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April 4, 2020

The Health of Live Theater: Practices under Pandemic Conditions

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## Abstract

### The Health of Live Theater: Practices under Pandemic Conditions

By Ruth Puryear

This document contains Ruth Puryear's reflections on directing and producing a live musical theater production safely during the Covid-19 pandemic as a resource for the theater community when returning to in-person endeavors. Her production of *The Last Five Years*, written and composed by Jason Robert Brown, rehearsed in a hybrid Zoom and in-person format and was performed by two casts as a drive-in musical at Emory University on March 18th-21st, 2021.

Navigating her two priorities, the safety and well-being of the actors and artistic quality, Puryear finds that emphasizing safety, trust, and respect in the rehearsal room increases creative capabilities, and sacrificing well-being for the sake of art is counterproductive. Throughout the process, she also questions the definition of "live" theater and finds that an element of liveness is in the community effort behind every theatrical endeavor. She concludes that the pandemic should awaken leaders within the industry to confront and rethink common practices, in part by encouraging intentional wellness practices in rehearsal rooms and increasing respect for the cast and crew's time and well-being when planning rehearsal schedules.

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*The Last Five Years* was presented through special arrangement with Music Theatre International (MTI). Authorized performance materials are also supplied by MTI. [www.mtishows.com](http://www.mtishows.com)

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## Chapter 1

### Proposal

#### *1. Introduction*

The continuing course of the Covid-19 pandemic inevitably influenced the direction of my thesis. It fueled my desire to create live theater in a time when people rightly avoid sharing spaces and, therefore, sharing experiences. My primary goal for the project was to produce and direct an artistically compelling musical theater production safely, with the help and guidance of my adviser and the Theater Studies Department. The other questions I desired to explore include: what distinguishes “liveness” in theater, and in what ways does my chosen format help me achieve my goals? What is the current state of theater, and why does this project matter? How can I create interesting directing choices for primarily solo material that impacts the audience even through barriers such as car windows and masks?

My original proposal for the project—written in April 2020—focused on building intimacy post-pandemic in the rehearsal room. I wrote in the proposal,

The series of related questions that I wish to explore through my Honors project are, how can I guide actors to regain trust, navigate fear, and physically interact with each other safely and comfortably? How can I create a rehearsal atmosphere of trust, focus, and joy without sacrificing artistic ambition? On a secondary, but still pertinent, degree, to what extent can I replicate that atmosphere during performances, and to what extent could that sense of safety and comfort in the rehearsal room lead to success in creating a vibrant performance? What are the most critical responsibilities of a director right now in order to reintroduce both actors and audiences to live theater?

My initial goals to explore intimacy were influenced by my experience directing *Heathers: the Musical*, a seventeen-person show with over fifty students involved in February 2020. I wanted to work on a more intimate project, focusing more on the rehearsal room tactics than on production elements. The course of the pandemic forced me to shift my attention to the



more fundamental goal of producing live theater in the first place, and incorporate many of my original goals into a new project. In March 2020, the emerging pandemic required global shutdowns, and placed restrictions on communal events such as theater that are still in place today. Broadway closed on March 12, 2020, and is not scheduled to reopen until May 30, 2021; other theaters across the globe have switched to online content or other creative means of producing art.<sup>1</sup> Given these conditions, I also needed to alter my methods. However, my original proposal's same core ideas remained: prioritizing comfort and safety for actors and crew members and aiming for the trust built throughout the process to support strong, confident performances. I attempted to do so by following the best safety protocols, adjusting my production plans to the trajectory of the pandemic, advocating for any materials or assistance that we might need, and encouraging communication.

## 2. *Material*

I approached my questions by directing *The Last Five Years*, a two-person, song-cycle musical written and composed by Jason Robert Brown. I chose this material because it alternates solo songs between two actors, involving the least amount of interaction between actors possible in a performance with a storyline. While one character primarily tells the story at a time, the material still explores intimate themes that I knew I could express with safe physical distancing between the actors. The story of the play follows the five-year-long span of a couple who rarely see eye-to-eye, as reflected by the characters telling their stories in different timelines, with Jamie progressing chronologically, starting with their meeting and Cathy moving in reverse chronological order starting with their breakup. The challenges I anticipated with this show included blocking the moments when the actors needed to sing together safely and creating

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<sup>1</sup> "Covid-19 Update," Broadway.com, accessed April 4, 2021, <https://www.broadway.com/announcement/covid-19-update/>

interesting artistic choices during each character's many solo songs. I detail my creative processes in Chapter 2.

### 3. *Format*

I utilized an outdoor drive-in format for the production because it maintained inherent safety features while hosting audience members and actors in the same space. While there are a plethora of online Zoom productions dominating the theater scene right now, the greater immediacy of an in-person performance made it a more meaningful option. Over the internet, the physical and possible temporal distance between audience members and actors lessens the theatrical performance's intended effect on its viewers. I was interested in exploring the impact of live performance on its collaborators and audiences, so creating live performances was a central and necessary goal for this project. I began this process using the term 'live performance' to mean performances with actors and audience in the same physical space at the same time.

Philip Auslander addresses the spectrum of liveness in his writings on "Live and technologically mediated performance," where he questions the binary "traditional definition of live performance," which he states "is founded on an opposition between the immediate and the mediated."<sup>2</sup> Auslander cites Whitney Houston's Superbowl rendition of "The Star-Spangled Banner" as a mediated performance that audiences experienced as 'live':

When Houston performed "The Star Spangled Banner" at the 1991 Superbowl, the audience present at the stadium saw her live body, but heard her recorded voice. She was, in fact, singing live, but her live voice was inaudible and replaced by the recorded one. Such a performance is indisputably technologically mediated but it is also simultaneously live and not-live: it contains elements of both live presence and recording. Liveness, then, is not an absolute condition – it is not the case that a performance either is or is not live.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Philip Auslander, "Live and technologically mediated performance," *The Cambridge Companion to Performance Studies*, ed. Tracy C. Davis (2008): 107.

<sup>3</sup> Auslander, "Live and technologically mediated performance," 109.

We also mediated our production of *The Last Five Years*: we projected the actors' voices through FM radio transmission to keep the audience and actors safely separated via the windshield. Unlike the case of Houston at the Super Bowl, the windshield barrier meant that actors and other audience members would not hear any audible audience reactions, such as laughing, clapping or gasping. However, I determined the FM transmission would create a more live experience versus pre-recording, Zoom performance, or other available options. During the curtain speech, I invited audience members to signal clapping with their windshield wipers. Some audiences spontaneously honked their car horns during curtain call. While not perfect substitutions for the comparatively unmediated experience of live theater, these strategies helped navigate the barriers of the drive-in format, allowing some interactions between the audience and the performers. I would suggest that, given a longer run, additional strategies would have been discovered. By physically being in the same space, visually watching, and engaging with live performers, these audience members had what Auslander would characterize as a "live" performance experience.

Sharing space with live performers, rather than viewing through a camera lens, is a fundamental difference between theater and film. Walter Benjamin explores the rapid transformation and increase of the reproduction of art in his 1935 essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," where he also draws an interesting distinction between acting for a live audience and behind the camera.<sup>4</sup> He writes: "The artistic performance of a stage actor is definitely presented to the public by the actor in-person; that of the screen actor, however, is presented by a camera,"<sup>5</sup> indicating that audiences will view the act of seeing a recorded performance in a fundamentally different way than they would a live event. The camera directs

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<sup>4</sup> Walter Benjamin "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (Schocken Books, 1969): 9-10.

<sup>5</sup> Walter Benjamin "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," 9.

the audience's attention by using techniques such as pans, zooms, and cuts; the audience can only see what is visible within the frame. In live theater, the audience focus is guided through acting and directing choices, lighting cues, curtains and masked off areas, but the audience retains control of where to look at each moment. For example, the director may emphasize the main character in a scene through using a spotlight and placing her in the center of the stage, but someone could still choose to watch one of the actors in the background. Successful Zoom and other recorded theatrical performances generally employ film techniques, and I would suggest that they are closer to film than theater, even when live-streamed. My choice of a live, if mediated, venue allowed me to work within my field and to utilize the skills I honed during my college studies rather than venturing into the challenges of film.

The primary justification for the use of drive-in theater was its safety during live performances. Audience members stayed inside their cars at all times, with windows rolled up, to create an automatic separation between the actors and audience members, as well as between audience members. Working outside during tech week and performances provided another layer of safety from any spread of airborne infection during the performance. I worked within Emory's extensive Covid safety protocols and also followed protocols developed by Emory Nursing School and Atlanta's Actor's Express Theater Company to create a safe rehearsal environment.<sup>6</sup>

Drive-in theater is a solution to many problems associated with performing in a traditional venue during the Covid pandemic, and drive-in theater productions are making headlines internationally. From August through September 2020, *SIX: The Musical* toured across the U.K., playing in large areas that could accommodate up to 300 vehicles.<sup>7</sup> In September 2020,

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<sup>6</sup> Emory Nursing School and Actor's Express, "Theatre Covid Study\_GeneralTheaterAssessment," accessed on September 23, 2020.

<sup>7</sup> Ryan McPhee, "SIX Musical Will Play Drive-In Style Across the U.K.," Playbill, accessed June 9, 2020, <https://www.playbill.com/article/six-musical-will-play-drive-in-style-across-the-uk>.

“Broadway at the Drive-In” opened in New York, which showed musical movies and live performances.<sup>8</sup> Theater is not the only field experimenting with drive-ins; *Billboard* reported thirty artists who held drive-in concerts from March through November, 2020.<sup>9</sup> This project built on and will hopefully contribute to a larger movement of artists seeking to share their art safely during a lingering pandemic.

#### 4. *Documentation and Success*

Using three chapters, I have organized this paper based on J.W. von Goethe’s three questions in his remarks, originally published in 1821 in a literary review, and later extracted and published separately as an essay “On Criticism.” He asks, “What did the author set out to do? Was his plan reasonable and sensible, and how far did he succeed in carrying it out?” (Goethe, 1).<sup>10</sup> In the next chapter, I will document my production and directing processes, including where these roles were in conflict and alignment. This description is laid out chronologically, including a timeline of requests, agreements, and negotiations with multiple Emory offices and the external production licensing procedure. It details the rehearsal process and my collaborations with the creative team. It holds my visions, inspirations, challenges, and discoveries. In the final chapter, I assess the extent to which the project’s initial goals align with the results, and address the lessons I learned from my successes and failures.

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<sup>8</sup> Adam Feldman, “A New Drive-in Movie / Broadway Hybrid Is Coming to NYC This Week,” *Time Out*, accessed October 8, 2020, <https://www.timeout.com/newyork/news/a-new-drive-in-movie-broadway-hybrid-is-coming-to-nyc-this-week-092220>.

<sup>9</sup> “Here Are All the Drive-In Concerts Happening Due to Social Distancing,” *Billboard*, accessed October 21, 2020, <https://www.billboard.com/articles/news/concerts/9379646/drive-in-concerts-list-coronavirus>.

<sup>10</sup> J.W. Von Goethe, “On Criticism,” *Goethe's Literary Essays*, ed. Elias Springarn (Harcourt Brace, 1921), 140.

## Chapter 2

### Process

I set out to create the magic of live theater during a pandemic. So, from the beginning, problem-solving skills played the most significant role in both the producing and directing aspects of my work. Problem-solving is always a central skill for directors and producers, but the challenges brought forth by the pandemic exponentially increased its value for this project. Another distinct aspect of this project was the complex intertwining and conflicts between my roles as director and producer. In order to wear these two different hats simultaneously, I went into the process with an overarching mindset to seek what would be best and safest for the people involved, while simultaneously working to create at the highest artistic level possible, at this moment in time. I will now explain the creative and logical steps that I took to make live theater happen during a pandemic. I will also share examples of the decisions I made, some of which prioritized safety or well-being over artistic quality, and some of which prioritized artistic choices over production elements. These decisions illustrated the dual nature of my role and were integral in shaping the lessons I ultimately learned.

While my thesis was initially approved in May, 2020, I truly began the process of producing the show on October 23rd, 2020, when I switched my project adviser to Professor Lisa Paulsen. Professor Paulsen was able to be on campus with me for the duration of the process. As early as our first meeting, I knew many of the obstacles I would face to make the production happen and began planning how to address them: securing a drive-in performance venue, implementing proper safety protocols through rehearsals and performance, securing permission to rehearse, sing, and perform on campus, creating a company from onboarded students, and finding a live accompanist. I also wanted to host at least some off-campus audience, such as

family members and, notably, to perform live without masks. There was no certainty we could overcome any of the attendant challenges or whatever additional obstacles would arise.

Nevertheless, knowing that we would require a lot of help, we decided to commit to a live theater performance, and to go forward with my new thesis and production plan. The shift in my thesis goals, from developing post-pandemic rehearsal practices to making effective theater safely in a persistent pandemic, began to grow clearer and more attainable.

Our first task and achievement was obtaining the rights to perform the show, *The Last Five Years*, through Music Theatre International (MTI), with the help of Professor Sara Culpepper, the only Emory representative that MTI would recognize. This forced us to set performance dates and audience size, and allowed us to proceed with auditions in early December. I held joint online auditions with Ad Hoc Productions, the student-run musical theater group on campus. I decided this was the best way to navigate the problem that our shows were set to rehearse at the same time and would be cast from the same pool of actors. We collaborated on asking auditioners for two contrasting sixteen-bar cuts, preferably with at least one from a contemporary musical. An additional requirement to audition for *The Last Five Years* was living on or near campus and being eligible to get onboarded for the spring semester, allowing me to plan rehearsals on campus. The demand for musical theater opportunities at Emory is high, and more students auditioned than we could jointly cast. There were twenty-one submissions for the four available roles in *The Last Five Years*, and sixteen submissions for the seven available roles in the Ad Hoc musical. It was clear from the level of interest that students were craving an in-person rehearsal and performance experience, after almost a year of primarily remote learning.

I made the decision to have two casts for the two-person show based on my work at Actor's Express Theatre Company as an Administrative Intern. As part of my fall internship with

Actor's Express, I helped edit and collect information for a draft of a report that they created in partnership with the Emory Nursing School. The goal of this report was to provide Atlanta area theaters with detailed reopening recommendations and procedures. One section that immediately stood out as applicable to my project was: "Artists must be assured that they will not be penalized for reporting their health status to the company, or feel that they must go on for the sake of the show... All companies should also consider... ensuring that every artist has an understudy available."<sup>11</sup> I wanted to ensure that our student artists could stay home at any time if they had reason to believe their health might be compromised without feeling that "the show must go on" at their own risk. At the same time, I wanted to ensure that the show would, in fact, go on, even if someone's external circumstances forced them to quarantine. I was also excited to work with more actors and explore the different qualities that each actor and pairing would bring to the same roles. The recommendations from this document, alongside the Emory Health and Safety Guidelines, ultimately shaped all of the safety protocols we employed, as detailed in my Production Plan (See Appendix A: Production Plan).

On the morning of December 5th, I notified nine women that they were called back for both the Cathy and Jamie roles and called back one man for the Jamie role. From their initial taped auditions, the actresses had shown us a great deal about how they would portray Cathy. For the callbacks, we let them know that we were considering casting a female Jamie. The music director Meredith Starks and I asked them to sing one cut from a Cathy song (*A Summer in Ohio*) and two cuts from Jamie songs (*If I Didn't Believe in You* and *Moving Too Fast*). The male auditioner only sang the Jamie songs. Our choice of songs was to let us see how they would

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<sup>11</sup>Actor's Express Theater Company and Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing at Emory University, "Theatre Covid Study\_GeneralTheaterAssessment." (Atlanta: September 23, 2020), 20.



handle the exceptional emotional and vocal range of each role, and give the opportunity to show how willing and able they were to tap into different emotional tones: *A Summer in Ohio* is an upbeat, belt-y, funny, love song; *If I Didn't Believe in You* is an earnest and raw, yet emotionally manipulative, song; and *Moving Too Fast* gave them the chance to show us confidence, energy, and an inflated ego.

While the initial auditions were pre-recorded, callbacks happened live over Zoom, so we could see them think on their feet and present the songs in one take. The Stage Manager, Music Director, and I sat on Zoom all day on December 6th, where we got to know each other as well as the performers. I started off each audition with some brief personal questions. For people I knew, I would ask questions along the lines of, “How are you? What has the process of preparing these songs been like for you?” For first-years: “What role do you see theater playing in your life during college? What gets you excited about performing?” I wanted to see the performers as people first, not simply as vessels for some final product. After they sang, I generally gave some feedback for one of the songs, and asked them to apply the ideas I gave them. Accepting and being hungry for feedback was one of the most important qualities I was looking for, along with an attitude of excitement. I hoped that these characteristics would help create positive rehearsal room energy from the start of the experience, which would help the actors meet the challenges of this project.

By the end of the day, we were overwhelmed by the talent and energy each person auditioning brought to the table. I was confident that each one of these students would bring something special to these roles. While I chose a show with a small cast to address safety, I was frustrated that I could not work with more of these artists. While we gained clarity about the Jamie roles, we decided that we needed yet another round of callbacks for Cathy. We asked five

women to submit one minute from *See I'm Smiling*, a song where Cathy attacks Jamie for not meeting what she considers to be the basic standards in a marriage. The cut demanded a lot of range, including Cathy at the height of her anger and vitriol to the end of the song, where she vulnerably states, "I swear to God I'll never understand/How you can stand there, straight and tall/And see I'm crying/And not do anything at all."<sup>12</sup> I asked them to "give it their all" and really let us see what they could do.

In my Directing I class, Professor Lydia Fort taught us that casting is 50% of your work as the director, because if you cast the actors well, you can get to a much deeper place much more quickly.<sup>13</sup> The casting decisions ultimately came down to six actors. The two most significant-and related-determining factors were stage presence and how their stage energy would pair with another person. I wanted to capture a central part of this play—the audience believing in the love these two people discover, build, and break. While it was challenging to assess this quality in solo auditions over Zoom, I knew that the vast majority of the show is spent with the characters apart. I found it intriguing to observe what each person brought individually to the role and to imagine how they would work as a pair. There were undoubtedly upsides and downsides to having the auditions over Zoom, but perhaps I was able to envision more possible combinations by seeing the actors as they presented themselves alone than I would have seen if they had jumped in and immediately been one half of a whole. For me, this process begged the question: is testing actors for immediate "chemistry" as important as it seems, or should it be on the director to be imaginative and rely more on creating an effective rehearsal room rather than casting based on initial impulses? Given what the actors showed me individually, I ultimately

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<sup>12</sup> Jason Robert Brown, "See I'm Smiling," *The Last Five Years*, 2002.

<sup>13</sup> Lydia Fort, Thea 250 class lecture, January 21, 2020.

made a bet that the two sets of actors would push each other, complement each other's strengths, and create a believable connection.

I chose to cast Serena El-Khatib and Brant Adams in one cast and Amelia Dimas and Haley Ornstein in the other. Brant was an easy choice for Jamie. In his only callback, he was able to reach the duality that is a large part of Jamie's character: well-meaning and vulnerable, yet also highly self-assured. Haley's strong alto voice, acting and improv skills, experience, and confidence also made her a great fit for Jamie. Both Serena and Amelia established themselves in their final callbacks when they brought themselves to extremely heightened emotional states, even in just a minute-long cut, while holding their own vocally. I had directed Serena before, but she showed more range than she had ever displayed, and it was clear that she was ready to tackle a three-dimensional role. I took the most considerable risk in casting Amelia, a first-year student, over older, more experienced performers, but chose her because of her captivating voice, impressive background in high school theater, and overall positivity and excitement.

I ended up pairing the actors together for opposite reasons. Serena and Brant both have an earnestness and eagerness as performers; they both tend to play young and sing at similar levels. They had performed together before in a show that I had choreographed, so I knew they had a good relationship on and off-stage. They are similar to each other and make a natural, easy fit as Cathy and Jamie. In contrast, Haley is a cool, funny performer who has a swagger about her, while Amelia is very warm, joyful, and vulnerable. Those differences are what I imagined would make each of them shine when put together. I was interested to see if Haley and Amelia could reach the same degree of believability as Brant and Serena, even though they had never met before. What all four actors shared was a deep passion for their artistic work and desire to work hard to make live theater happen, despite all the obstacles they would face.

Concurrently, I gathered crew members and needed them to be as excited and ambitious as the performers. I reached out to trusted collaborators Nora Hundertmark and Lukas Palumbo from my previous show, *Heathers*, to be joint Technical Director/Set Designer. Serena El-Khatib and Lizzie Cohen volunteered to be Costume Designer and Assistant Stage Manager. Oxford continuee Kailey Graziotto stepped up and signed on as Stage Manager, and another continuee, Maggie Whittemore, stepped in at the last minute as Props Designer. Meredith Payne, the Master Electrician and Sound Engineer for Theater Emory, also offered sound equipment and advice, loaned us her student sound assistant for the run of the show, and taught the crew members how to use the equipment properly. During winter break and the first month of the spring semester, I focused on preparation so they would have everything that they would need to complete their responsibilities successfully.

I needed to ensure sufficient funds to allow the production to run smoothly. I created a budget, applied for, and received a \$700 Spring 2021 Independent Research Grant from Emory College and the Theater Studies Department covered the remaining amount. The production budget was extremely tight after paying \$960 for rights, so I was determined to find costume, set, and props solutions that served the play with minimal expense. I wanted to use the actors' own clothes as costumes for their own safety and cleanliness, and to crowdsource props to generate a lived-in, authentic feel, as well as to cut costs. The set, clear masks that we used during the rehearsals and performances, and radio transmitter made up the remaining remainder of the budget. On January 4th, 2021, I submitted a Personal Statement and the first iteration of my Production Plan to Emory Undergraduate Research Programs, and received word that I had received the full grant amount on February 10th. (See: Appendix B: Budget)

Much of January was spent sending emails and having meetings. I met with Parking Services and secured their involvement in getting cars in and out, got initial notes and then approval from the Emory Health and Safety Office, and located scripts after they got lost in transit. I also worked hard to carve out creative space during this period, working on blocking and creating a Scene Breakdown, where I broke down many of the technical elements alongside the scene and page numbers (See Appendix C: Scene Breakdown). My original plan was to perform on the top of Fishburne Parking Deck, but when I visited Allen Plaza outside of the Schwartz Center for the Performing Arts, I felt an artistic pull that led me immediately to seek to secure that venue instead. At this stage, I was in danger of letting the demands of producing overshadow the creative work of directing. I recognized the need to follow my artistic impulse in choice of venue. I envisioned the Allen Plaza space in a diamond shape, with the glass doors and windows of the Schwartz Center as the background of the show. Existing stone pillars served as great transitional pieces from the set to the building. There was a circle in the middle of the stage area that reminded me of a clock, and I immediately knew that I wanted to utilize that in my blocking, since time is so integral to the play. Allen Plaza would give the production a put-together background and greenery, along with a backstage area to store set pieces, set up dressing areas, and a green room for actors when they were not on stage. While Allen Plaza could only hold nine cars as opposed to my original intention of fifteen, I prioritized my artistic inspiration. The decision to move locations was an example of how choosing among competing priorities became a necessary and large part of making this show happen, and also how being a director influenced me as a producer. In this case, the director decided and the producer adapted.

At this point in the process, I had designer meetings to share my inspirations and to hear their ideas. I wanted to emphasize and play with the idea of the building and breaking of a home,

as a metaphor for the relationship. For the set, I wanted to utilize levels and acknowledge our outdoor location by including a picnic table. One of the set designers, Nora Hundertmark, built on my idea, suggesting that we incorporate nine boxes that could be stacked on top of each other and taken apart. Inspired by that design idea, I utilized the boxes heavily in the blocking. I began the show with the boxes strewn all over the stage; the actors slowly built them up throughout the first act into a staircase position, representing their budding hopes and aspirations for the future. They spent the rest of the show tearing it down, so the structure was just as disordered as it was in the beginning. This collaborative effort resulted in a simple yet integral and exciting part of the show's set design and blocking.

Another collaboration was with the Costume Designer, Serena El-Khatib, also playing Cathy in one cast. I sent her my ideas and information about song locations and the outfits I imagined. I wanted Jamie's costumes to go from light and carefree to more structured, while Cathy's trajectory did the opposite. I made Pinterest boards to capture each characters' ideal vibes, which Serena then used as the basis for her designs. We conducted 30-minute-long Zoom "fittings" with the actors, who showed us articles of their clothing that might work. We selected the outfits based on which the actors were confident in and would also tell the overall costume story. Each actor's character interpretation was distinct, and that was reflected in the costumes they wore. Costumes ended up being a very personalized element of the process. My collaboration with Serena worked well because she had the skill to combine and layer the actors' clothing in unique ways.

Finally, it was time for the rehearsal process to begin. I created a Master Rehearsal Schedule, but to retain flexibility, we notified actors that it would be updated every Sunday for the upcoming week based on our progress the week prior. Our early rehearsal hours were from

6:00 pm to 9:00 pm on Tuesdays through Thursdays, and 12:00 pm to 3:00 pm on the weekends. Those hours expanded during technical rehearsals. Music rehearsals were always held on Zoom, and staging rehearsals were in the Schwartz Center Theater Lab. We rehearsed fourteen hours total the first week, nineteen hours the second and third weeks, and twenty-two hours the final week. Due to Covid protocols and the nature of the play, I rehearsed with each actor individually and only worked with both cast members starting at the end of the third week. Initially, I called each cast member for about five hours per week, which then increased to about eleven hours (See: Appendix D: Rehearsal Schedule).

I had three reasons for these severe limitations to rehearsal hours, in comparison to common practice of thirty or more hours per week. First, I knew that my own energy would be crucial and was aware that my productivity has drastically decreased since the beginning of the pandemic. I wanted to be mindful of the actors' potential need for more rest time. I had previously regularly attended or led four hours of rehearsal per day, occasionally eight or ten hours, fueled by the social nature of rehearsal and life. Now, at the end of a three-hour-rehearsal, I grow tired and need time to rejuvenate. The pandemic has not only put most Emory students in a position where they are much more isolated, but also increased stress, depression, and Zoom fatigue.<sup>14</sup> I was able to attend all of the rehearsal hours because I had dedicated credit hours to work on this project, whereas my collaborators had not. I wanted to give the actors enough rehearsal time that they could succeed and feel completely confident in their performances, but to avoid pressure and burn out on top of school and other activities. Second, on a somewhat related note, I wanted them to stay healthy, and was cautious that overwork could make them susceptible to getting sick. This choice was in line with my goal to make theater happen safely.

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<sup>14</sup> The Editorial Board, "Emory, Give us a Break," *The Emory Wheel*, accessed April 4, 2020, <https://emorywheel.com/emory-give-us-a-break/>

The last reason I was careful about the number of rehearsal hours was that, in my experience, one-on-one coaching generally stops being productive after about an hour and a half.

Additionally, most of the show is sung, and I did not want to tire their voices. I found that having these relatively short bursts of creative energy with the actors was very successful, leaving them feeling energized and excited to do some work on their own or think about ideas they could explore during the next rehearsal. I often ended work on a song with challenges for what they could work on for the next rehearsal.

I came into rehearsals expecting that the rehearsal schedule would end up being dynamic to an extent and that there might be wrenches thrown into my entire initial plan—and there were. Right off the bat, there was a member of the production who came into close contact with someone who had Covid-19, and this person could not attend the first week of rehearsals. Since we were at the beginning of in-person rehearsals, I decided to cancel the person's in-person rehearsals, increase their music rehearsals over Zoom, and increased the other actors' rehearsal time. We then decreased everyone else's rehearsals for the next week while getting this person up to speed. Just as everyone was on track, on Saturday, February 27th, I found out that I had come into close contact with someone who tested positive for Covid-19. I immediately replaced Sunday's in-person rehearsal with an hour-long Zoom rehearsal while we assessed the situation. This ended up being a testament to our safety procedures: Emory Contact Tracing confirmed that everyone but me could continue practicing in person, unless I tested positive. I had to quarantine for eleven days, which included nine rehearsals, but everyone else could continue using our setup in Schwartz Theater Lab.

The challenge was how to direct a play from a distance. Professor Paulsen Zoomed me into all of those rehearsals using a large monitor in the classroom, and I was able to continue to



refine moments and implement new blocking. The major obstacle that I faced from Zooming into a live rehearsal was that the video quality on the monitor was poor, preventing my seeing the expressions on the actors' faces. This hindered my ability to observe the majority of the discoveries that each actor was making. More importantly, I felt an incredible disconnect from the work. I never got a rush of joy when they made a bold choice that completely brought a moment to life or felt the overwhelming sense of pride and delight when they finally landed a moment with which they had been struggling. To bridge this sense of detachment, I asked Kailey Graziotto, the Stage Manager, to send me videos taken on her phone of the last run-through we did of each song. That helped in reviewing the actors' work more clearly after rehearsal, and I was excited to see that those breakthrough moments were happening. However, I was still missing the opportunity to give them good feedback in the moment. Our breakthrough occurred when I asked Kailey to FaceTime me from her phone while the actor was running through the song. Suddenly, I felt as though I was almost transported back into rehearsal. I could sense and be affected by their choices. Even better, I could see them from two angles: the large, zoomed-out view on my laptop screen and the closer angle on my phone. I began to appreciate and be able to gain even more information from seeing the big-picture movements and traffic patterns alongside the smaller choices. These were rehearsal techniques born out of necessity, but perhaps could also be utilized during more normal times.

The second obstacle I faced from attending rehearsal through a screen was that I could not use my own body language and physical energy to get an idea or movement across. As a dancer, I am very connected to my body, and often use it to emphasize the quality of a moment that I am trying to inspire-perhaps it is the urgency in their demand, laziness in how they brush off their scene partner, or seduction in their eye when they flirt. Almost every time that I give any

type of note, whether it is about intentions or a blocking suggestion, I get up and use my body to demonstrate what I am trying to say. For example, one of the actors had a harder time letting loose and getting loud with her body. When I was physically present and trying to get her to get to a joyful, free place for a certain part-whether celebrating her success or asking her partner on a second date-I did so verbally, but, at the same time, I would try to spin around or spread out my arms, motioning and trying to pull the energy out of her that would allow her to get amped up with me and not feel embarrassed to embrace the moment. Over Zoom, I could not use physical gestures to help pull emotions out of the actors, so I had to learn to coach actors without using my body as an aide.

The best results from having to direct in this way were the results that came from taking a suggestion from my adviser Professor Paulsen. She encouraged me to give the actors specific challenges to find two or three moments where they make certain discoveries or actions during each song. This exercise would allow the actors the freedom to make their own choices within certain limitations, which would ultimately make taking ownership over their performances more attainable. For example, when I was trying to get more of a sense of frustration and cruelty from an actor who was making consistently likable decisions, I asked him to find three moments where an audience member would find his action or intention unlikeable. He could choose to belittle, imitate, antagonize, or choose any number of ways to affect his scene partner from that instruction and would be actively thinking about his potential choices throughout the entire song to complete the challenge. The actors seemed to have fun with these challenges, and I could see that they were thinking about the material as something pliable that they could shape themselves rather than just as a set of instructions that they had to follow.

When I got back into the rehearsal room, even though I learned and gained a lot from stepping back and being forced to see things in new ways, I lit up. I was able to put all the puzzle pieces together that had felt so far apart when I was away. I returned to in-person rehearsals on Wednesday, March 10th, which was our first day using the performance space and less than a week from when we were scheduled to first perform in front of an audience. Thankfully, the transition from the rehearsal space to the performance space was relatively simple, since the two spaces were about the same size. We had rehearsal set pieces that were almost identical to the actual set pieces. Although sound elements were beginning to be put in place and used that first day on set, I knew how important it was to keep working on the acting. I communicated to the team that I would need to have the full rehearsal time dedicated to making the final blocking touches that were nearly impossible to do from behind a camera. I knew the performance would suffer if I did not use that rehearsal to clean all of the transitions, guiding the actors in the small moments when they entered and exited. On Thursday, March 12th, we worked and did a run-through of Act 1 for each cast and did the same with Act 2 on Friday, March 13th, while also adding tech elements such as props and sound. I decided to invite the actors from each cast to watch the other cast's rehearsals, which might have been the best decision I made throughout the process.

In those three rehearsals, the show went from feeling disjointed to smooth and cohesive. I think this was due to those last focused hours of rehearsal, and putting everything together in the space. But I think the crucial element, after working mostly alone, was the chance for the actors to be together in the same space, getting to know each other, showcasing their hard work, and learning from each other. It finally felt as though we were part of a team working together to put on a show, when, earlier, it had felt like as if individuals were trying to carry the show on their

own. We needed to have one-on-one rehearsals for longer than I had initially planned because it was clear that erring on the side of caution was the right decision, based on the two incidents where people involved in the show had to miss significant rehearsal periods. As it can feel with many shows, this one pulled together at the last minute.

Another reason those three rehearsals were so special was that we had received permission for the actors to remove their masks during solo moments on stage, something my adviser and I had been working toward since October. I set up the audience and blocked the show in a way that there would be zero chance of transmission, largely to try to obtain permission for this to happen. Now, I wanted the continual masking and unmasking to have artistic merit. I wanted to use these masks, necessary to protect ourselves and others, in a new way: to play a metaphoric role in an artistic endeavor. Artistically, the two characters removing and putting back on their masks at the beginning and end of every number, and whenever the other character entered, became emblematic of their relationship. When each character was alone, they were unafraid to confront their darkest desires. They were uninhibited by the restraints of their relationship, and they were vulnerable. When they were together, they both had their walls up. They also had such pressures and expectations of the other person that they were unable to see them fully and clearly for who they were. Windshields still served as a barrier between the audience and the actors, but the audience was able to see another person's face unhindered and unafraid of the consequences due to the safety of the environment. Limited mask removal was a key accomplishment toward making the magic of theater happen when the odds were against it.

Just as my optimism grew, I had to cancel our invited dress rehearsals because of rain. I decided that the best course of action would be to give the actors a chance to have one more run-through with props, mics, costumes, and the box set pieces since those were the last pieces

we brought in. We could not be in the rain with all of those added elements, so we went back to Schwartz and did full dress rehearsals, one with a faculty member in the audience. Before starting, I implored the actors to reclaim the space, infusing it with all of the new energy that being in the real space had brought. This run-through was for them to have one more chance to get comfortable with all of the tech elements, so for them to focus on that, but more than anything, I wanted them to enjoy it, have fun, and breathe life into such a demanding piece. I was hoping that this freedom would bring them important discoveries.

While those rehearsals were not ideal, they were productive and valuable, and I felt the company was ready going into opening night. The rain that had been going on for days cleared up that morning, leaving only some wind with which to contend. Little did we realize how strong that wind was until we got outside in the production space. I made some last-minute adjustments to account for it, including making adjustments to secure props that might have blown away. I also worked with the actor who placed the tall, thin, prone-to-falling-over Christmas tree to wedge it in between some boxes to keep it standing. I coached the actors to let the wind raise the stakes and influence their emotions-almost as though they were performing in a dramatic period piece movie, with box fans purposefully pointed towards the actors, hoping this would heighten the drama.

When the show began and the sun started to go down, the wind became even more intense, and it was clear that the actors needed some adjustments. During the first number, the actor playing Cathy was thrown off guard when the scarf she wore in her hair fell down and her hair began rustling the microphone. I quickly texted the Assistant Stage Manager backstage to make sure both performers' hair was pulled back into secure ponytails or buns so that would no longer be an issue. The wind picked up even more, and I texted her again, asking her to give the

actor playing Cathy the option to not wear her short, flowy dresses, replacing them with pants from earlier in the show. The actor chose to remain in her pants, a good call that saved us from potential mishaps. Not wearing the correct costumes for a few numbers unfortunately made quite a difference in the flow and feel of the overall show, but it was necessary for the actor to feel comfortable and confident, and to focus on her performance instead of on holding her skirt down. This decision was an example of a time that live, outdoor theater forced unanticipated choices that could affect artistic quality. Although the pandemic wasn't directly responsible for this challenge, in determining how to respond I was still guided by my goal of making live theater happen safely in a pandemic.

During this performance, the actors were resilient and worked remarkably under the circumstances. At one point, the wind sent a plastic cup flying across the stage during a serious song. The actor had the right impulse to get up and collect the cup, but in the process, forgot where she was in the song. Fortunately, after about four lines, she collected herself and got back on track. Seeing her contend with the elements and overcome a setback in real performance time, while it was not what I would have wanted to happen, was what I remember most distinctly from that night. It made me proud and excited to see her face a challenge and ultimately succeed. There were also some poignant moments that the wind created, such as during the song where the actors' timelines cross in the middle of the show. They extended their arms out to one another at the opposite sides of the circle of cement in the middle of the stage, committing themselves to each other. The darkened sky and wind tugging at their clothes and bodies seemed to be screaming, "Don't do it," foreshadowing that their relationship was doomed. The actors began the show fighting with the elements, but as they grew used to it, they began to navigate the weather as a tool that could push them to make stronger choices. While the weather made the

actors work and struggle harder than they were used to, inducing some sacrifice in musicality and acting, watching them initially battle and then adjust to the circumstances created a memorable night at a live performance.

Just when I thought that we had dealt with all of the possible obstacles that a live show could bring, we encountered new challenges for the performance on Friday, March 19th. It was opening night for the second cast, and while I had been watching the weather, by that morning it seemed as though we were in the clear, with no rain predicted for that evening. The night had a shaky start when we held the show's opening for a cast member's friends to arrive due to road closures for President Biden's visit to Emory. The actors were just starting to settle into their performances and shake off their initial nerves when the sky grew dark and a few raindrops began to fall. I handed the tech crew some plastic bags from my car and they covered the speakers, which were onstage, as the rain continued. One of the actor's clip-on microphones stopped working during a song in the middle of the show, and the Sound Board Operator ran onstage and gave her a handheld microphone. To give us time to fix the microphone, to let the rain settle down, and to create a plan moving forward, I announced a five-minute intermission. We began the next song, but the rain was unrelenting. Watching the actors getting soaked, I came on stage during the beginning of a song and handed an actor my umbrella from the trunk of my car. While interrupting the show and breaking the fourth wall was not my preferred choice, it became clear to me in that moment it would have been far worse for me to have left the actor and her microphone out onstage for the remainder of the song without any cover from the rain. To top it all off, we also endured a few minutes when a car alarm went off from the adjacent parking deck, and some people chose to walk through the performance space mid-show.

Again, the actors had great attitudes and reacted to the distractions with composure, and I felt this vindicated my choice to highly prioritize the performers' confidence throughout the rehearsal and design processes. The most memorable event of the night for me was when one of the actors walked onto the wet stage barefoot, in a scene where he usually wore slippers. I was appalled, but I understood—and confirmed with him afterward—that he thought the slippers would become uncomfortably drenched. Seeing someone who I felt responsible for walking outside barefoot during a storm was nothing short of shocking. All we could do backstage at the end of the performance was laugh—our options were either that, or cry. I just had to sigh and think: these are the joys of site-specific theater. I am also confident that the audience, aware of all this scrambling, knew and felt they were at a live event.

The next performance made everything worth it. It was the second and closing performance for the first cast, and when I spoke with them right before the house opened, I told them to walk out and own the space. They had earned this performance and it was their time to shine. From the second they entered to the very last moment of the show, they were bursting with energy and radiated confidence. They performed beautifully, even growing in their performances from where they had gotten in rehearsals. After the first two challenging nights, a wave of relief came over me; we had the makings for a great show, we just needed the right set of circumstances to make it happen. Closing night, we had the same successful experience with the other cast, although it did not feel as transformative, since we had just experienced a performance where everything fell into place.

The most special thing about closing night was strike, where the tech crew, our faculty adviser, and actors from both casts joined together to move the backstage equipment, props, and set back to the Schwartz Lab, which was no small feat. Even though we were lifting and carrying



heavy flats, platforms, tables, and boxes, everyone had a positive attitude about our last bit of time together working on the show. While wearing masks and maintaining social distancing, there was still an overwhelming feeling of community and teamwork. I mentioned to Professor Paulsen that this was the most community that I have experienced in over a year. In that moment, I felt the joyful, complete feeling that kept me pursuing theater year after year and persisting throughout this thesis project. Even though we did not get to have moments like that throughout the entire process, that one night made all of our dedication and hard work worth it, confirming the power and meaning of live theater.

## Chapter 3

### Lessons Learned

Now, back to Goethe to help assess the success of the project: “What did the author set out to do? Was his plan reasonable and sensible, and how far did he succeed in carrying out?”<sup>15</sup> I set out to make live theater happen safely during a pandemic, explore what defines live theater, and make artistically compelling solo material that can be experienced through a car’s windshield. If I had to use an adjective to describe my plan, I would describe it as ambitious, but the ambition of my project did not necessarily make it unreasonable or senseless. What made my plan attainable was twofold: first, the dedication of my adviser, and second, my ability to prioritize when needed. Through this chapter, I will reflect on my failures, successes, and lessons learned.

#### *1. Lessons in Producing, Directing, and Priorities*

My biggest success on the producing side was that I achieved my goal of making live theater happen. The process included a plethora of emails and meetings, endless adjustments and planning in the midst of unknowns, but what stood out the most was the overwhelming amount of support that I found from various individuals and administrative offices at Emory. Over the span of a few months, I was able to secure the rights to perform, reserve a venue, obtain funds, assemble a cast and crew, make the audio and parking elements of a drive-in musical work, and implement effective safety protocols. Most of those necessary steps to make the production happen would not have been possible without the goodwill and support of others, and underscored the need for good relationships to launch any production. I was conscientious about creating an inclusive environment where everyone had responsibilities that allowed them to have

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<sup>15</sup> Goethe, “On Criticism,” 140.

meaningful suggestions. I learned that having a support structure in place, having the ability to problem-solve as a group, and being unafraid to ask for help were incredibly valuable assets during the process.

As a director, I found individual strategies that supported each actor's growth in their role and watched them become more confident and independent performers. I consider the working environment I created a success; I was very intentional in uplifting them at every possible chance and reminding them that they are allowed and encouraged to follow their instincts and open up their minds to new possibilities with every performance. I wanted the performances to feel as fresh as possible, and their openness to discovery even in performance could help that magic happen. I always strove to treat them and their individual needs, talents, and creative processes with respect, giving them space when needed and trying to shape challenging moments when they were up to it. I detected the attitudes they brought into each rehearsal and determined to work with what they had to offer that day to be the most productive and make the most discoveries. Typically, I matched their initial energy, related with and engaged with them personally, then made sure to focus their energy on the task at hand. I knew that the actors' energy in each moment would be critical to success in these unusual production circumstances, so I worked on getting them into good mindsets during every rehearsal and empowered them to take charge of their performances. By valuing their individual needs and external circumstances in this way, I feel successful in having created an atmosphere where they would feel safe and therefore be able to take risks. At the same time, I was pushing them to take ownership of their performances and make new discoveries with every run-through. I think that this experience will help all four actors have the ability to vocalize what they need from future rehearsal processes and tackle upcoming roles instead of just waiting to be told what to do. From this process, I

learned that sometimes the best way to increase the quality of an actor's performance abilities is to increase your own faith and trust in them.

The final two performances of the show, uninterrupted by outside forces, had strengths and weaknesses. In terms of blocking, one of my successes was in the overall use of the stage and flow. I used the circle on the ground for the beginning, middle, and end points of the show and had a balance of songs that utilized the different areas of the stage, including the box area, picnic table, platform, doors and windows, the space behind the cars, and center stage. I utilized levels, and the characters' trajectories on the stage had a balance of confident, straight lines and winding, uncertain arcs. Jamie's character necessitated a lot of movement and unbounded energy, while Cathy's called for stillness, given that her character found herself stuck in her lowest moments. One of the areas that I focused on in rehearsal, with Professor Paulsen's help, was to encourage the characters to play the opposite—for Jamie to find stillness and for Cathy to find quick-paced physical movement or moments of freedom. I helped each actor to track their character's journey through the show and navigate the longevity of the timeframe: five years and the start to the end of a relationship changes someone a lot. While I am happy and proud of the artistic level of the work that I presented, the decisions that I made to prioritize health, happiness, and safety had the effect of taking away some time and energy that could have potentially allowed us to get farther in realizing these goals. I believe I made the right choice.

My overall objectives slightly shifted from my initial plan, as I realized throughout the process that prioritizing health and safety for everyone involved was the more pertinent goal than artistic achievement in ensuring that a live performance could happen. Building a rehearsal routine that was conscientious of the actors' health and happiness made me realize how people in power in the theater industry, even at the collegiate level, can exploit artists' love of the work to

create a culture of unfair or unsafe working practices. For example, sometimes directors unexpectedly hold actors for up to hours after their rehearsal technically ends, late into the night or early morning. I prioritized never holding actors for longer than a few minutes past their scheduled end time. I realized how theater-makers frequently are taught to choose the goal of artistic achievement over treating their actors with fairness and respect, so I chose to lean into my priority of well-being and did not compromise. I found that making informed decisions such as these with a strong value system and a sense of level-headedness trickled down and increased the trust and happiness within the group. The final iteration of the show that we ended up with was about eighty percent of what I thought we could do artistically, which I might not have been satisfied with in a non-pandemic setting, but I am actually proud of during this specific time. We tackled countless large and small obstacles during this entire process, and I learned that I had to simplify and prioritize my goals in order to hold onto the most important ones. Through facing these obstacles, I discovered that persistence is perhaps my greatest asset as a director and producer. I also learned that making decisions that benefitted the actors' happiness also benefitted their commitment to the process and development as performers.

Not being physically present for nine rehearsals was perhaps the largest obstacle I had to contend with, and ultimately took a real toll. Being behind a screen made implementing new blocking take longer and also reduced my energy levels. It made me keenly aware of the value of live, in-person rehearsals. The disconnect from the cast members decreased my ability to discover new possibilities during rehearsal and experiment with ways to make the show more dynamic. I chose to focus more on giving the actors the materials and time they needed to become comfortable with the show material, which was an important part of the process, but it did diminish my own creative discoveries. My priority shifted from crafting as many contrasting,

interesting moments as possible to making the show happen—as we had considered postponing or cancelling when I had to lock down. Without the ability to reach actors when they came to rehearsal, I became more hesitant to challenge actors for fear of pushing myself or the others past our limits. These were painful choices and hard decisions.

Ultimately, I was not willing to sacrifice the well-being of anyone for the sake of artistry. Perhaps at a different time, I would have extended the hours of rehearsal in order to feel that the show was meeting, if not exceeding, expectations. For this production of *The Last Five Years*, which relied more on the four actors giving it their all than on any other element of the show, it was more constructive to have fewer, more focused hours of rehearsal than spending long hours risking exhaustion. I believe that prioritizing rest time, good relationships between everyone in the room, and being the most supportive director I could be made this production possible and ultimately successful, on a more fundamental and crucial level than the individual artistic choices I made. We made a live experience happen in a pandemic, and that was ultimately the magic I most wanted to create.

In a post-production reflective discussion, Professor Lydia Fort steered me in the direction of an emerging artistic field called “creative producing,” exemplified by the new Artistic Director of Baltimore Center Stage, Stephanie Ybarra. Ybarra explains, “People are often asking me which “side” of the administration, the art or the business, that I live on. I think what being a creative producer means to me is that I am most comfortable squarely in the perfect center of that, where I have one foot in each world and am constantly translating one to the other, and leveraging one for the benefit of the other, while maintaining the integrity of both.”<sup>16</sup> The concept of merging the creative aspect of directing with the managerial side of producing was

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<sup>16</sup> Stephanie Ybarra, interview by Rob Weinert-Kendt. *Entrances & Exits Interview*, American Theatre, December 7, 2018.

central to what I explored during this project, even though I did not have a name for it at the time. In merging these two traditionally separate roles, I was forced to continually weigh and prioritize the impact of my decisions from multiple points of view. Instead of either the director or producer winning the argument, I was spurred to find creative solutions that addressed both artistic and producer goals. Closing any disconnect between producing and directing elements has the potential to address issues of exploitation within current theater practices, including topics such as rehearsal hours. My hope is that my findings from this project could contribute to this important national conversation about the individual and joint responsibilities of directors and producers through the lens of this new position, the “creative producer.”

## *2. Lessons in Live Theater*

In the first chapter, I articulated why I did not want to pursue theater over Zoom. When I ended up needing to utilize Zoom, it became clear that what made the biggest difference between live rehearsals and Zoom rehearsals was the sense of community and the power of being in the physical presence of people with whom you are working intimately. When I was not in the same space as everyone else, I found that the degree to which I could effectively communicate, collaborate, and come up with new artistic ideas suffered more acutely than I could have anticipated. The social element of theater being a significant factor in my own artistic process indicates that the relationships built during rehearsal processes are integral to the artistic outcome of the show. Another example that points to this finding is that the actors’ performances improved quickly and significantly when other cast members began attending their rehearsals. There are all sorts of reasons why this would happen: they want to impress each other, they were able to match energy levels, or they were competing with each other. In any case, the addition of people to the room increased their desire to perform to the best of their ability, incorporate

feedback, and make new discoveries. Live rehearsal is equally vital to theater artists as live performance is to the audience experience.

These observations help to clarify one part of what makes “liveness” in theater. Based on my experience of this process, live theater is not necessarily defined by being in the same physical place or experiencing the same events at the same time. It is also not simply a characteristic of a type of performance setup or format itself. I believe that a vital aspect of what makes theater live and unique from other non-live performances is the process of building a community that, in turn, uplifts the show in significant ways. In a movie, the actor does not likely know or work around the people making audio or visual effects, and the costume designer does not likely know the production assistants. One aspect that makes live theater so special is that, for the most part, everyone works in proximity, knows each other, and therefore learns to trust and support each other. The actors trusting each other to sing the right parts at the right time and trusting the soundboard operator to play the right music are integral to the show’s success, as is the freedom of the actors to connect with the audience. When I came on stage and handed an actor an umbrella, we shared a smile, and the relationship we built during the process led her to accept the umbrella with no sense of doubt or hesitation, and the confidence to incorporate it into her performance. That tangible sense of trust and connection between the cast and crew members is an aspect of liveness that allows performances to be successful.

The sociable bonds between all of the members of the cast and crew are the glue that elevates the production to the next level. It is not a coincidence that the members of the design team who did the best work artistically were trusted colleagues, and those who I did not have the chance to meet in-person seemed less committed and proactive in completing their work. I speculate that if we had rehearsed entirely over Zoom and then been in person only for the



performances, there would have been a degree of liveness missing. I have come to believe that the small moments that build communities within groups of people are essential to fulfilling the promise of live performance. Moments such as leaving the building together and walking to your car or joking around during breaks are integral to building a sense of trust and camaraderie within a group of people, and these moments do not happen when you are separated by a screen. These aspects of the show would not have been as solid if not for the time that we spent together outside of the rehearsal room. When we return from primarily virtual interactions, I anticipate that people will not take these interactions for granted, and I will advise and encourage theater-makers to value this connection as much as ‘work time’—perhaps even plan bonding time and experiences into future rehearsal schedules.

The audience having an awareness of this group effort is also part of what makes theater “live” for them. By plan, the audience sees the actor behind the character during the curtain call. Another aspect of live theater is the knowledge that anything could go right or wrong at any given moment. When the sound and lighting cues are perfectly in sync with the set moving and an actor perfectly hitting an impressive note, that is a moment the audience will remember. On the opposite side, when the illusion is broken, that can be an equally memorable moment. When the sound board operator ran on stage and handed an actor a microphone during our second show, the audience got a glimpse of the layers of creative collaboration that were behind the production, and they knew they were seeing something absolutely real and unique. Everything that went wrong that night was unique to that performance. I suggest that its unpredictability enhanced the audience's connection to the "live" performance, amplifying their awareness of the community effort and in-the-moment decisions that the people behind the production made. The

audience becomes the final, crucial part of that community created by a production that is vital to making a performance experience live.

### *3. Moving Forward*

The most important takeaway from this research is that the quality of community and mutual respect for the people involved are integral to a live performance's success. My alteration of standard practice for rehearsal periods out of a desire to create safe theater during a pandemic is a practice that I believe should continue even after the pandemic ceases. There are multiple avenues for creating positive change that leaders can take advantage of moving forward-whether it is building in time during a rehearsal outline to check-in with everyone, being purposeful about not calling cast or crew members when they are not needed, or other ways that encourage mutual trust and respect. No artistic goal should supersede the health and well-being of actors or crew members, and that should include the collegiate training level. There is a lot of buzz in the theater world about canceling ten out of twelve rehearsals<sup>17</sup>, a common tech week scheduling tactic where cast and crew members are called for twelve hours in a day and have two hour-long breaks. I believe that the expectation of late nights and long weekend rehearsals on actors and crew members, on top of the fact that most theater artists need to hold secondary jobs to make a living, undermines the professionalism of the field as a whole.

The expectation of being overworked is one aspect of the field that I am hopeful will change in a post-pandemic world, and I am hopeful that this project will contribute to the body of knowledge that indicates that you do not have to push people to their breaking points to create good art. I am happy with my decision to value the actors' time, energy, and health because everyone's spirits stayed high throughout the entire process, no one fell ill, and by anticipating and respecting their needs, they respected our valuable time. I could see that mutual respect

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<sup>17</sup> Jerald Raymond Pierce, "Time for a Change: What If We Cut the Long Hours?" American Theatre

reflected in the quality of their work. Giving actors the best possible chance to succeed and thrive both during rehearsals and in performances includes allowing them the opportunity to be well-rested and well-rounded outside of rehearsal and expand their ability to make creative discoveries.

This process also raised questions that would be interesting to explore going forward. Putting on an intimate show successfully without physical intimacy raised the question, why is onstage intimacy such as kissing or touching so prevalent and fascinating? Given the power dynamics at play in actor-director relationships, can individual artists be trusted to decide where the line is that they should draw for themselves when prioritizing their health and safety during a performance? Observing the development and growth of social bonds in a rehearsal room from the first day of rehearsal until closing night, and how leaders facilitated those bonds, would also be helpful in further exploring the group effort behind productions. As a pillar of live theater, I believe that the unique communities that theater creates, as well as the potential for toxic cultures within those communities, would be an excellent area with multiple facets available for further study.

## Appendix A: Honors Project Production Plan

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1. Overview
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5. Performance Safety Protocols
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  - c. Emergency Egress
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### **1. Overview**

As research for my honors thesis, I will be directing *The Last Five Years*, a musical by Jason Robert Brown. It is a two-person show made up entirely of solo songs, with the exception of two minute-long duets at the middle and end of the show.

The performances will be approx. 1 hour 15 minutes long, with no intermission. The performances will be at 6:30pm on March 18th-21st, with rehearsals beginning on February 17th.

### **2. People Involved**

#### **Cast:**

I have two casts for the show (four people in total): Brant Adams, Amelia Dimas, Serena El-Khatib, and Haley Ornstein. All four of the students will either be living on campus or onboarded. One of the recommendations that the Emory Nursing School is giving to all Atlanta theaters when reopening is that they have understudies for all roles, ready to step in at any time. I decided to create two casts instead of understudies to give more performance opportunities to students. The four actors will have almost entirely separate rehearsals so that we do not risk any of them potentially getting ill at any point. *Please refer to the Rehearsal Schedule document for more specific details.*

**Crew:**

There are four crew members: Kailey Graziotto, Nora Hundertmark, Lukas Palumbo, and Lizzie Cohen, all of which will be onboarded. Kailey is the Stage Manager, so she will attend every rehearsal, but the other three will only attend rehearsals from March 10th-17th.

**3. Rehearsals**

All exclusively-music rehearsals will take place over Zoom. Every in-person rehearsal will take place in Schwartz 203 or outside. Everyone involved will wear masks at all times, practice 6-foot physical distancing when singing outdoors, practice 12-foot physical distancing when singing indoors, and follow any other safety protocols required by the space. A faculty member will be present at all rehearsals to ensure that everyone is taking proper safety measures.

The average number of people per rehearsal is 4 - one actor, the Stage Manager, a faculty member, and myself. The maximum number of people at a rehearsal at the same time will be 9 people, which will happen for 6 outdoor rehearsals - four actors, the Stage Manager, Assistant Stage Manager, Sound Board Op, a faculty member, and myself.

**4. Performance Space**

We have gotten permission from Lewis Fuller to use the Allen Plaza, which is the courtyard adjacent to Schwartz, next to Fishburne. The setup will be about 10 cars arranged in two lines facing the building. The parking spots will be marked with orange traffic cones. The sound can be played through cars' radios from an FM transmitter playing audio from a keyboard and mic input from headset microphones. We are also working with Emory Transportation & Parking Services to best utilize the space.

**5. Performance Safety Protocols**

There will be six people total involved in running each show:

- Two actors
- The stage manager
- The assistant stage manager (ASM)
- The director
- A faculty advisor

All of them will remain masked and at least 6 feet apart at all times.

**Audience Safety**

There are three rules for audience members:

1. Audience members are required to stay in their cars and keep their windows rolled up during the entirety of check-in and the performance.
2. Cars can hold up to 4 people each.
3. No photography or videography is allowed.

We will email reminders about these conditions for attending the show. There will also be signage around the check-in area and the stage that reminds the audience that they must follow these protocols.

### **Check-In Process**

The check-in process will also be sent out in emails to the audience members in advance. They will drive to the check-in table outside the Schwartz Center, where they will show their ticket to the ASM through the car window. The ASM will then help them to their parking spot by motioning and holding a sign. There will be orange traffic cones and numbered signs to indicate parking spots. The playbill for the show will be available in an online format for audience members to see details about the show, cast, and crew.

### **Emergency Egress**

If a car needs to leave during the show, we will ensure that there is plenty of room for all of the cars to back out of their spaces and exit the parking deck. We will work and comply with Emory Transportation & Parking Services on this matter.

### **Actor Safety**

I plan to seek approval from Emory's HR department to have the singers safely unmasked when they are performing alone outside since the audience members will be inside their cars the entire time with the windows rolled up. Everyone else involved in the production (the Pianist, The Stage Manager, Assistant Stage Manager, Faculty Advisor, and Director) can be as far away from the stage area as recommended. If this plan is approved, I will choreograph entrances and exits so that the actor always wears the mask until they get to the stage and put it back on when they leave.

For the moments where both actors are performing, they will remain 6 feet apart and wear clear face shields or transparent masks. I will consult with the EHSO about conditions under which they could only wear face shields.

No photography or recording of any kind is allowed during the show as part of our licensing agreement with Music Theatre International. However, we could also set up visible caution signs stating that there are unmasked performers working under safe conditions to make sure no one takes a picture out of context.

Appendix B: Budget

**Expenses:**

MTI* Rights.....	\$960.00
Set.....	\$115.36
Masks .....	\$108.63
FM Transmitter.....	\$89.99
<b>Total.....</b>	<b>\$1,273.98</b>

<b>Total Amount Funded.....</b>	<b>\$1,273.98</b>
Amount Funded by Emory Undergraduate Research Programs.....	\$700.00
Amount Funded by Emory Theater Studies Department.....	\$573.98

\*Music Theatre International

## Appendix C: Scene Breakdown

Scene Title	Still Hurting	Shiksa Goddess	See I'm Smiling	Moving Too Fast	I'm A Part of That	The Schmuel Song	A Summer in Ohio
Scene #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Pages	1-2	3-4	5-7	8-9	10-11	12-14	15-16
Props	Cathy's wedding ring, Jamie's wedding band, yellow legal pad with note, Cathy's purse	Watch in box	Jamie's phone, Cathy's script, Cathy's purse	Cathy's phone, manuscripts, card stock	Pile of Jamie's books	Gift-wrapped box with watch inside, yellow legal pad with scribbles, BackStage magazine, business card, gold	Diary, hair rollers
"Location"	C: Cathy and Jamie's living room in their apartment. J: Cathy's front porch	Cathy's front porch, then Jamie's apartment	C: Pier by a river in Ohio. J: Jamie's apartment	Jamie's apartment, then to Cathy and Jamie's apartment	A bookstore	Cathy and Jamie's living room in their apartment	Cathy's bedroom in Ohio
Primary Location on Stage	Stage Center and picnic table	Stage Left entrance, then to Stage Right boxes	Stage Left picnic bench	Everywhere	Stage center and picnic table	Everywhere	Stage Right boxes
Characters:							
Jamie	x	X	x	X	x	X	
Cathy	X		X	x	X	x	X

Scene Title	The Next Ten Minutes	A Miracle Would Happen	Climbing Uphill	If I Didn't Believe in You	I Can Do Better Than That	Nobody Needs to Know	Goodbye Until Tomorrow/I Could Never Rescue You
Scene #	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Pages	17-19	20-22	23-26	27-28	29-30	31-32	33-35
Props	Jamie and Cathy's wedding bands, ring box with engagement ring	Cans of beer, Jamie's briefcase	Jamie's phone, one of Jamie's books		Bouquet of flowers	Blanket, pillows, cup of water	Yellow legal pad, Jamie's wedding band, pen, Jamie's briefcase/bag
"Location"	Central Park	Leaving work/at a bar	In an audition/waiting rooms for auditions	Jamie and Cathy's bedroom	In the car	Jamie and Cathy's bedroom	Cathy's porch/Jamie and Cathy's living room and front porch
Primary Location on Stage	Downstage Center circle	Stage Right glass door and boxes	Stage Left platform	Stage Left area	Downstage Center single box	Platform	Everywhere
Characters:							
Jamie	X	X	x	X		X	X
Cathy	X		X		X		X

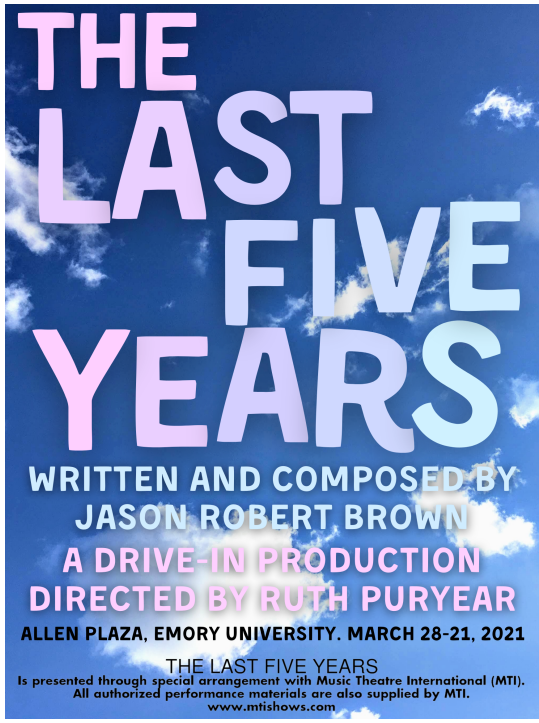


## Appendix D: Rehearsal Schedule

	Date	Rehearsal Type	Time	Location	Goals	Actor Call Times	Others Needed (Entire Time)	Notes
Week 1	Wednesday, Feb 17	Cathy Vocal	7:30-9:15	Zoom	"I Can Do Better Than That," "Climbing Uphill"	7:30-8:15 Amelia 8:30-9:15 Serena	Director, Stage Manager, Music Director	Serena works until 8:15, Haley on Zoom
	Thursday, Feb 18	Jamie Vocal	7:30-9:00	Zoom	"Shiksa Goddess," "Moving Too Fast" "The Schmuel Song"	7:30-8:15 Brant 8:15-9:00 Haley	Director, Stage Manager, Music Director	Kailey has class until 7:15, Haley on Zoom
	Friday, Feb 19	Jamie Blocking	6:00-9:00	Schwartz Lab	"Shiksa Goddess," "Moving Too Fast"	6:00-7:25 Serena 7:35-9 Brant	Director, Stage Manager, Faculty Member	Haley on Zoom
	Saturday, Feb 20	Jamie Blocking	12:00-3:00	Schwartz Lab	"The Schmuel Song" and review	12:00-1:25 Brant 1:35-3:00 Amelia	Director, Stage Manager, Faculty Member	Haley on Zoom
	Sunday, Feb 21	Cathy Blocking	12:00-3:00	Schwartz Lab	"I Can Do Better Than That," "Climbing Uphill"	12:00-1:25 Serena 1: 35-3 Amelia	Director, Stage Manager, Faculty Member	Haley on Zoom
	Sunday, Feb 21	Jamie Vocal	3:00-5:00	Zoom	Review note changes	3:00-4:00 Haley 4:00-5:00 Brant	Director, Stage Manager, Music Director	Haley on Zoom
Week 2	Tuesday, Feb 23	Jamie and Cathy Vocal	6:00-9:15	Zoom	"A Summer in Ohio" "A Part of That" "If I Didn't Believe In You" "Nobody Needs to Know" "See I'm Smiling"	6-6:45 Haley 6:45-7:30 Serena 7:45-8:30 Brant 8:30-9:15 Amelia	Director, Stage Manager, Music Director	Brant can call in and Kailey has class until 7:15, Haley on Zoom
	Wednesday, Feb 24	Jamie and Cathy Blocking	6:00-9:00	Schwartz Lab	"Shiksa Goddess," "Moving Too Fast" "The Schmuel Song" "See I'm Smiling"	6:00-7:30 Haley 7:40-9 Amelia	Director, Stage Manager, Faculty Member	No Brant, Serena works until 8:15
	Thursday, Feb 25	Cathy Blocking	6:00-9:00	Schwartz Lab	"Shiksa Goddess," "Moving Too Fast" "The Schmuel Song" "See I'm Smiling"	6:00-7:30 Haley 7:40-9 Serena	Director, Stage Manager, Faculty Member	No Brant, Kailey has class until 7:15
	Friday, Feb 26	Cathy and Jamie Review *off-book*	6:00-10:00	Schwartz Lab	All previous songs (except See I'm Smiling)	6-6:50 Serena 7-7:50 Amelia 8-8:50 Haley 9-9:50 Brant	Director, Stage Manager, Faculty Member	
	Saturday, Feb 27	Jamie Blocking	12:00-3:00	Schwartz Lab	"If I Didn't Believe In You," "Nobody Needs to Know"	12-1:25 Brant 1:35-3:00 Haley	Director, Stage Manager, Faculty Member	
	Saturday, Feb 27	Cathy Vocal	3:00-5:00	Zoom	"See I'm Smiling," "I'm Still Hurting"	3:00-4:00 Amelia 4: 00-5:00 Serena	Director, Stage Manager, Music Director	
	Sunday, Feb 28	Cathy Blocking	1:00-2:00	Zoom	"I'm Still Hurting" and review	1:00-1:30 Amelia 1:30-2:00 Serena	Director, Stage Manager, Faculty Member	Ruth on Zoom
Week 3	Tuesday, March 2	Jamie Vocal	6:00-8:00	Zoom	Finalize note changes, review anything that needs work	6:00-7:15 Haley, 7: 15-8:00 Brant	Director, Stage Manager, Music Director	Kailey has class until 7:15, Ruth on Zoom
	Wednesday, March 3	Cathy Review	6:00-9:00	Schwartz Lab	Still Hurting, A Part of That, etc	6:00-7:25 Serena 7: 35-9:00 Amelia	Director, Stage Manager, Faculty Member	Kailey has class until 7:15, Ruth on Zoom
	Thursday, March 4	Jamie Review	6:00-9:00	Schwartz Lab	If I Didn't Believe in You, Nobody Needs to Know, Schmuel Song	6:00-7:55 Haley 8:05-9:00 Brant	Director, Stage Manager, Faculty Member	Serena works until 8:15, Ruth on Zoom
	Friday, March 5	Jamie Blocking	6:00-9:10	Schwartz Lab	A Miracle Would Happen, I Could Never Rescue You, monologues	6-7:30 Brant 7:40-9: 10 Haley	Director, Stage Manager, Faculty Member	Ruth on Zoom
	Saturday, March 6	Cathy Blocking and Review	12:00-3:00	Schwartz Lab	Goodbye Until Tomorrow, monologues, review	12:00-1:25 Amelia 1: 35-3:00 Serena	Director, Stage Manager, Faculty Member	Meredith visiting, Ruth on Zoom

	Saturday, March 6	Cathy and Jamie Vocal	3:00-5:00	Zoom	The Next Ten Minutes, Goodbye Until Tomorrow/I Could Never Rescue	3:00-4:15 Haley, 3:30-4:15 Amelia 4:20-5:00 Brant 4:35-5:00 Serena	Director, Stage Manager, Music Director	Ruth on Zoom
	Sunday, March 7	Cathy and Jamie Blocking	12:00-3:10	Schwartz Lab	The Next Ten Minutes, Goodbye Until Tomorrow/I Could Never Rescue	12:00-1:30 Serena, Brant 1:40-3:10 Amelia, Haley	Director, Stage Manager, Faculty Member	Ruth on Zoom
	Tuesday, March 9	Cathy and Jamie Blocking - Transitions	Director, Stage Manager, Faculty Member	Schwartz Lab	Schmuel Song, Next Ten Minutes, Goodbye Until Tomorrow/I Could	6-7:30 Brant, Serena 7:40-9 Haley, Amelia	Director, Stage Manager, Faculty Member	Kailey has class until 7:15, Ruth on Zoom
	Wednesday, March 10	Cathy and Jamie Blocking - Transitions AND Sound Training	5:00-9:15	Allen Plaza then Schwartz Lab	Still Hurting, See I'm Smiling, Moving Too Fast, A Miracle Would Happen,	5-7 Haley, Amelia 7:15-9:30 Brant 7:45-9:30 Serena	Director, Stage Manager, Assistant Stage Manager, Board Op, Faculty Member	Serena works until 8:15, Ruth is back but has a commitment from 7-7:15
Tech	Thursday, March 11	Cleaning rehearsal in the space	5:00-9:00	Allen Plaza then Schwartz Lab	Act 1 Run Through with time for fine tuning	5-9 Brant, Serena, Haley, Amelia	Director, Stage Manager, Assistant Stage Manager, Board Op, Faculty Member	Kailey has class until 7:15
	Friday, March 12	Tech	4:00-8:00	Allen Plaza	Act 2 Run Through with time for tech	4-8 Haley, Amelia, Brant, Serena	Director, Stage Manager, Assistant Stage Manager, Board Op, Faculty Member	
	Saturday, March 13	Tech	2:00-7:00	Allen Plaza	Full run-throughs (minimal)	2-4:30 Serena, Brant 4:30-7 Haley, Amelia	Director, Stage Manager, Assistant Stage Manager, Board Op, Faculty Member	
	Sunday, March 14	Tech	2:00-7:00	Allen Plaza	Full dress rehearsals, both casts	2-4:30 Haley, Amelia 4:30-7 Serena, Brant	Director, Stage Manager, Assistant Stage Manager, Board Op, Faculty Member	
	Tuesday, March 16	Dress Rehearsal	5:00-8:00	Allen Plaza	Invited dress rehearsal	5-8 Haley, Amelia	Director, Stage Manager, Assistant Stage Manager, Board Op, Faculty Member	Kailey has class but is missing part of it
	Wednesday, March 17	Dress Rehearsal	5:00-8:00	Allen Plaza	Invited dress rehearsal	5-8 Brant, Serena	Director, Stage Manager, Assistant Stage Manager, Board Op, Faculty Member	
	Thursday, March 18	Performance	Call at 5, cars arrive at 6, the show begins at 6:15	Allen Plaza		Haley, Amelia	Director, Stage Manager, Assistant Stage Manager, Board Op, Faculty Member	Kailey has class but is missing part of it
	Friday, March 19	Performance	Call at 5, cars arrive at 6, the show begins at 6:15	Allen Plaza		Brant, Serena	Director, Stage Manager, Assistant Stage Manager, Board Op, Faculty Member	
Shows	Saturday, March 20	Performance	Call at 5, cars arrive at 6, the show begins at 6:15	Allen Plaza		Haley, Amelia	Director, Stage Manager, Assistant Stage Manager, Board Op, Faculty Member	
	Sunday, March 21	Performance	Call at 5, cars arrive at 6, the show begins at 6:15	Allen Plaza		Brant, Serena	Director, Stage Manager, Assistant Stage Manager, Board Op, Faculty Member	

## Appendix E: Program



**THE LAST FIVE YEARS**  
 WRITTEN AND COMPOSED BY  
**JASON ROBERT BROWN**  
 A DRIVE-IN PRODUCTION  
 DIRECTED BY **RUTH PURYEAR**  
 ALLEN PLAZA, EMORY UNIVERSITY. MARCH 28-21, 2021

THE LAST FIVE YEARS  
 Is presented through special arrangement with Music Theatre International (MTI).  
 All authorized performance materials are also supplied by MTI.  
 www.mtishows.com

**THE LAST FIVE YEARS**  
 ORIGINALLY PRODUCED BY NORTHLIGHT THEATRE, CHICAGO, IL  
 ORIGINALLY PREPARED FOR THE NEW YORK STAGE BY  
 ARIELLE TEPPER AND MARTY BELL

**CAST**

CATHERINE HIATT.....AMELIA DIMAS (3/18 & 3/20)  
 SERENA EL-KHATIB (3/19 & 3/21)

JAMIE WELLERSTEIN.....HALEY ORNSTEIN (3/18 & 3/20)  
 BRANT ADAMS (3/19 & 3/21)

**CREW**

DIRECTOR.....RUTH PURYEAR  
 FACULTY ADVISOR.....LISA PAULSEN  
 STAGE MANAGER.....KAILEY GRAZIOTTO  
 MUSIC DIRECTOR.....MEREDITH STARKS  
 TECHNICAL DIRECTOR/SET DESIGNER.....LUKAS PALUMBO  
 & NORA HUNDERTMARK  
 ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER.....LIZZIE COHEN  
 SOUND BOARD OP.....SAWYER GRAY  
 COSTUME DESIGNER.....SERENA EL-KHATIB  
 PROPS DESIGNER.....MAGGIE WHITEMORE

ANY VIDEO AND/OR AUDIO RECORDING OF THIS  
 PRODUCTION IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED

**MUSICAL NUMBERS**

STILL HURTING.....CATHY  
 SHIKSA GODDESS.....JAMIE  
 SEE I'M SMILING.....CATHY  
 MOVING TOO FAST.....JAMIE  
 A PART OF THAT .....CATHY  
 THE SCHMUEL SONG.....JAMIE  
 A SUMMER IN OHIO.....CATHY  
 THE NEXT TEN MINUTES..... CATHY & JAMIE  
 A MIRACLE WOULD HAPPEN/  
 WHEN YOU COME HOME TO ME.....CATHY & JAMIE  
 CLIMBING UPHILL.....CATHY  
 IF I DIDN'T BELIEVE IN YOU.....JAMIE  
 I CAN DO BETTER THAN THAT.....CATHY  
 NOBODY NEEDS TO KNOW.....JAMIE  
 GOODBYE UNTIL TOMORROW/  
 I COULD NEVER RESCUE YOU.....CATHY & JAMIE

**SPECIAL THANKS TO...**

**LISA PAULSEN**  
 FOR ATTENDING EVERY REHEARSAL AND  
 ADVISING EVERY STEP OF THE WAY

**LEWIS FULLER**  
 FOR THE USE OF ALLEN PLAZA

**MEREDITH PAYNE**  
 FOR MAKING SOUND HAPPEN

**AARON MAYER & MALINA RODRIGUEZ**  
 FOR PROVIDING THE SPACE, TOOLS, AND SUPERVISION  
 NEEDED TO BUILD THE SET

**KEVIN KARNES**  
 FOR ASSISTING WITH MASK REGULATIONS

**EMORY HEALTH & SAFETY OFFICE**  
 FOR HELPING ENSURE THAT OUR REHEARSALS  
 AND PERFORMANCES ARE SAFE

**EMORY PARKING SERVICES**  
 FOR ASSISTING THE "DRIVE-IN"  
 ASPECTS OF THE SHOW

**THIS PROJECT IS GENEROUSLY  
 SUPPORTED BY...**

**EMORY THEATER STUDIES DEPARTMENT**  
**SPRING 2021 UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH  
 PROGRAMS INDEPENDENT RESEARCH GRANT**

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