

**GREAT  
LAKES  
THEATER**

# MAMMA MIA!

## TEACHER PREPARATION GUIDE



Music and lyrics by BENNY ANDERSSON and BJÖRN ULVAEUS / Some songs with STIG ANDERSON

Book by CATHERINE JOHNSON / Originally conceived by JUDY CRAMER  
Based on the songs of ABBA

Directed by VICTORIA BUSSERT

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Cleveland's Classic Company  
at Playhouse Square

1501 EUCLID AVENUE, SUITE 300  
CLEVELAND, OH 44115-2108  
P 216 241 5490 / 216 241 6315  
GREATLAKES THEATER.ORG

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PRODUCING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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Fall 2017

Dear Educator,

Thank you for your student matinee ticket order to Great Lakes Theater's production *Mamma Mia!* performed in repertory with Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* in the beautiful Hanna Theatre at Playhouse Square from September 28th through November 11th.

On a tiny Greek island, Sophie is making final preparations for her wedding day in paradise. Little does her mother Donna know that Sophie's last minute preparations include sleuthing out who her father may be among three possible candidates that she's secretly invited. The story-telling magic of ABBA's classic, pop-hit songs propels this enchanting tale of love, laughter, family and friendship...which concludes with a trip down the aisle that you'll never forget!

This guide is designed – through essays, discussion questions and classroom activities – to give students both an introduction to, and a point of entry for, a personal exploration of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. We offer special thanks to arts educator Jodi Kirk for her outstanding contribution to this guide.

Great Lakes Theater is proud to provide you with the finest in classic theater and the necessary educational resources to support your work in the classroom. We are thrilled that you will be coming to see us and we welcome your input on how best to support your classroom preparation for our work. Please let us know what you think!

Sincerely,

Kelly Schaffer Florian  
Director of Educational Services  
[kflorian@greatlaketheater.org](mailto:kflorian@greatlaketheater.org)

David Hansen  
Education Outreach Associate  
[dhansen@greatlaketheater.org](mailto:dhansen@greatlaketheater.org)

The mission of Great Lakes Theater, through its mainstage productions and its educational programming, is to bring the pleasure, power and relevance of classic theater to the widest possible audience.

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## A NOTE TO STUDENTS: WHAT TO EXPECT AT THE THEATER

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**You** may or may not have attended a live theater performance before. To increase your enjoyment, it might be helpful to look at the unique qualities of this art form — because it is so different from movies or video.

The live theatrical performance not only involves the actors on the stage; it is meant to involve you, the audience, in ways that film and television cannot. In truth, although you are sitting in an auditorium and the actors are on stage, there is very little separating the audience from the performers. How you react to the play *deeply affects* the actors. Something as seemingly trivial as whispering or unwrapping a candy bar can distract them and disrupt the mood and tone of their performance. Due to the important relationship between actors and audience members, there are certain, perhaps obvious, provisions of live theater we wish to call to your attention.

In the Hanna Theatre, it is important to know that the taking of pictures, either with or without a flash, is strictly prohibited. Also, it is essential that all electronic equipment, including cell phones, music players (even with headphones), alarm watches, etc., be completely powered off once you have entered the theatre. Even the glow from a silent cell phone (used

for text messaging, or posting social network updates, for example) can be very distracting to fellow audience members, even if you try to mask it under your hand or an article of clothing. Our goal is to provide every person in the audience with the best possible theatrical experience, so we appreciate your respectful cooperation during the performance.

Other differences live theater provides: in film or video, the camera and editing define what we will see. In the theater, however, each of us works as a camera and editor, choosing his or her personal points of focus. And in the Hanna Theatre, you should know that often we do not use microphones. As audience members you'll need to actively listen and "tune in" to the sound of the unamplified human voice.

As for our lighting and scenery, it might surprise you to know that these are not necessarily meant to be realistic. In this production, for example, there are design elements that are abstract or metaphorical.

The theater's ability to focus on human experience — distilled through the dialogue and behavior of people on stage and enhanced by the scenery, costumes, lighting, music and dance — is a centuries-old tradition. Being part of the communal magic when performer and audience connect — whether at a baseball game, music concert or theater performance — cannot be duplicated.

The performance you will see at Great Lakes Theater will happen only once. It is unique and personal. Though this play will be performed more than a dozen times, the performance you see belongs only to you.

We hope you enjoy it, and we'd like you to share your response with us.

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# GLT: OUR HISTORY, OUR FUTURE

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Tom Hanks and fellow company member Bert Goldstein.



The beautifully renovated Hanna Theatre.

Since 1962, Great Lakes Theater (GLT) has brought the world's greatest plays to life for all of Cleveland. In 1961, the Lakewood Board of Education president persuaded a Shakespeare troupe, led by Arthur Lithgow, to make Lakewood Civic Auditorium its home. The theater that opened its doors on July 11, 1962 as Great Lakes Shakespeare Festival presented six Shakespeare plays in rotating repertory. In exchange for free rent, the company provided student matinee productions. The repertory was expanded in 1965 to include non-Shakespearean classics as a result of an exchange of productions with Princeton's McCarter Theater. The Company outgrew its original home at Lakewood Civic Auditorium and, in 1982, made the move to the Ohio Theatre in Playhouse Square, launching the revitalization of downtown Cleveland's Theatre District.

In 2001 the Company was searching for a new Producing Artistic Director, and the Board sought a candidate with well-established business skills as well as artistic leadership. Charles Fee was selected for his commitment to Shakespeare and his reputation for building Idaho Shakespeare Festival into a highly successful regional theater. GLT recommitted itself to its founding core values: Shakespeare, rotating repertory and an acting company of the highest caliber. During Fee's tenure, the company has been recognized for its artistic excellence, winning the *Northern Ohio Live Magazine Award* for excellence in Theater in 2005 after three years of being a finalist, as well as *The Free Times Reader's Choice Award* for Best Performing Arts Group in 2006, and for eliminating the inherited accumulated net deficit of over one million dollars.

The Company has also been a revolutionary producing model unlike any other in America to create cost efficiency and enhance our artistic product. We now exchange our repertory productions with Idaho Shakespeare Festival (ISF) in Boise, Idaho and Lake Tahoe Shakespeare Festival (LTSF) in Nevada. This deep collaboration between independent producing organizations is a first in American theater. With this visionary model now fully in place, GLT, ISF, and LTSF are able to deepen the artistic quality of the work on our stages, share our production costs, maximize our resources, and provide nearly year-round employment to our resident company of artists.

Now, GLT has entered into a new phase, making the historic Hanna Theatre in Playhouse Square its home. The renovation of the Hanna Theatre, as well as the creation of GLT's first endowment fund, is part of our *Re-Imagine A Classic* Campaign to ensure GLT's future. Our new home in the Hanna features a hydraulically operated thrust stage, a first for this region, and innovative and intimate seating where no seat is farther than eleven rows from the stage. We believe that this extraordinary theater experience will revolutionize the way Northern Ohio experiences classic theater.

Great Lakes Theater is one of only a handful of American theaters that have stayed the course as a classic theater. With a plucky history of bucking economic trends to strive for and nurture the highest artistic quality, it remains a distinctive and significant cultural resource in an extraordinary American city.

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# CHOREOGRAPHER'S NOTE

BY JACKLYN MILLER

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Thirty-six years after their breakup, the Swedish rock band ABBA remains one of the most popular bands in the history of pop music. Recognized for their subversive music, their simple, direct, and sometimes solemn lyrics were masked in a bright, cheery fashion with a beat that is irresistible. The band catapulted to success in 1974 but wasn't accepted by club DJ's until the mid-80s at a time when AIDS was horribly destroying a community. Several of ABBA's songs became anthems for forlorn people trying to keep their humor amidst unbearable grief.

Ten years after the group disbanded, and following their resurgence in the club scene, ABBA's *Gold: Greatest Hits* was released in 1992 and skyrocketed to the second largest-selling album in the UK, surpassed only by The Beatles, marking the revitalization of ABBA in the collective conscience. Seven years later, *Mamma Mia!* exploded.

Referred to as a 'jukebox musical'- a show that features popular songs from a particular or variety of artists - *Mamma Mia!* left an undeniable impact on modern musical theater history. Between the 1970s and its debut in 1999, there were only 17 shows that fell into the category of jukebox musical. Post its meteoric splash, there have been over 70 jukebox musicals created - *Jersey Boys*, *We Will Rock You*, *Rock of Ages*, *Beautiful*, and *Escape to Margaritaville* to name a few. *Mamma Mia!* trail-blazed an entire genre into popularity and elevated a style that currently dominates Broadway.

Spanning over 440 cities and countries - London, New York, Australia, Germany, Russia, China, etc.- *Mamma Mia!* has brought over 60 million people into theatres across the globe to indulge in an evening of joy and nostalgia.

From a movement perspective, the most engaging thing to watch is ones' authentic expression of self. Musicals don't typically give you that; often you're met with a glorious synchronicity of stylized dancers. Not to say that those artists aren't genuine within the confines of what they're doing; they are. I'm merely saying that this art form can sometimes lack a sense of spontaneity and individual representation that one only finds at weddings, parties and clubs- prime outlets for anyone to jump up and live in their own self-expression.

With ABBA's infectious music, *Mamma Mia!* offers the opportunity to embrace the freedom of being on an open dance floor, all the while celebrating the enormous influence ABBA has had on pop culture and honoring the spirit of abandonment they imbued in their fans all over the world.

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# MUSICAL NUMBERS

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## ACT I

Overture - Orchestra  
I Have A Dream Prologue - Sophie  
Honey Honey - Sophie, Ali, & Lisa  
Money, Money, Money - Donna, Tanya, Rosie,  
Pepper & Company  
Thank You For The Music - Sophie, Sam, Harry, &  
Bill  
Mamma Mia - Donna & Company  
Chiquitita - Donna, Tanya & Rosie  
Dancing Queen - Donna, Tanya & Rosie  
Lay All Your Love On Me - Sky, Sophie, & Male  
Ensemble  
Super Trouper - Donna, Tanya, Rosie & Female  
Ensemble  
Gimme, Gimme, Gimme - Female Ensemble  
The Name Of The Game - Sophie & Bill  
Voulez Vous - Company

## ACT II

Entr'acte - Orchestra  
Under Attack - Sophie & Company  
One of Us - Donna  
SOS - Donna & Sam  
Does Your Mother Know - Tanya, Pepper &  
Company  
Knowing Me, Knowing You - Sam  
Our Last Summer - Harry & Donna  
Slipping Through My Fingers - Donna & Sophie  
The Winner Takes It All - Donna  
Take A Chance On Me - Rosie & Bill  
I Do, I Do, I Do - Sam, Donna & Company  
I Have A Dream - Sophie  
Encore  
Mamma Mia - Company  
Dancing Queen - Dancing Queen  
Waterloo - Company

## Dramatis Personae

Sophie Sheridan, born and raised on the island... Kailey Boyle\*  
Ali, Sophie's friend... Shayla Breille G.\*  
Lisa, Sophie's friend... Amy Keum\*  
Donna Sheridan, Sophie's mother... Jillian Kates\*  
Tanya, former Dynamo... Jodi Dominick\*  
Rosie, former Dynamo... Laura Welsh Berg\*  
Sky, Sophie's fiancé..... Jake Slater  
Pepper, barman at Taverna... Warren Egypt Franklin\*  
Eddie, helps Sky with Water-Sports... Mack Shirilla\*  
Harry Bright, may be Sophie's father.... Eric Damon Smith\*  
Bill Austin, may be Sophie's father... Alex Syiek\*

Sam Carmichael, may be Sophie's father... Nick Steen\*

Father Alexandrios, the local priest... Andrew May\*

Chorus, consists of the Islanders, who work at Donna's, wedding guests... Andrew May\*, Matt Koenig\*, Daniel Millhouse\*

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# AN ABBA BIOGRAPHY

## FROM THE ROCK & ROLL HALL OF FAME

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Photo by Michael Svensson.

ABBA rose out of Sweden in the Seventies to become one of the most successful and beloved pop groups in music history. Their success gave a more international flavor to popular music, broadening it beyond the English-speaking countries of origin. ABBA truly was an international phenomenon, topping charts and breaking records in England, France, Italy, Germany, Holland and Scandinavia. For a few years, ABBA ranked second only to automaker Volvo as Sweden's biggest money-making export.

According to the Recording Industry Association of America, ABBA has sold more than 10 million records in the U.S. Estimates of worldwide sales range as high as 350 million. In the U.K. alone, these Swedish superstars charted 19 Top 10 singles (including nine that went to Number One) from 1974 to 1982. America proved somewhat more impervious to ABBA mania, as the group cracked the U.S. Top 10 only four times and hit Number One exactly once (with "Dancing Queen," in 1977). However, America got belatedly on board when the "jukebox musical" *Mamma Mia!*, based on the songs of ABBA, became a Broadway sensation. In December 2009, it became the 12th longest-running Broadway show in

history as it closed in on its 3,400th performance. *Mamma Mia!*, which premiered in London in 1999, has played around the world to an estimated 40 million people. A film version and accompanying soundtrack were released in 2008. All of this further fueled ABBA mania, which remains in high throttle three decades after the group's breakup in 1982.

The seeds for ABBA's decade of infectious, effervescent pop were sewn in 1966, when Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvæus met. The two were already rock stars in Sweden, where Björn played guitar with the Hootenanny Singers and Benny was keyboardist with the Hep Stars (referred to in their homeland as "the Swedish Beatles"). They made some records as a duo, using the name Björn and Benny. In 1972, they recorded one of their songs using Björn's wife, Agnetha Fältskog, and Benny's wife-to-be, Anni-Frid Lyngstad ("Frida," for short), as backing vocalists. Cut in a studio in Stockholm in March 1972, "People Need Love" was credited to "Björn and Benny, Agnetha and Anni-Frid," as the ABBA acronym had not yet been devised. (Technically, the first "B" in ABBA is backward, according to the band's copyrighted logo.) "People Need Love" became a Swedish hit and was



issued in America on Playboy Records (an offshoot of the magazine), which peculiarly amended the credit to "Björn and Benny (with Svenska Flicka)" – meaning "Swedish girl."

ABBA's breakthrough came in 1974, when their song "Waterloo" won the Eurovision Song Contest. It topped the charts in many countries, including Britain, and even hit Number Six in the U.S. With its ringing harmonies and surging melody, "Waterloo" recalled the tuneful, high-energy songs of the girl-group era and the British Invasion at a time when infectious pop songcraft was in short supply. There was much more to come from ABBA in this vein. A year after the success of "Waterloo," they scored again with "SOS," reaching Number Six in the U.K. and Number 15 in the U.S. ABBA became a



Abba photographed in 1970. Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images

fixture on the world charts.

Their mounting success resulted in sustained chart feats of Beatles-like proportions. Over a six-year period, from late 1975 through early 1982, ABBA released 15 consecutive singles that placed in the U.K. Top Five. Eight of those were Number One hits: "Mamma Mia," "Fernando," "Dancing Queen," "Knowing Me Knowing You," "The Name of the Game," "Take a Chance on Me," "The Winner Takes It All" and "Super Trouper." The singles "Chiquitita" and "I Have a Dream" just fell short, reaching Number Two. Four others stopped at Number Three: "Money, Money, Money," "Angel Eyes/Voulez-Vous," "Gimme Gimme Gimme (A Man after Midnight)" and "One of Us." All are driven by the soaring, harmonized lead vocals of Agnetha and Anna-Frid and the songwriting and production of Björn and Benny.

From 1975 to 1980, ABBA spent 43 weeks atop Britain's album charts—a feat equaled by no one. By contrast, the group only topped the American album and singles charts once: in April 1977, when "Dancing Queen" hit Number One for a week. For this reason, as *Billboard* wrote, "the members of ABBA consider America to be their only failure." Even so, they placed 20 songs in the Hot 100 and have seen eight of their albums certified gold or platinum by the RIAA. In fact, much of ABBA's American success came belatedly,



The Eurovision moment that swept the world: when ABBA won the competition with their song "Waterloo" in Stockholm in 1974. Olle Lindeborg/AFP/Getty Images.

after their 1982 breakup. Internal tensions stemming from the divorces of the two couples recalled similar turbulence within Fleetwood Mac during the making of that band's *Rumours* (1976). Agnetha and Björn separated in late 1978, and Benny and Anni-Frid split up in early 1981. They recorded their final album, *The Visitors* (1981), before disbanding in 1982. Benny and Björn thereupon set about working on the musical *Chess* with Tim Rice, while Agnetha and Anni-Frid embarked on solo careers. ABBA has never regrouped.

An ABBA revival in the Nineties was sparked by the incredible success of *Gold: Greatest Hits* (1992), which has sold 26 million copies worldwide, including six million in America. The comprehensive box set, *Thank You for the Music*, was released in 1994. The musical *Mamma Mia!* came at the end of the decade and carried the ABBA revival into the new millennium. In 2002, Universal Music remastered and reissued ABBA's eight studio albums in expanded versions. An even more exhaustive box set, *The Complete Studio Recordings*, appeared in 2005. With ABBA's 2010 induction into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, ABBA mania will continue for years to come.

Agnetha Fältskog (vocals; born April 5, 1950); Benny Andersson (keyboards; born December 16, 1946); Björn Ulvæus (guitar; born April 25, 1945); Anni-Frid Lyngstad (vocals; born November 15, 1945)

## Learn More & Explore

Visit the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame at <https://www.rockhall.com/inductees/abba> for a 2010 Induction Interview with Anni-Frid Lyngstad.

# IDAHO SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL'S PRODUCTION OF MAMMA MIA! AT GLT'S HANNA THEATRE



Opposite page (clockwise from top left):  
Laura Welsh Berg, Jillian Kates & Jodi  
Dominick; Kailey Boyle & Jake Slater;  
Amy Keum, Shayla Breille G. & Kailey  
Boyle; Mack Shirilla & Jodi Dominick; Jodi  
Dominick & Warren Egypt Franklin; the  
*Mamma Mia!* company.

This page clockwise from top left): the  
*Mamma Mia!* company; Kailey Boyle &  
Jillian Kates; Nick Steen & Jullian Kates;  
the *Mamma Mia!* company; Eric Damon  
Smith & Jillian Kates.

Photos by DKM Photography.



# COSTUME RESEARCH & DESIGN

BY TRACY CHRISTENSEN



Inspiration for Donna.



Inspiration for Sophie.



Inspiration for Rosie.



Inspiration for Tayna.



Inspiration for Tayna.

Clockwise from top left:  
 Jillian Kates; Katie Boyle  
 & Jake Slater; Warren  
 Egypt Franklin & Jodi  
 Dominick; Laura Welsh  
 Berg, Jillian Kates & Jodi  
 Dominick.





Inspiration for Sam.

Inspiration for Sky & Sophie.



Clockwise from top left:  
Nick Steen; Eric Damon  
Smith; Alex Syiek &  
Laura Welsh Berg;  
Warren Egypt Franklin.

Inspiration for Harry.



Inspiration  
for Pepper.



Inspiration for Bill.



Agnetha Fältskog.

BOWS / SUPER TROOPERS



ROSIE



DONNA



TANYA



Anni-Frid Lyngstad.



Members of Abba: Björn Ulvaeus, Agnetha Fältskog, Anni-Frid Lyngstad and Benny Andersson.



Photo of Cher.

HEN PARTY PERFORMANCE



ROSIE



DONNA



TANYA



Laura Welsh Berg, Jillian Kates & Jodi Dominick.



Jodi Dominick, Jillian Kates & Laura Welsh Berg.



Agnetha Fältskog, Björn Ulvaeus and Anni-Frid Lyngstad .



Agnetha Fältskog.

BOWS - SUPER TROOPERS



Jillian Kates & Nick Steen.



LARRY



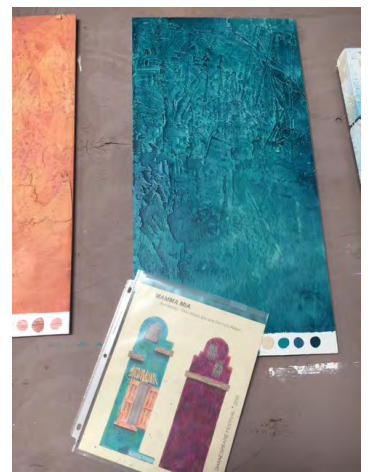
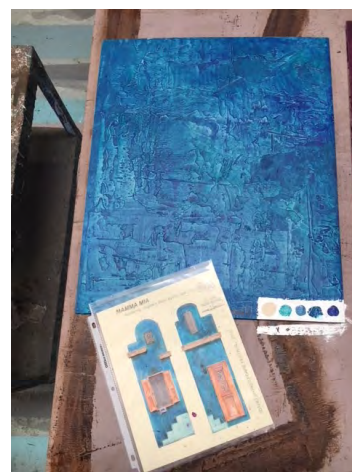
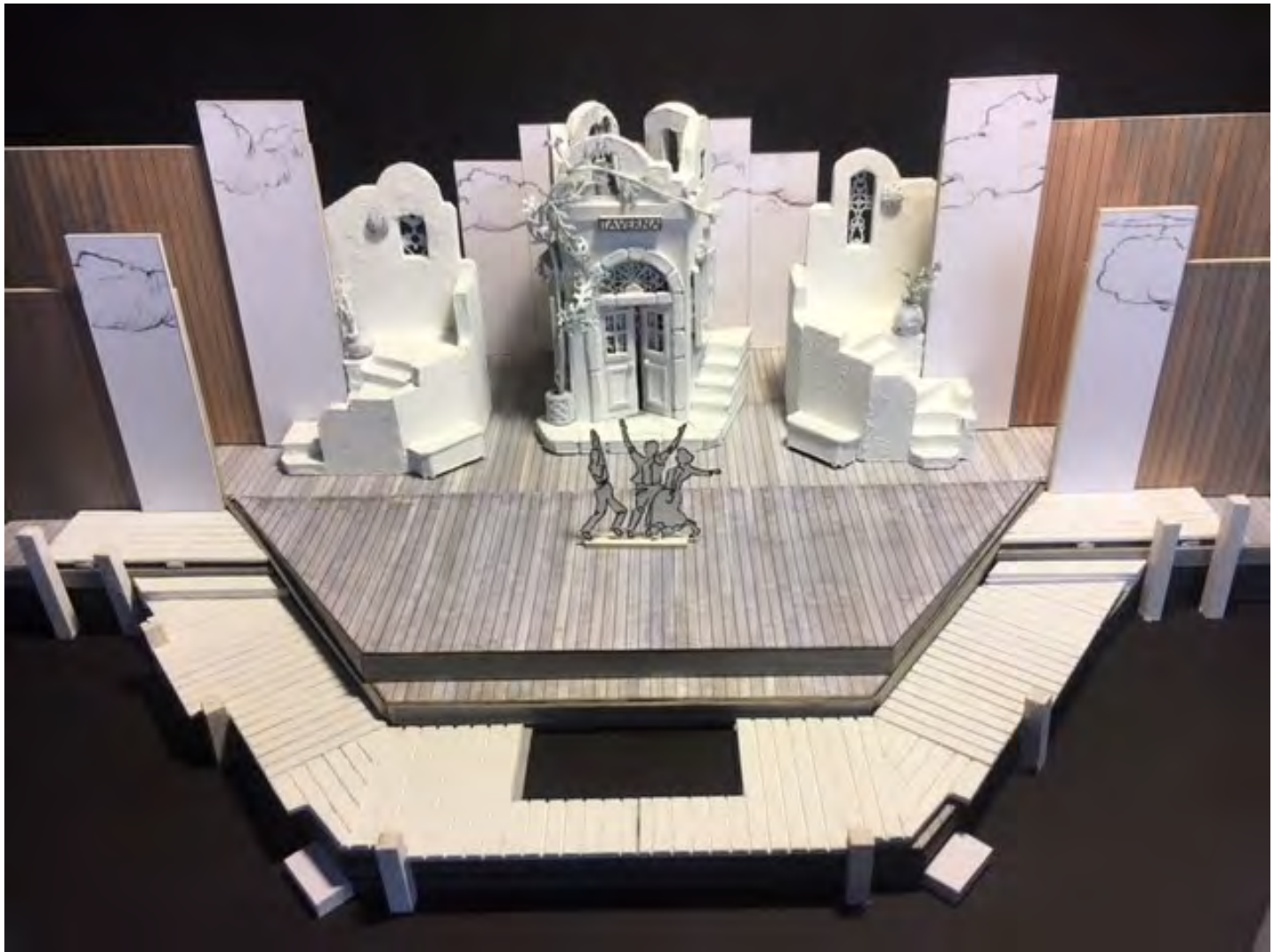
SAM



BILL

# SCENIC DESIGN

BY JEFF HERRMANN





# MAMMA MIA

Rendering - SR Stairs and Landing



S.D.  
SCENIC  
SIGNATURE



# MAMMA MIA

Rendering - Donna's Taverna



35  
IGNER



Previous page:  
photos of scenic  
model, top. Paint  
and texture  
samples, bottom.

This page: color  
scenic renderings  
(above). Finished  
set, Idaho  
Shakespeare  
Festival. Photo by  
DKM  
Photography,  
right.



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# WHAT IS THEATER?

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The word theater is derived from the ancient Greek word *theatron*, or “seeing place.” The word drama comes from the Greek *dran*, which means “to do.” Put those meanings together, and theater is essentially a place where something is seen *and* something is done—an action is witnessed.

**THEATER is a living, real time event and place where performers and audience members interact; energy is shared and a rapport is established.** Theater is also a paradoxical art form. It lives in many realms. In his book aptly titled, *THEATRE*, author Robert Cohen suggests that:

- Theater is spontaneous, yet it is rehearsed.
- Theater is participatory, yet it is presented.
- Theater is real, yet it is simulated.
- Theater is unique to the moment, yet it is repeatable.
- Actors are themselves, yet they are characters.

In producing *Mamma Mia!*, company members of Great Lakes Theater are engaging in one of the oldest and most treasured art forms. They are story-tellers who will bring to life the characters and world of *Mamma Mia!* where the music of ABBA is used to amplify and underscore Sophie’s search for her father, the antics surrounding her wedding, and her mother Donna’s reconciliation with her past choices.

As you bear witness to their performance, it is good to remember that while the actors are tapping into genuine feelings and emotions, they are taking on the roles of characters that may be entirely different from who they are off stage. Their actions, behaviors and costumes are reflective of character choices and demands of the script. While they are sharing a rehearsed performance based on established words and music, it is important to remember that the actors are striving to create the story as if telling it/sharing it for the first time.

**As an audience member, you are not directly part of the action but your responses will certainly shape the performance that you attend.** In order to truly support the performers and soak in the full experience, there are a few things to consider:

- As a general rule, if you can hear and see the actors, they can hear and see you. Talking and movement is distracting to them as well as other audience members.
- Be a good listener. Avoid talking to your neighbor or commenting on the overall action or any individual performance.
- Turn off your cell phone and do not text message.
- Keep hands and feet to yourself.

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- Do not talk or whisper during the performance.
  - Do not leave your seat unless it is an emergency. Take bathroom breaks before or after the show and at intermission.
  - Unwrap any noisy food items BEFORE the performance begins.
  - Laugh at the parts that are funny; cry at the parts that are sad.

**Most importantly, come to the theater with an open mind.** Suspend judgment and commentary until after the performance. Give yourself permission to immerse yourself in the story, the music and the e journey of the characters. Even if you discover that theater or this particular production is not your thing, acknowledge the enormous amount of work, skill and courage that it takes for theater artists to create and perform in such a large-scale production.

The best way to show appreciation is by clapping at the end of the performance. Applause says “Thank you! You’re great!” If you really enjoy the show, give the performers a standing ovation by standing up and clapping during the bows.



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# QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

## PRIOR TO ATTENDING THE PERFORMANCE

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1. What do you imagine it takes to produce a Broadway musical the scope of *Mamma Mia*? Have you seen the movie? What, if anything, did you like about it? If you have seen it, what do you expect will be different in the stage adaptation? What do you think it will be like watching unfamiliar actors take on roles made famous by the likes of Meryl Streep, Pierce Brosnan, Colin Firth and Amanda Seyfried?
2. Obviously, in real life, people do not break out in song whenever they need to express a thought or feeling. How do you imagine this musical conceit enhances or distracts from the theatrical experience? In what ways do you think seeing a musical is different from seeing a play? What does it take for you to personally to lose yourself in the story and journey of the characters? Is this type of transcendence more difficult at a live performance? Why? What is the difference between going to a movie and watching TV? How are those experiences different from going to the theater and witnessing a live performance?
3. What is the very first music you remember? What kind of music, musical groups or performing artists were you drawn to? Who or what were the greatest influences in deciding what was good? How did your earliest exposure to music affect the kind of music you currently listen to? How much is your taste in music influenced by your family, siblings, friends, media and environment? What, if any, judgments are made based on the type of music people listen to?
4. What is on your personal play list? What do those musical choices say about you? How open are you to different musical styles and artists?
5. What is it about music and art that touches the soul? In what ways do music and art transcend language, cultural, economic and social barriers?
6. In what ways can music serve as a catalyst for change? Do you believe that people are hard wired to appreciate music and art? In what way is our appreciation and understanding of various musical styles and rhythms reflective of our cultural background, social environment, race and gender?
7. How have your musical tastes changed over the years? Explain.
8. Can you think of a song that takes you to a certain moment in time? How does that particular song/artist color the experience? How does music chronicle and shape our lives?
9. What comes to mind when you hear the term “pop music”? How does pop music define an era, decade or particular time in history or society? What would you classify as today’s “pop music”? In what way, if at all, does it reflect your current experience, your generation’s feelings or modern sensibilities?
10. What – if anything – did you know about the musical group ABBA? Do you have a particular song that you love? What is it about their music that has staying power? Is there a current musical group that you think people will be listening to 50 years from now? What is it about their musical style and storytelling that you believe has universal and lasting appeal?
11. In many ways, *Mamma Mia!* is a love story; a true ‘romantic comedy’ with elements of farce thrown in

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- the mix. How do you define farce?
12. What makes you laugh? Who is the funniest person you know? What makes them funny? What is your favorite comedy? What draws you in, character, situation, physical antics or dialogue? When – if ever – have you felt that you were the star of your own sit com? Can you think of an absurd and ridiculous “it could only happen to me” moment that could have been tragic if it wasn’t so hysterical? Share that moment with your classmates.
  13. Although much of the musical embraces the absurd, there is an undercurrent of loss and longing woven throughout the piece. Most of the characters are trying to find or rediscover their true, most authentic selves. In her desire and need to take care of her daughter and make a living to provide for her, Donna has lost the fearless part of herself that defined her youth. Sophie is looking to others – Sky and her father(s) – to fully understand and own who she is and what she dreams of becoming. How do you define self? How do you discover or unearth the essence of who you are? Is the core of our character and essential personality traits stamped on us from infancy or do we grow into our essential selves? In what ways are you the same you were five or ten years ago? In what ways have you changed? How do life events shape and define us?
  14. Love is a central theme in this piece. How does falling in love change you? When do you know you are in love? Does the feeling come on suddenly or is it a gradual awakening? Explain.
  15. What makes a great love story? What is your favorite love story of all time? What makes it so memorable? What fictional couple best captures your imagination and defines your understanding of romantic love? What is it about their connection, relationship and/or passion that stands out? How does the fictional portrayal of love and relationship – the media bombardment of what love and romance should look like – color the way you think about falling in love, dating, sex, marriage, etc.?
  16. Describe the qualities of your ideal romantic partner? How realistic is this portrait? In what way do men and women’s criteria differ? When thinking of your ideal partner, are there traits or behaviors that are absolute requirements? What would you consider a deal breaker? Is it important to set a standard for yourself? Why? Can love and/or attraction truly be prescribed? In what ways, if any, do you have control over who you fall in love with?
  17. In what ways does love make us vulnerable? What are the benefits and costs of vulnerability? What does it feel like to have your heart broken? Does love serve to empower or weaken your sense of self? Explain.
  18. How does romantic love differ from familial love? Describe the bond of parent and child. How has your love, devotion or connection to your parent(s) changed as you have grown more independent? Do you feel that parental influence is more biological or environmental? What traits, physical and emotional, do you share with your mother, or father or grandparents? What individual traits seem to have absolutely no bearing on their influence? If you could change one thing about your mom or dad or grandparents or guardian, what would it be? What would be the one thing that they would want to change about you?
  19. What do you wish your parents better understood about you? How does (or would) knowing details about your parent’s past challenges, choices and possible indiscretions help you better understand or even appreciate their point of view? Do parents have a right to keep certain aspects of their past a secret? What do you wish your parents would share with you about their past?

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20. How does reputation define you? What does it take for people to go beyond the various labels and group associations to see the real you? In what ways are people bound by their past histories or current 'roles'? What does it take to break free from people's perceptions of who you are? In what ways are your parents' perceptions of who you are different from the truth? How does your perception of who your parents are (or were) match reality?
21. The play opens the day before Sophie's wedding and her marriage is a point of contention between Sophie and her mother. What are your thoughts about the institution of marriage? Do you believe that the institution of marriage still has the same value today as it did 40-some years ago, or even 20-some years ago? Why? In what ways is the notion of marriage different for men and women? What accounts for these sometimes conflicting attitudes? How do you think getting married changes who you are individually and as a couple? What is the "right" age to get married? What age is too young? Is there any age that is too old? Does there come a point in time in any relationship where you either need to make a commitment to your partner or move on? Is marriage the ultimate form of commitment?
22. Does falling in love change with age? In what way is love a gamble? Why is it so hard to see our parents as romantic beings who have physical desires and seek partnership? Can you imagine your parents at your age? Do you think they were more cautious or fearless than you are? Would it or does it upset you to know that your parents may have had a bit of wild side?
23. How important are your dreams in your life? In what ways do dreams influence your life choices? What are some of your goals/wishes/dreams for the future? What are some of the actions that will be required by you to achieve them? What do you do about the events and issues in our life for which we seem to have no control? What does it take to make a dream come true?
24. Are dreams crippling or empowering? Explain. What is the source of a dream? How much are our dreams driven by outside forces? What happens when your dreams differ from those of your parents? How do you personally identify your heart's desire? Are those hopes and desires subject to change? Why do you think that is?



Kailey Boyle & Jillian Kates. Photos by DKM Photography.

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# ACTIVITIES

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## WHERE DO YOU STAND?

*Mamma Mia!* centers on the journey of strong female characters who are not solely defined by the men in their life. In fact, the play questions the validity of marriage as an institution and celebrates the autonomy of the main characters. At one point, Donna's friends joke the state of marriage when referring to one of their favorite t-shirt quotes: "Marriage is an institution – for the people who belong in an institution." They dismiss the current need for women to define their success based on their relationship status. Tanya states, "Girls today seem to think that a woman's greatest achievement is getting a man."

Do you think *Mamma Mia!* is a feminist play? Defend your answer. How do you personally define "feminism"? What female characters in books, movies and television shows call on us to be better versions of ourselves? Who are your female role models? What makes them so awesome? Before or after seeing the production, it would be worthwhile for students to question their own gender bias and begin to examine the ways in which society and personal history help to create, nurture and grow these constraints.

The following activity is an interactive survey in which students move one side of the room to the other based on their core beliefs and truths.

To begin the exercise, have students gather in the middle of the room. This is neutral territory. The far left side of the room is designated as "STRONGLY AGREE" and the right side of the room will represent "STRONGLY DISAGREE" with the spaces in between "NEUTRAL" representing a gradation of strongly agree and disagree.

Have students move to the space in the room that best represents their belief regarding the following statements: Remind students that this is a non-verbal exercise. After each statement, pause for a second, and give students a chance to take note of where they and their classmates have moved in response to these gender preconceptions/assumptions.

Women are more emotional than men.

Pink is a girl's color

It is okay for boys to cry

Women are more jealous than men

It is okay for a girl to smack her boyfriend when she gets frustrated

It is never okay for a man to hit a woman in frustration

Women do not have the same power as men

Men know how to get women to do what they want

Women know how to get men to do what they want

Women will use their sexuality to get money and material things

Men are born cheaters

Women are passive and submissive

Men are self-confident and aggressive

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Women are good with technology  
Men are good communicators  
Women are evaluated based on their appearance  
Men are evaluated based on their athletic abilities  
Men are smarter than women  
Women are smarter than men  
Women are better caretakers  
Men are better breadwinners  
A strong woman is threatening  
A tender man is weak  
“Bad” boys are irresistible  
“Good” girls are who you marry  
There is a double standard concerning women and men’s sexual behavior  
In relationships, men are more interested in sex than in emotional connection  
In relationships, women are more interested in emotional connection than sex  
Women fall in love, men fall in lust  
Kindness is more important than physical beauty  
There is no such thing as gender inequality  
Feminism is scary  
A woman’s place is in the home  
Girls are better in sports  
Boys are better cooks

After you have completed the exercise, have students engage in discussion surrounding gender assumptions. Who shapes our notion of gender roles and expectations? Have you ever felt limited or judged by a gender assumption/expectation that didn’t align with your individual sensibilities, abilities or desires? What *are* the differences between men and women? Is this difference due more to societal constructs or basic genetics or a combination of both? What gender stereotypes do you find most frustrating? In heterosexual relationships, which gender – in most instances – do you believe holds the most power? How do you achieve equality or balance among the sexes? What kinds of chauvinistic, misogynist or sexist behavior have you encountered? How did you respond? What can we do as a society to create gender equality? What are your thoughts regarding the #metoo and #timesup movement?

VIDEO - Watch the following videos to elicit more student responses and add to the dialogue about gender, stigma and societal assumptions.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XjJQBjWYDTs>  
Reese Witherspoon: "Ambition is Not a Dirty Word" - YouTube



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## CHARACTER COLLAGES

Choose one of the central figures of the play — Donna, Sophie, Sky, Rosie, Tonya, Sam, Bill, Harry and Sky — and search for images, words, headlines, metaphors, colors and textures that best reflect and/or capture the essence of the character. Have students create a visual collage for a chosen character and one that best represents them in a self-reflection collage (this might need to be done as an at home). Display the various collages throughout the classroom and have the class meander through, museum style. Have the class discuss what they see. Challenge students to articulate and defend the choices they made in putting together their character and personal collages. Were various characters easy to identify? Why? What similarities and differences were present? How did the character collages differ from the personal reflection collages? Which character, if any, most resembles you? Discuss.

## POP MUSIC

Have students do some outside research on some of the pop hits of the 70s. Invite them listen to the music of Simon & Garfunkel, Elton John, Don McLean, Sly and the Family Stone, Joni Mitchell, Queen, The Eagles, Billy Joel and Fleetwood Mac. Break into small groups and have each group select two or three songs from a single artist. Using those songs, have the group create a dramatic scenario based on the musical style and content of the song/s and lyrics. Who do you image would sing such a song? Describe the characters' personality and motivation? What event happens prior to the song? What dialogue leads up to the song and what happens afterward? Encourage students to create a through line for their imagined scenario. Have students rehearse and present their scenes complete with costumes, choreography and dynamic lip syncing.



Kailey Boyle and the *Mamma Mia!* Company. Photos by DKM Photography.

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# WRITING PROMPTS

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## PERSONAL ESSAY

Write a personal reflection about the woman who most inspires you. Try to think of specific examples of how and why this woman serves as a role model. Pay attention to details. Think about the sound of her voice, favorite expressions, physical attributes, how she walks into a room, the way she laughs etc.

## A LETTER TO YOUR FUTURE DAUGHTER

Write a letter to your daughter. Think about the world that you want her to inherit. What does she need to know about your current joys and struggles. As she prepares for high school and college and the world, what should she know? What advice do you have for her? What should she pay attention to? What traps should she avoid? What are the best ways for her to claim power and equality?

## JOURNAL ENTRIES

When I look at the pages of a fashion magazine I feel ...

My greatest female role model is ...

My greatest male role model is ...

Society tells us that boys should \_\_\_\_\_ but I think ....

Television and movies tell us that girls are \_\_\_\_\_ but I know...

Respond to the following:

“Real men don’t cry ....”

“All she needs is a good man ...”

“She wears the pants in the relationship ...”

“Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned ...”

“Man up ...”

“#MeToo ...”

“#TimesUp ..”

## ADDITIONAL WRITING PROMPTS:

“When I was little I used to believe...”

“Now that I am older I know that what really matters is...”

"When I am old and gray, I will most likely...

“In order to fit in I must...”

"The person I marry will..”

"Most people would never guess that I..."

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"The time that I am most myself is when..."

"I am most like my..."

"If I could be anybody else, I'd definitely be \_\_\_\_\_ because..."

"Morality is best taught when..."

"Mercy is when..."

"I feel lonely when..."

"The person I marry will..."

"Love is like..."

"Marriage is..."

"Most people don't know that what I really love ..."

"My greatest gift is..."

"The only thing I have real talent for is..."

"When I am performing in front of a crowd, I feel..."

"I wish I could sing like..."

"If only I could dance like..."

"When I dance, I feel..."

"Music makes me..."

## RESOURCES

100 Hits: 70's Pop - Various Artists | Songs, Reviews, Credits | AllMusic  
<https://www.allmusic.com/album/100-hits-70s-pop-mw0000814323>

The 1970s In Pop Culture, Politics and Beyond timeline | Timetoast ...  
<https://www.timetoast.com/timelines/the-1970s-in-pop-culture-politics-and-beyond>

What 1970s Feminists Did During the Women's Movement - ThoughtCo  
<https://www.thoughtco.com> > ... > Women's History > History of Feminism

A Brief History of Marriage | History | Yesterday Channel  
<https://yesterday.uktv.co.uk/history/article/brief-history-marriage>

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# HOW TO WRITE A REVIEW

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## MORE HOW AND LESS WHAT

A theater review is not a book review, you do not need to summarize what happens. Provide the necessary background so the reader knows the name of the play and the basics of what kind of play it is, and then move into your commentary. You do not need to explain WHAT the play is, instead write about HOW successfully it was presented.

## THE ACTOR NOT THE CHARACTER

You can disapprove of the decisions a character makes, but how well did the ACTOR perform the role? Was their behavior appropriate to the part as written? Feel free to share your opinions, comparing or contrasting their work with other actors with whom you are familiar.

## WHAT IS DIRECTION?

Maybe you have heard of a “director” in theater or film, but do you know what they do? It is not a director’s job to tell the actors how to say every line, but they are the person responsible for creating the general mood and concept for the production. What was your impression of the production as a whole? Was it too funny for a serious play? Or not amusing enough for a comic play? Use words to reflect back to the director how successful the production is as a whole.

## DON’T FORGET THE DESIGN

The set you see and the sounds you hear are also unique to this one production of this play. Describe what you see and hear, but also be sure to make clear how successful these designs are in telling the story of the play.

## IN CONCLUSION ...

While it is not necessary to give a “thumbs up” or “thumbs down” your concluding sentence should summarize your impression of the production as a whole.

## THEATER REVIEWS IN THE NEW MEDIA

Reviews in news websites may be 1000 words, they may be as brief as 300 words. Can you write a one-page review? Can you write a 100 word review, to post on Facebook? Do you think you could create a 140-character review that sums up the production for posting on Twitter?

A sample review written by a student follows this page.

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# A SAMPLE REVIEW WRITTEN BY A STUDENT

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## "Gambit": More Poetry Than History — Mark Wood

If Aristotle was correct when he said that poetry “is a higher thing than history,” then “Royal Gambit,” which opened Friday night at Pentacle Theater, is, I suppose, on the right track.

For those who were expecting a representational treatment of the life of England’s Henry VIII, “Royal Gambit” was a shock, if not a disappointment. Those who sought poetry got it, although of a very dogmatic and simplistic sort.

This unusual, highly presentational play by Hermann Gressieker, directed by Ed Classen, is an indictment of modern man as a ruthless opportunist. The Tudor king is a representative of a rationalizing, shifty society which has become “superior to the highest” while “wallowing in the depths.”

As Henry uses the banners of “reason” and “humanism” to obtain then dispose of his six wives, so modern man uses them for his own pleasure and glorification, uses them to wage war in the name of peace, to hate in the name of love.

Such is the grim theme pleasingly presented by a company of seven actors, who performed their roles energetically, if unevenly. The presentational acting style employed here is difficult to perfect. It should be theatrical, yet believable; aimed at the head, yet acceptable to the heart.

Louise Larsen was a standout as Catherine of Aragon, Largely because she utilized this presentational approach and was not afraid of open theatricality. Her flamboyant stage presence, which needed to be toned down in her recent role in “Last of the Red Hot Lovers,” found full vent here.

Henry's fourth wife, Anne of Cleves, was portrayed by Gale Rieder, who quickly became an audience favorite. Her thick accent was letter-perfect and her direct humor was a welcome contrast to the bitter satire of the rest of the play.

The other four actresses—Kathy Stratton, Marcia Engblom, Polly Bond and Patricia Sloan—each had their exceptional moments. However, they generally seemed tied to more conventional, representational acting styles.

Ron Fox was superb in the role of Henry. Tuxedoed, leering with the look of a demonic marionette, the vacant stare of a deranged orator, Fox dominated the stage fully, commanding both in voice and stage presence.

The technical elements of the play were more than adequate. Musical accompaniment was appropriately sparse and simple.

At one point the play, King Henry roared, “In my realm I decide what constitutes tragedy!” Ironically, Gressieker strips modern man not only of his possibilities as a tragic figure worthy of any sympathies at all. In the final moments of the play, Catherine of Aragon announces the death of modern man and the birth of a new era. It is a scene of great hope, but it is not as profound as her earlier pronouncement to her husband that “the ways of the world are not so cut and dried!”

For my own part, I wish that “Royal Gambit’s” statement were not so cut and dried. By making man out to be such a simple monster the play defeats its own purposes and turns poetry into scathing dogma, which is probably even less interesting than, say, history.

*<http://faculty.chemeketa.edu/jrupert3/eng105/Annrev.html>*

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# A BRIEF GLOSSARY OF THEATER TERMS

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<b>Apron</b>	The part of the stage in front of the curtain
<b>Auditorium or House</b>	Where the audience sits
<b>Beam Spread</b>	The area a single light covers
<b>Blackout</b>	Turning off all the lights in the theatre at once
<b>Board</b>	The control center for lights, sound, or both
<b>Book (The)</b>	A copy of the script containing all notes and blocking
<b>Box Office</b>	Where the audience buys tickets
<b>Box Set</b>	A set in a proscenium with three walls
<b>Call</b>	The time certain members of the production need to be at the theatre
<b>Cheat</b>	When an actor takes a realistic action and modifies it for the audience to see
<b>Cloth</b>	Scenery painted on fabric
<b>Cue</b>	A line or action that immediately leads to another action by the actor (for them to speak) designer or stage manager (to change the lights or sound)
<b>Curtain Call</b>	The bows at the end of the show
<b>Dimmer</b>	Equipment that controls the brightness of a light
<b>Director</b>	The creative head of a production. They create a vision for the show and work with actors, designers, and crew to bring that vision to life
<b>Flat</b>	A frame covered with canvas, cardboard, or some other light material which is then painted as part of the set
<b>Floodlight</b>	A light that has a wide unfocused beam covering most of the stage
<b>Fly</b>	A system used to raise set backgrounds, set pieces, or potentially actors
<b>Follow-spot</b>	A spotlight that can follow an actor as they move across around the stage
<b>Footlights</b>	Floodlights on the floor at the front of the stage.
<b>Gel</b>	A piece of plastic placed over the light to change its color
<b>Greenroom</b>	A room where the company can relax, eat, or potentially watch the show if a TV and a camera has been rigged
<b>Notes</b>	The director's notes on the performance or rehearsal
<b>Pit</b>	An area between the stage and the audience where an orchestra can sit (typically below audience level)
<b>Producer</b>	The person responsible for all logistical and financial aspects of a production (as opposed to the creative head, the director).
<b>Properties or Props</b>	Items used by actors in a show (such as swords, plates, watches, etc.)
<b>Proscenium</b>	A type of stage defined by a proscenium arch. Proscenium theatres typically distinctly

separate the audience and stage by a window (defined by the proscenium arch). The stage typically will not go far past the proscenium arch (the Ohio Theatre, for example).

**Raked Stage**

A stage that is angled (upstage is the top of the hill and downstage the bottom) so that the audience can see the action more clearly

**Set**

The scenery used in a scene or throughout the play

**Set Dressing**

Parts of the set that don't serve a practical function but make the set look realistic.

**Spotlight**

A type of light that is focused so that it can light a very specific area

**Strike**

Taking apart and removing a set from the theatre

**Thrust**

A stage that goes beyond the proscenium arch so that the audience is sitting on three sides of the set - in front, and on either side (the Hanna Theatre, for example).

**Tracks**

The rails on which curtains (tabs) run.

**Trap**

A hole in the stage covered by a door where actors or set pieces can exit or enter

**Understudy**

An actor who learns all of the lines and blocking of another actor (typically one of the actors in a lead role) who can perform in case the main actor cannot go on

**Upstage**

The rear of the stage

**Wings**

The sides of the stage typically blocked off by curtains where actors and crew can stand and wait for their cues

## STAGE DIRECTIONS



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# QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

## AFTER ATTENDING THE PERFORMANCE

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1. What were your favorite aspects of this production? How did the visual elements — the set, costume and lighting design — elevate the production values of the performance? What aspects of the director’s overall interpretation aided in your overall enjoyment and understanding of the piece? Discuss.
2. What production choices, whether they be choreography or design or character interpretation, were particularly intriguing? What, if any, production choices seemed incongruent from the production as a whole? What moments, if any, took you out of the world of the play? What elements drew you in? Explain.
3. What actor do you believe had the most fully realized characterization? What was it about it about his or her performance that drew you in? What moment was most memorable? Why?
4. Track Donna and Sophie’s transformation from the beginning to the end of the play. What discoveries are made by the main characters? Who do you think grows the most? Why? How is that growth manifested in performance? Of all of the characters, who did you identify with the most? Why?
5. What moment in the GLT production of *Mamma Mia!* stood out? What was your favorite musical “moment”? What made it meaningful or fun?
6. The production opens with Sophia holding three invitations that she is about to mail to three men who might be her father. She sings:

*I have a dream  
A song to sing  
To help me cope  
With anything  
If you see the wonder  
Of a fairy tale  
Take the future ...  
... even if you fail*

How do dreams help you cope? Is the “wonder” of a fairy tale hurtful or helpful? Explain. Do you think that Sophie is trapped or freed by the action of inviting her possible “fathers” to her wedding? Do ever feel trapped by an image of what ‘family’ is supposed to look like? How do you define “family”? Is there such a thing as a perfect family? What are the differences between the traditional nuclear family, a blended family or a chosen family? How important are biological ties? Why do you think it is so important for Sophie to have her dad – who she has never met – give her away?

7. Sophie finds out about her mom’s youthful ‘indiscretions’ after reading Donna’s diary. Does Sophie have a right to know who her dad might be? Why do you think Donna kept this secret for so long? What parts of our parents’ past are fair game and what parts should be kept private? What kinds of things do imagine you would find if you stumbled across one of your parents’ diary from the year you were born? If you found their journal or diary, would you read it? Why or why not? Have you ever had someone read your diary or a private journal entry? What did that feel like?



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8. In the opening scenes, we are introduced to Ali and Lisa, Sophia's best friends as well as Tanya and Rosie, Donna's best friends. What role does friendship play in the lives of both Sophie and Donna? What role do your friends play in your life? How do your friends help you navigate through both the big and little moments that define your life?
  9. Donna is a force to be reckoned with. She is – or was – a free spirit who followed her heart, lived to the fullest and damned the consequences. She is the “Dancing Queen” and is the nucleus of connection for virtually everyone in the play. Have you ever met someone who was larger than life? How did that encounter and/or relationship impact the way you saw yourself and how you chose to interact with the world around you? In what way has or does Donna shape the reality of Sophie, of Sky, of her best friends and of her past loves?
  10. How do Donna and Sophie see each other at the beginning of the play? Can you define the undercurrent of tension that colors the following dialogue:

*DONNA: Will you look at my baby – her whole life ahead of her ...*

*SOPHIE: Mom, I am getting married, not joining a convent ...*

*DONNA: I know, well in my day, you just didn't get married at twenty ... A white wedding, can you believe this? I don't know where she gets it from.*

- Why do you think that their view on marriage is so different? How has the perception and understanding of women's roles as wife, mother, career professional and/or “bread winner” changed from the 70's to the 90's to today? How do you define “feminism”? Is fighting for gender equality as important today as it was in the 70s or 90s? Defend your answer. What is the perfect age to get married? Does it differ for men or women? Does the dream of a traditional wedding complete with a white princess dress make you less of an independent and strong woman? Besides their different viewpoints on marriage, what seems to be at center of Donna and Sophie's mother and daughter conflict? What did the actresses who portrayed these roles do to illuminate their dissent?
11. Donna has spent her more than half of her life working as a single mom to provide for her daughter and build the Taverna, putting her personal hopes and desires on hold. When she has a moment to fantasize about a “sugar daddy,” Donna uses the song “Money, Money, Money” to illustrate the wonder of a life of leisure. How would excess money change the way you live and approach life? What would be the very first thing you would do or buy if you won \$10,000,000? Do you agree with the lyric: “Money, Money, Money ... always sunny in a rich man's world”? Explain your answer. In what way is current society “a rich man's world”?
  12. What were your first impressions of Sam Carmichael, Bill Austin and Harry Bright? How did casting choices help define the differences between these three men? In the first scene, Sophie claims that she will instinctively know who her father is the moment she meets him. What was your gut instinct? If you had to choose who Sophie's biological father was at that first moment, who would you chose? Why?
  13. When Donna is confronted with the fact that Sam, Bill *and* Harry have suddenly appeared at her Taverna, she has a bit of a breakdown. She states:

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*I knew this would happen. All my life it's been tapping on my shoulder – of course it had to come out now! It had to ... God, why was I such a stupid little idiot?*

What, if any, choices from the past haunt you? Is regret a worthy feeling or emotion? In what ways does a secret weigh on your conscious? When is hiding a truth easier than confronting the potential pain or heartbreak of hurting a loved one or yourself? Do you think Donna should have shared this secret with her friends? With Sophie? With Sam, Bill or Harry? Which conversation do you think would have been most difficult? How can you rewrite the past through present actions?

14. As Donna struggles to face the truth, her best friends come to the rescue with the comical but endearing, “Chiquitita.” How do friends help you through life’s darkest moments? The song lyrics suggest, that the pains and sorrows of life are mere blips and that joy will return:

*Chiquitita  
You and I cry  
But the sun  
Is still in the sky  
And shining above you*

Do you agree with this philosophy? There is a media campaign targeted for teens – especially those in the LGBTQ community – who feel excluded and bullied and like they don’t matter, reminding them that “it will get better”? Does that advice or reminder make a difference when you are in the throes of dealing with hardship? Discuss your answer.

15. As Donna tries to process the fact that three of her lovers, any one of which, could be Sophie’s biological father, she asks, “*Why have they all turned up like this? It is like some horrible twist of Fate.*” Define “fate”? What role does fate or fortune play in realizing your destiny? How is personal destiny determined? Describe the tension that may be experienced from one’s perceived duty and their personal desire? In your experience, what holds the greater power...duty or desire? Discuss. Which holds greater power for Donna? How does that power shift throughout the musical?
16. As Donna bemoans the current state of affairs, her friends Tanya and Rosie remind her who she really is – “*our Donna -life-n’-soul of the party; el rock chick supremo*” – and, of course, launch into the iconic “Dancing Queen.” How does humor help us through troubled times? Have you and your friends ever pretended to be in a rock band or stop what you’re doing when a certain song is played? How does the silliness and joy of those moments help override worry and frustration? In what way did the staging of this number illuminate the friendship of these three women? How did remembering their old Dynamo routine, help strengthen Donna’s resolve to own the past and focus on making Sophie’s wedding as beautiful as possible?
17. What are your impressions of Sophie and Sky’s relationship? What is the difference between love and lust? Between a love affair and the real deal? Sky tells Sophie that she has turned his world upside down. In their rendition of “Lay All Your Love On Me,” both Sky and Sophie sing about the intensity of their feelings for each other and the rawness of emotions – including fear and jealousy – that accompany that feeling. In what way does love make you susceptible to rash emotion and/or overall recklessness? Is jealousy a natural response to loving someone? How are love and trust interconnected? Do you agree with Sky, is marriage “*biggest adventure of your life*”? How is love different than marriage?
18. Sophie dreams of the perfect wedding and has an image of the perfect couple and perfect family complete

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with the white dress and her dad giving her away. What is the difference between a perfect wedding and an ideal marriage? Describe the qualities of your "ideal" husband or wife. How realistic is this portrait? In what ways do men and women have different criteria of marriage? When thinking of your ideal partner, are there traits or behaviors that are absolute requirements? Deal breakers? Is it important to set a standard for yourself? Why? Can love and/or attraction truly be prescribed? In what, if any, ways do we have control over whom we fall in love with?

19. Act I ends with the huge production number “Voulez Vous,” which essentially promotes the power of now:

*Take it now or leave it  
Now is all we get  
Nothing promised  
No regrets*

What does it mean to “live in the moment”? In what ways do you try to be “present”? Does the fear of making a mistake sometimes prevent from making a choice or taking action? What does it feel like to truly be free? What expectations, perceptions, habits, influences and circumstances entrap you from fully engaging in the moment at hand or prevent you from owning your dreams and following your heart’s desire? How can the way we think about what is possible – authentic fears and legitimate obstacles – enslave us and prevent us from taking action and moving forward? At this point in the story, what is Sophie’s greatest hope? What is her greatest fear?

20. Act II opens with Sophie’s fears being made manifest. How did Sophie’s nightmare change her trajectory? Have you ever had a dream or nightmare reform the way you thought about something or helped illuminate a solution to a problem?
21. What three words would you use to describe Donna and Sam’s relationship? What happens when miscommunication and a sense of betrayal color the depth and beauty of your love for another? Is there any way to get past a deep sense of betrayal? How do past loyalties shift when someone you love shocks and disappoints you? What does it take to forgive and move on? What is the difference between forgiving and forgetting? Which is more powerful? Is love and reconciliation worth the potential of pain and disappointment? Explain your reasoning.
22. What is your take on Tanya and Pepper’s flirtation and the musical number “Does Your Mother Know”? What role does age play in a relationship? Does age matter when you are attracted to someone or fall in love? Is there equality when one partner is 5, 10, 15 or even 20 years older? What can difference – whether it be age, race, religion, sensibility, circumstance or history – bring to a relationship? What is the best relationship you know? What do you think are the qualities that make it work?
23. As Sophie struggles with how to handle the reality of *three* dads walking her down the aisle, she finally seeks Sky’s help and guidance. He is distraught because she hid this truth from him. He states:

*I thought we talked about everything, I thought we had trust, but you went behind my back for some stranger...*

Have you ever neglected to share a difficult truth because you were afraid of a loved one’s response? How did that work out for you? What does it take for you to trust someone? What does it take for someone to truly get to know you? Why is it sometimes difficult to reveal our authentic selves? What does it feel like to have trust and faith betrayed? Sky later confesses that the only reason he agreed to a big

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wedding was because he thought that was what she wanted. Does true love require compromise and self-sacrifice? How do you know when you have gone too far? Is Sky correct when he assesses that Sophie's desire for this "fantasy" wedding is truly a thinly veiled attempt to meet her dad and play "Happy Families"? Sophie insists that "*it's all about knowing who I am – I want to get married knowing who I am.*" How do you know who you are? How does your family history shape you? What role does genetics play in destiny and the revelation of self? How important is knowing your biological mother or father? What is more influential in the forming of self: biology or environment? Discuss.

24. As Sam prepares to walk Sophie down the aisle, he interrupts Sophie and Sky's argument, and he shares the fact that his marriage ended in divorce. He warns:

*"I've done the big white wedding and the cake and ... well, I'm sorry, it doesn't always end up happily ever after..."*

In your mind, what does "happily ever after" look like? What does it take for a relationship to have sustaining power? What advice would you give to your daughter on her wedding day?

25. Sam sings "Knowing Me, Knowing You."

*Breaking up is never easy, I know  
But I have to go  
Knowing me, knowing you  
It's the best I can do*

How do you know when a relationship is over? What does it feel like to break up? When, if ever, can a break up, be a break through? What are some the ways that being in a relationship positively and negatively defines you? What do imagine Sam's marriage was like? What propelled Sam to accept Sophie's invitation? How was his reasoning different from Bill's and Harry's?

26. Harry takes his "fathership" to Sophie quite seriously and tries to make up for lost time by offering Donna some money. He, too, reflects on their past, which, manifests in the songs "Our Last Summer":

*Those crazy years  
That was the time  
Of the flower power  
We had a fear of flying  
Of growing old  
A fear of slowly dying  
We took a chance  
Like we were dancing  
Our last summer*

Do you think the lyrics capture the reality of coming to age in the late 1970's or best reflect the reality of youth ... that toxic mix of both fearlessness and bravado? What is craziest thing you have ever done? What are you most afraid of? In what ways do you think your sense of recklessness and freedom as well your current fears change in the next twenty to thirty years?

27. One of the most touching moments in the play is when Donna helps Sophie get ready for the wedding as she sings "Slipping Through My Fingers." How has the relationship between you and your parent shifted

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as you move through life markers such as kindergarten, middle school, high school, graduation, your first love, preparing for college, your first job, your first apartment, marriage, parenthood etc.? Do your parents still see you as their “baby”? Is that thought/reality comforting or suffocating? What does it mean to be an adult? How does the relationship between parent and child change when the child is no longer a child? As you are coming of age, what do you need most from your parents? What do wish you had said or done during a particular difficult moment of transition? What is Donna longing to hear from Sophie? What is your mom, dad, grandparent or guardian longing to hear from you? How do you hold onto those moments of shared connection? What is your favorite memory of being with your mom, dad, grandparent or guardian? What is it about that moment that is forever etched in your heart?

28. One of the climatic moments in the musical occurs during the confrontation between Sam and Donna when she sings “The Winner Takes It All.” How is falling in love a gamble? What does it take to reconcile with your past and forgive those who have hurt and been hurt? What is grace? Should anyone truly forget the past? What does the past teach us? In what way have their twenty years apart prepared Sam and Donna for the future?
29. Share your reactions to Rosie and Bill’s spontaneous romp and their infectious rendition of “Take a Chance on Me.”
30. In the course of the play we learn that Sophie’s mother disowned her when she found out about her daughter’s pregnancy, and that Donna was so ashamed about not knowing who Sophie’s father was that she kept it a secret for twenty years, yet at the wedding, she confesses everything! What does it feel like when the truth finally comes out? What causes people to be judgmental? Who teaches us morality? What moral absolutes guide your own sense of right and wrong? How do think society's understanding of what is moral has changed within the past 25, 50 or 100 years? Do you and your parents share the same basic moral values? What are the similarities? What issues cause the most rift in your perspective? How much does society's changing frame work influence your own moral code? Who is harder on you – you, your parents or elders or society?
31. The play ends in a wedding but it is not Sophie and Sky’s but rather Donna and Sam’s! Was the ending a surprise? A disappointment? Or the perfect “happily ever after”? In what way did the elaborate curtain call add to the overall sense of fun of this musical? After seeing the production are you more of less eager to see or revisit the movie adaptation? Are you curious to check out *Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again* or are you content to close the curtain on the story of Donna, Sophie and her three dads? Elaborate.

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# NOTES

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# ABOUT GREAT LAKES THEATER

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## **Charles Fee, Producing Artistic Director**

The mission of Great Lakes Theater, through its main stage productions and its education programs, is to bring the pleasure, power and relevance of classic theater to the widest possible audience.

Since the company's inception in 1962, programming has been rooted in Shakespeare, but the company's commitment to great plays spans the breadth of all cultures, forms of theater and time periods including the 20th century, and provides for the occasional mounting of new works that complement the classical repertoire.

Classic theater holds the capacity to illuminate truth and enduring values, celebrate and challenge human nature and actions, revel in eloquent language, preserve the traditions of diverse cultures and generate communal spirit. On its mainstage and through its education program, the company seeks to create visceral, immediate experiences for participants, asserting theater's historic role as a vehicle for advancing the common good, and helping people make the most joyful and meaningful connections between classic plays and their own lives. This Cleveland theater company wishes to share such vibrant experiences with people across all age groups, creeds, racial and ethnic groups and socio-economic backgrounds.

The company's commitment to classic theater is magnified in the educational programs (for both adults and students) that surround its productions. Great Lakes Theater has a strong presence in area schools, offering an annual series of student matinees and, for over 30 years, an acclaimed school residency program led by teams of specially trained actor-teachers.

1501 Euclid Avenue, Suite 300 • Cleveland, Ohio 44115 • Tel. (216) 241-5490

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