson photo on timeline)*

LeFLEUR

I have sculpted Mr. Gibson's intensity on the pitching mound. His determination to overcome racial prejudice and poverty burns in his eyes.

*(LeFLEUR claps and DAVID creates Tom Osborne pose.)*

ARMSTRONG

The final nominee is Coach Tom Osborne. Dr. Osborne was the head football coach at the University of Nebraska winning 3 national championships.

*(ARMSTRONG places Osborne photo on timeline)*

LeFLEUR

This statue captures strength and honor of Coach Osborne during his 25 years as head coach.

ARMSTRONG

Mr. LeFleur, if we could please, review our five nominees....

LeFLEUR

But of course, ma cherri...

*(LeFLEUR claps and DAVID creates Pound pose)*

ARMSTRONG

Louise Pound, an expert figure skater, tennis player, bicyclist, and coach of the women's basketball team at the University of Nebraska. A real pioneer for women athletes.

*(LeFLEUR claps and DAVID creates Alexander pose.)*

Grover Cleveland Alexander, who pitched in the Major Leagues for 20 years,

*(LeFLEUR claps and DAVID creates Sayers pose)*

Gayle Sayers, who scored 6 touchdowns in one game, and wrote the book *I am Third*, which the movie *Brian's Song* was based.

*(LeFLEUR claps and DAVID creates Gibson pose)*

Bob Gibson, who was elected to the Baseball Hall of Fame in 1981 and also played basketball for Creighton University and the Harlem Globetrotters.

*(LeFLEUR claps and DAVID creates Osborne pose)*

And Tom Osborne, who won 255 college football games for the University of Nebraska and is now an elected congressman representing Western Nebraska.

*(LeFLEUR claps and DAVID exits)*

LeFLEUR

I return to my artist retreat to await word on which two of my brilliant visions will be

commissioned.

ARMSTRONG

Yes, thank you, Mr. LeFleur for sharing your artistic expressions with us today.

*(LeFLEUR nods and exits)*

So take a few seconds to vote for which two of these sports heroes should have their statues in the front of the Nebraska Sports Heroes Hall of Fame.

*(Voting music starts as students vote as  
ARMSTRONG exits and gets ready for writers.)*