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Omaha Theater Company for Young People at the Rose
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The Grocer's Goblin and The Little Mermaid

Hans Christian Anderson Fairy Tales

collaboratively created by Stephanie Jacobson and Brian Guehring
script written by Brian Guehring, visually created by Stephanie Jacobson
a puppetry play for a minimum of 4f/2m/2 either

Draft #3.7 tech week Draft

The goblin has lived in the grocer's store for many years (because the grocer leaves out a bowl of porridge with a pat of butter for him). Each night the goblin steals the Grocer's wife's gift of gab and gives it to the various objects in the store so they can converse. Everything changes when a student moves into the room above the store. As the goblin spies on the student through the keyhole, the student's book of stories springs to life filling the goblin with light, splendor, and amazement. The goblin sits outside the student's door all night to hear the entire story of *The Little Mermaid*. The Little Mermaid falls in love with the world of humans and eventually gives up her voice to grow legs and join the prince whom she grows to love. The Little Mermaid however is unable to win the Prince's hand in marriage and turns into an ariel spirit. Before the student can begin another story, a raging fire threatens the grocer and the goblin has to choose one thing to save: his porridge or the student's book of stories.

The Grocer's Goblin and The Little Mermaid is a puppetry production for young audiences that will use a combination of Bunraku puppetry, shadow puppetry and found object puppets with original music and a projection designer. *The Grocer's Goblin and The Little Mermaid* is scheduled to be produced by the Omaha Theater Company for school groups and public audiences in February 2014 and will run 60 minutes. This script involved designers at a generative point in the development process with the goal to create a coherent, collaboratively activated theatrical event. The original production company is:

CAST :

Sarah Carlson Brown, Kelsey Celek, Roderick Cotton, Jackie Kappes,
Joe Lullo, Katie Otten, Walter Shatley, Kathryn Stahl

PRODUCTION TEAM

Director Stephanie Jacobson
Projection Designer: Brittany Merenda Set Designer: Brad Carlson
Costume Designer: Sherri Geerdes Composer: Joe Lullo
Puppetry Consultant: Eric Novak Light Designer: Kyle Toth
Stage Manager: Angel Emerson Production Manager: Jennifer Collins Hard
Literary Manager: Michael Miller Development Dramaturg: Matt Guttschick

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The Grocer's Goblin and The Little Mermaid

Hans Christian Anderson Fairy Tales

script written by Brian Guehring, visually created by Stephanie Jacobson
a puppetry play for a minimum of 8 performers

Character List

The Grocer's Goblin

+GOBLIN	a practical goblin who is entranced by the power of story
GROCER	the kind, simple owner of the store
WIFE	the loud wife of the Grocer, who has the gift of gab
STUDENT	a thoughtful student who lives above the grocer
BOOKSELLER	a poor village bookseller
*TRASH BIN	a know-it-all
*CASH BOX	a pompous snob
*BUTTER CHURN	a old fashioned, mature, calming, loyal friend

The Little Mermaid

^LITTLE MERMAID	a 15 year old mermaid who yearns to live with humans
^OLDER SISTER	her oldest sister, a traditional young mermaid
^MIDDLE SISTER	her middle sister, also a traditional young mermaid
^GRANDMOTHER	her proud, understanding grandmother
^SEA SORCERESS	a powerful sorceress who knows about the humans
PRINCE	a kind gentle prince
SERVANTS	human servants to the prince
SAILORS	sailors on the Prince's boat
AIR SPIRITS	kind daughters of the air

+The Goblin maybe a bunraku puppet or an actor in a costume

* The Objects in the Grocer's Store are envisioned to be found object puppets

^ The Mermaids are envisioned as Bunraku puppets or actors with a bunraku tails

Settings

A Danish Grocery Store, The Grocer's Bedroom, The Student's Bedroom
Under the Sea, the Prince's Boat, The Prince's Castle

Time

Early 1800's

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scene 1: The Grocer's Store

(The scene opens inside a simple neighborhood grocery store. The store has a TRASH BIN , a BUTTER CHURN, and a CASH BOX. Above the store on the second floor are two bedrooms and a hallway. The WIFE finishes grinding coffee beans for a BOOKSELLER. The GROCER is putting the purchases into a bag)

WIFE

You are going to love this coffee. And you have to buy these butter cookies with them. It's the perfect combination. We make the cookies and the butter from scratch right here in the store.

(WIFE wraps up some cookies and gives them to the BOOKSELLER)

I'll just go ahead and add it to your total. Oh, and if you like those butter cookies, you have to try these almond biscuits, too. Trust me, you will LOVE them. Now can we get you anything else?

BOOKSELLER

That's all today.

(BOOKSELLER hands over money to GROCER who takes money and gives change.)

WIFE

Thank you for dropping in today. How is your mother doing? *(BOOKSELLER starts to answer but is cut off)* I saw her the other day and told her she needs to take it easy. Nothing like rest, relaxation and good food to make you feel better. She'll soon be able to help you in your book store in no time. In fact, take these chocolate candies she loves so much.

(WIFE gets a bag of candies. The BOOKSELLER then notices movement in the corner of the store as a stack of cans gets knocked over)

BOOKSELLER

Do you have a mouse?

WIFE

No, no! Of course not. No mice in this store. My husband just kicked the stack of cans with his foot. He is just so eager to sweep up.

(GROCER goes to stack the cans. WIFE hands BOOKSELLER bag of candies)

BOOKSELLER

I'm sorry, I have no more money. I would trade you this book of stories for the candies.

(BOOKSELLER hands book to GROCER)

WIFE

What would we do with a book?

BOOKSELLER

Read the stories. Explore new worlds. Spark your imagination.

(The GROCER is fascinated)

WIFE

Who needs stories? What a waste of time.

(WIFE takes away the book from the GROCER)

GROCER

We could use the pages to wrap up the cheese.

WIFE (giving back the book)

I don't think so. You should keep the book, so you can sell it and make money. We couldn't take it from you. It was wonderful catching up with you.

(WIFE takes back candies)

BOOKSELLER

You certainly have the gift of gab.

WIFE

I am a good talker. I get it from my mother's side of the family. You get my mother and grandmother and aunts and sisters together, and your ears will never get a break. We can talk for hours and hours and hours. The men in my family are strangely quiet, though.

(While his WIFE is talking on and on, the GROCER gives the BOOKSELLER the candies and takes the book.)

Thank you for dropping by. Enjoy your groceries! We'll see you soon!

(The WIFE walks the BOOKSELLER out of the store and watches the BOOKSELLER exit. SHE turns the "Open" sign to "Closed" and shuts the door. GROCER is sweeping up)

WIFE

I told you to get rid of that mouse! The last thing our store needs is the village thinking that we are housing thousands of mice. Business is tough enough without adding more problems to deal with.

(WIFE sits down and starts eating some of the food as the GROCER sweeps)

GROCER

It's not a mouse, dear.

WIFE

A rat would be worse! Or is it a badger? A weasel? Think of the damage and destruction something like that could do to our food.

(WIFE opens a new box of cookies to eat)

GROCER

It's not an animal, dear.

WIFE

Then what is it? What keeps knocking things over in the middle of the night and rearranging the cans and displays?

GROCER

I don't know exactly, dear.

WIFE

I loose sleep each night worrying about it. Do you think it can climb the stairs? Are we safe at night in our own bed when we are asleep?

GROCER

I assure you, it won't harm us, dear.

WIFE

And it also won't ever go away if you keep leaving out a bowl of porridge each night.

GROCER

It's for good luck. My father did it each night and my grandfather before that.

WIFE

I don't know why your father insisted you keep up that silly tradition, but it is time to stop. We can't afford to lose any more food without selling it. We will surely go out of business. *(WIFE takes some candy off the shelf to eat herself)* I am going up to lie down. I am exhausted!

GROCER

Yes, dear. I'll be upstairs in a moment.

(the GROCER'S WIFE exits the back door of the store and climbs up to lie down in their bedroom. The GROCER puts away the broom.)

GROCER

Don't worry about my wife. She just likes to talk.

(GROCER opens up cashbox and counts the money and smiles.)

GROCER

We had a better day today. I'll put a pat of butter on your porridge tonight.

(He then gets out a bowl of porridge. He then goes to the butter churn and takes out a spoonful and puts a pat of butter on porridge)

GROCER

Enjoy. Thank you for keeping a watch on our store.

(the GROCER puts down the bowl of porridge on the floor, dumps the dust into the trash bin, turns out the light and climbs the stairs. After a moment, a GOBLIN¹ sneaks out of a hiding place and cautiously walks up to the bowl of porridge)

GOBLIN

Yum! Yum! Yum! Butter today!

(the TRASH BIN starts to cough up dust)

GOBLIN

Oh, sorry, Mr. Trash Bin. Too much dust. Too much dust.

(the BUTTER CHURN starts moving on its own)

GOBLIN

Sorry, Ms. Butter Churn. I don't understand you. Are you talking about the book?

(GOBLIN picks up book and flips through it. Nothing happens. The CASH BOX starts making a horrible noise)

GOBLIN

Sorry, Sorry, Ms. Cash Box. I was distracted. I'll go get it.

¹ The Goblin may be a Bunraku puppet or a hand puppet or possibly an actor in a costume.

(GOBLIN climbs up the stairs to the bedroom where the GROCER and his WIFE are sleeping. WIFE starts snoring loudly with a big open mouth. The GOBLIN sneaks up to the WIFE and reaches down into her throat. WIFE continues to sleep but makes no more noise. The GOBLIN scrambles down to the grocery store and puts something in the TRASH BIN² and it can immediately talk)

TRASH BIN *(still coughing)*

That dust was horrible. Dust and dirt should be thrown outside. My job is consuming paper and food scraps.

(GOBLIN puts something on the CASHBOX so it can talk)

CASHBOX

We would have more coins, if the Grocer wouldn't make trades.

(GOBLIN puts something on the BUTTER CHURN so it can talk)

BUTTER CHURN

Little Goblin. I am so glad you enjoyed my butter.

GOBLIN

Very tasty.

BUTTER CHURN

Use complete sentences.

GOBLIN

Your butter is very tasty. I am getting better at human talk. Yes?

BUTTER CHURN

Yes, you are.

GOBLIN

Thank you for teaching me.

BUTTER CHURN

You are welcome, little goblin. Thank you for giving us the gift of gab.

² The Objects in the Grocery Store coming to life are initially envisioned to be found object hand puppets

TRASH BIN

It does make the long evenings a little more interesting.

(CASH BOX humphs)

CASHBOX

Goblin, do you feel guilty for *stealing* our mistress's gift of gab?

GOBLIN

I just borrow it.

CASHBOX

Is it yours to take?

(GOBLIN sadly goes to porridge and sits dejectedly)

BUTTER CHURN

Now, Ms. Cashbox. Stop picking on our kind little goblin friend!

CASH BOX

It is wrong to take things that do not belong to you.

TRASH BIN

The grocer's wife does not need her gift of gab when she is sleeping.

BUTTER CHURN

And we could not talk without it.

CASHBOX

I didn't say I don't enjoy having the gift of gab.

BUTTER CHURN

Thank you kind Goblin for giving us the ability to speak.

TRASH BIN

Cash Box, would you prefer the goblin not give you the gift of gab?

CASH BOX

If anything should be allowed to use the mistresses delightful gift of gab, it should be I. I have been in her family for years.

TRASH BIN

We know. You have told us many times.

CASH BOX

I may be new to this store. But my mistress and I will soon have this store making more money.

BUTTER CHURN

Go ahead and eat your porridge, Goblin. It is well earned.
(*GOBLIN starts eating*)

GOBLIN

Yum. Yum. Yum.

CASH BOX

You should enjoy it while you can. As you heard, my mistress may soon put a stop to your daily porridge.

BUTTER CHURN

Why do you say such things, Cash Box?

GOBLIN

This will be my last one?

BUTTER CHURN

Oh, ignore the cash box, goblin. The Grocer will continue to leave you food.

GOBLIN

Good, good. Grocer leaves me food. So I stay.

CASH BOX

You should leave on your own and stop taking advantage of the poor Grocer. You are not needed here.

GOBLIN

Not needed?

CASH BOX

Not anymore.

GOBLIN

I watch the store. I keep it safe.

CASH BOX

Now that I am here, I protect the most important thing in this store: the money. You do more harm than good, goblin.

GOBLIN

What you mean?

CASH BOX

You eat the groceries, knock over cans, and scare the customers.

GOBLIN

I sleep during the day. I don't scare customers.

BUTTER CHURN

It is not the goblin's fault the store stayed open late today.

CASH BOX

The store must stay open to make money. Goblin, you should really find a new home.

GOBLIN

But I know no other home. I am here my whole life.

CASH BOX

Time for a change, then.

GOBLIN

Where would I go?

BUTTER CHURN

Don't listen to her, Goblin. You should stay here.

TRASH BIN

If you left, we would not be able to talk.

BUTTER CHURN

You are very important. You protect the grocer and his wife and all of us.

(The STUDENT walks up to the store. The GOBLIN sees the STUDENT, quickly steals back the gift of gab from the objects. GOBLIN climbs up the stairs to the bedroom and gives back gift of gab to WIFE. The STUDENT knocks quietly. The GROCER doesn't wake. The STUDENT knocks again. The GOBLIN knocks over a coat rack and wakes up the GROCER and the WIFE. The WIFE screams.)

GROCER

Dear it was just the wind. That's all. Go back to sleep.

(The STUDENT knocks one last time and the GROCER hears.)

GROCER

Is someone knocking on our door?

WIFE *(hoarsely)*

Maybe it is a....*(WIFE coughs and hacks and shakes her throat)* Sorry, my voice seems a little tired. We must hurry. We may have a customer!

(GROCER and WIFE run downstairs. STUDENT begins to walk away. WIFE opens door)

WIFE

Can we help you?

STUDENT

Did I wake you? I apologize. I thought I heard voices and everyone else in town is asleep.

(WIFE walks out and brings in the student)

WIFE

Don't be silly. Come right on in. You look hungry. Let me get you some bread and butter.

(GROCER tears out paper and wraps up the bread and butter)

WIFE

You have to have some cheese, too. Are you new to the area? I don't recognize you. I pride myself on knowing everyone in our village.

(WIFE starts packaging cheese)

STUDENT

I have just arrived. I'm on my way to the university, and was hoping to get some food.

WIFE

That is a long way to travel so late. You should find a room here in the village to spend the night.

STUDENT

Do you know of such a room?

WIFE

We happen to have such a room you can rent for one night.

STUDENT

That would be wonderful. How fortunate I am that you were awake so late tonight.
(The GROCER hands the STUDENT his cheese and groceries. STUDENT takes out money)

STUDENT

Here is the money for the food and the room for tonight.
(WIFE takes all the money)

WIFE

Let me show you to your room. I am sure you will find the bed very soft and comfortable. The window faces the south.....
(STUDENT unwraps cheese and looks at paper. He stops suddenly and interrupts the WIFE)

STUDENT

Excuse me, ma'am. Sir, where did you get this paper you wrapped the cheese in?

GROCER

The bookseller gave it to me.
(the WIFE gives the GROCER an evil look)

STUDENT

Is there more to the book?

GROCER

Sure. You can have it if you want.
(GROCER hands book to STUDENT)

WIFE

We won't charge you much for it.

STUDENT

I am afraid I have no more money. *(WIFE takes book back)* Wait. If you please, let me have the book instead of the cheese. There's no harm in my having plain bread and butter for supper. But it would be terrible to tear a book to pieces. You are obviously a kind and practical man, but....

GROCER

But I know no more about literature than the trash bin does.

(GROCER and STUDENT laugh. WIFE gives the STUDENT the book and takes back the cheese)

WIFE

Let me show you to your room, now.

(The WIFE and the STUDENT go up the stairs. The GROCER puts away the money and cheese and follows them. The WIFE and GROCER go back to sleep as the STUDENT begins to unpack. WIFE starts snoring loudly with a big open mouth. The GOBLIN sneaks up to the WIFE and again reaches down into her throat. WIFE continues to sleep but makes no more noise. The GOBLIN scrambles down to the grocery store and gives the CASH BOX the gift of gab.)

CASHBOX

The student should have paid for the cheese and the book.

(GOBLIN gives TRASH BIN the gift of gab)

TRASH BIN

The grocer was very rude. Insulting me like that.

(GOBLIN gives the BUTTER CHURN the gift of gab)

BUTTER CHURN

The grocer was just joking and meant no harm.

CASH BOX

Well it is true. Neither the grocer nor you know anything about literature.

TRASH BIN

It is not true! I know all about stories. It's the stuff they put in the newspaper when they don't know what else to print. I dare say I've got more stories and literature in me than that student does.

CASH BOX

I don't trust the student. What if the student tries to rob the store?

TRASH BIN

I have consumed many stories of strangers entering houses and stealing from the owners.

BUTTER CHURN

And you can't protect the entire store, can you Ms. Cash Box?

CASH BOX

Goblin, this is your chance to prove yourself useful. Go spy on the student.

(GOBLIN hesitates)

Your job is to make sure the grocer and the store are still safe.

GOBLIN

I go spy. I protect the store!

(The GOBLIN sneaks up to STUDENT's room and peeps through the keyhole. The STUDENT has finished putting things away and has lit a candle. The STUDENT then takes out the tattered book and puts it on the desk.

When the STUDENT opens the book and reads)

STUDENT

The Little Mermaid.

(The STUDENT sits back to read the story as the GOBLIN eagerly listens)

STUDENT

Far out to sea, the water's as blue as the petals of the loveliest cornflower, and as clear as the purest glass, but it's very deep, deeper than any anchor will go. Down there live the mermen.

Scene 2: Underwater World

(The Grocery store and all of its characters fade into the darkness as the projection screens and stage come to life with the underwater world of the Little Mermaid.

Music starts as shadow images of underwater animals, seaweed and coral emerge. Shadow puppets of mermaids start swimming through the water.

The LITTLE MERMAID, OLDER SISTER, and MIDDLE SISTER are playing a game of hide and seek in the middle of the ocean.)

PLAYWRIGHT'S NOTES:

When Stephanie Jacobson approached me in the spring of 2011 (after surviving working with me as the director of my adaptation of *The Misfits*) about this project, I immediately jumped on board. Just like Stephanie, I love fairy tales. These are classic stories that have stood the test of time because they still have things to tell us. As educators of young people, I am surprised how many of these classic stories children do NOT know (or ONLY know as Disney movies). Theater for Young Audiences as a field is so focused on adaptations of recent children's literature, that classic fairy tales are often ignored. I am excited to bring a fairy tale play to our stage.

Stephanie is intrigued with *The Little Mermaid*. The story explores the important themes of yearning, sacrifice, exploring new worlds, first love, taking risks, consequences of actions, and learning to put others' happiness over one's own happiness. Of course, this is also a big title, but has many challenges. How do you dramatize the underwater scenes with the heavy, gravity ruled bodies of actors? How do you dramatize the Little Mermaid's inner voice when she is a human? How can you make the audience look at this story again when they have watched the wonderful Disney movie hundreds of times?

Stephanie's vision was to use Bunraku, shadow puppets, video projections and found object puppets to attack these challenges and bring the story to life. As a playwright, I was excited about this collaboration with a gifted puppeteer and the challenge of incorporating the puppetry into the script. I am always excited about exploring new ways to make a unique theatrical experience for our audience.

When looking at other Hans Christian Anderson fairy tales to add to this production, I fell in love with the less well known story *The Goblin at the Grocer's*. In addition to being a wonderfully clever and delightful story, I loved the theme it explored is the importance of art and stories in feeding the soul. This is another story that puppetry can really augment. I liked the balance of re-imagining a well known story and introducing a new fairy tale. The story also sparked an interesting way to frame *The Little Mermaid*.

When new Artistic Director Matt Guttschick joined the Omaha Theater Company, the development process for this production came into focus. After a full year and a half of developing the concept and the first draft with Stephanie, we then involved the creative teaching artist staff here at the Omaha Theater Company to further explore these stories through improvisation, statue work, hot seating and puppet exploration. We then worked with the composer, the puppetry consultant, the projection designer, the light designer, and the puppet designer and played in the space as we explored HOW to tell the story. The final six months of the development process was focused on creating a coherent, collaboratively activated theatrical event.

So I hope you enjoy this draft of *The Grocer's Goblin and The Little Mermaid*. We are having a fun (and challenging time) exploring these fairy tales.

The Grocer's Goblin and The Little Mermaid was had a script development week in May 2013 with the teaching artists of The Rose theater to develop the plot and characters. The generous artists for the development week were:

Dange Sanders, Kevin Ehrhart, Jennifer Ettinger,
Andy Saladino, Nicole Korpela, Adam Sherrod, and Shannon Rzucidlio

The Grocer's Goblin and The Little Mermaid subsequently had a design, puppetry and projection development week in July 2013 with the following actors:

Melissa Rice, Michael Miller, Brad Hildebrandt, Jake Thomson,
Jackie Kappes, Kelsey Celek, Abby Barber

The Grocer's Goblin and The Little Mermaid was produced in February 2014 as a main stage production of the Omaha Theater Company for Young People at The Rose. The original production team and cast were as follows:

Sarah Carlson Brown
Joe Lullo
Roderick Cotton
Kelsey Celek
Kathryn Stahl
Walter Shatley
Jackie Kappes
Katie Otten
Nicole Korpela

LITTLE MERMAID/CASH BOX
PRINCE/GROKER
GOBLIN/SAILOR
GROKER's WIFE/OLDER SISTER/AIR SPIRIT
BUTTER CHURN/GRANDMOTHER
TRASH BIN/BOOKSELLER/SEA SORCERESS
GOBLIN PUPPETEER/MIDDLE SISTER/AIR SPIRIT
STUDENT/AIR SPIRIT
understudy

Director Stephanie Jacobson
Set Designer: Brad Carlson
Composer: Joe Lullo
Light Designer: Kyle Toth
Stage Manager: Angel Emerson
Technical Director: Grant
Literary Manager: Michael Miller

Puppetry Consultant: Eric Novak
Costume Designer: Sherri Geerdes
Projection Designer: Brittany Powell
Prop Designer: Liz Spray
Production Manager: Jennifer Collins Hard
Scenic Painter:
Development Dramaturg: Matt Guttschick

Brian Guehring is the Playwright in Residence of the Omaha Theater Company, one of the nation's largest professional theaters for young people. Brian has adapted the world premiere scripts of the Newberry Award winning novel **Julie of the Wolves** (directed by Everett Quinton), **Miss Bindergarten**, **If You Give a Cat a Cupcake**, **Holidays Around the World** and **Sacagawea: Discovering History**. Brian's scripts have won several national and regional awards. His adaptations of **Where the Red Fern Grows** and **Old Yeller** and his original Theater in Education play **The Super Adventures of Pyramid Man and Dr. Nutrition** won AATE (American Alliance for Theater and Education) Unpublished Play Project Awards. His script **The Bully Show** was selected for the 2002 New Visions/NewVoices new play development workshop at the Kennedy Center. His adaptation of the **The Misfits** was honored as one of the best theater productions of 2010 in Omaha by the Omaha World Herald and was one of two plays honored by AATE's Playwrights in Our Schools program in 2011. Brian received a playwriting fellowship from the Nebraska Arts Council in 2002. His new adaptation of the Newberry Award winning novel **The Giver** was honored as one of the best theater productions of 2008 in Omaha by the Omaha World Herald. His original script **King Chemo** won the Southwest Theater Association's 1997 Best New Play for Children, and his original play **Creating Haley's World** was selected in 2003 for development in the inaugural Playwrights in Our Schools program. His adaptation of two Hans Christian Anderson fairy tales **The Grocer's Goblin and The Little Mermaid** was featured at a 2014 regional TYA/USA conference in Omaha. His plays have been produced by Imagination Stage in Washington, D.C., Lexington Children's Theater, Walnut Street Theater in Philadelphia, Barter Theater of Virginia, South Carolina Children's Theater, A. D. Players in Houston, Apple Tree Theater for Young Audiences in Chicago, Town Hall Theater in Dayton, and other schools and theaters. **King Chemo** and **The Bully Show** are published by Dramatic Publishing Company and his short play **Mindless Drooling Teenage Zombie Bullies** is included in the Dramatic Publishing anthology **The Bully Plays**.

Brian is also the Education Director of the Omaha Theater Company which does drama education outreach for every single child in over 70 local schools each year. His teen theater troupe **Pride Players** (which uses improvisation to explore issues facing gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, and straight allied teens) won a Human and Civil Rights Award from the National Education Association in 2006. In 2010, Brian was elected to the Board of Theater For Young Audiences/USA. He also serves as co-president of the leadership council for the Pride Youth Theater Alliance. Brian earned his BA in theater from Duke University before earning his MFA in Children's Theater and Creative Drama from the University of Texas at Austin.