



# UPSTAGE CALLBOARD

## *Into the Woods*

With only 10 actors, one piano, and boundless imagination, this witty and wildly theatrical re-invention is *Into the Woods* like you've never seen it before! Mind the wolf, heed the witch and honor the giant in the sky at this extraordinary musical about the power of wishes and what really happens *after* they come true.

## *a note from Artistic Director Todd Haimes*

With an ensemble of 10 actors, all playing a variety of instruments on stage, this *Into the Woods* is a beautiful new take on a beloved piece. As characters from different fairy tales connect, each has a unique sound, from brassy princes to a guitar-driven Jack and his beanstalk. Wonderful touches of ingenuity abound, with a taxidermy wolf, sheet music birds, and a surprisingly evocative cow bell. When a feather duster can become a hen and curtains can turn into two terrible stepsisters, we are in a world where imagination drives storytelling, and anything can happen.

*when* *Once upon a time*      *where* *In the woods*

## *who*

**Cinderella** - A young maiden who is mistreated by her stepmother and stepsisters and hopes to attend the Prince's festival

**Cinderella's Mother** - Deceased. Guides Cinderella through a voice from her grave

**Cinderella's Prince** - A prince who yearns for Cinderella's affection

**Cinderella's Stepmother** - Cinderella's father's new wife; very demanding and mean-spirited toward Cinderella

**Florinda** - Cinderella's stepsister

**Jack** - A naïve boy who is looking for adventure

**Jack's Mother** - A protective yet independent mother

**Little Red Riding Hood** - A spoiled, fearless young girl

**Lucinda** - Cinderella's stepsister

**Milky White** - Jack's cow and friend

**Mysterious Man** - An observer who meddles in certain situations

**Rapunzel** - A maiden who is locked in a tower by the Witch and longs to see the world

**Rapunzel's Prince** - A prince who tries to save Rapunzel

**The Baker** - A strong-willed townsman in search of a way to have a child and make his wife happy

**The Baker's Wife** - A determined woman who wishes for a child of her own

**The Witch** - The Baker and his Wife's neighbor who sends them on a journey to reverse a curse she set on their house

**Wolf** - A hungry hunter who lures Little Red Riding Hood off of the path

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# INTERVIEW WITH CO-DIRECTORS NOAH BRODY AND BEN STEINFELD

Education Dramaturg Ted Sod interviewed the *Into the Woods* co-directors Noah Brody and Ben Steinfeld.

**Ted Sod:** Let's start with some biographical information: where you were born, where you were educated, and when you decided to become actor/directors.

**Noah Brody:** I was born in Bound Brook, New Jersey. I went to undergrad at Colgate University, and I have degrees in chemistry and English literature from Colgate. I performed as a kid and did forensics and school plays in high school, but I got really into performing Shakespeare from my work as an English major. I moved to New York and started studying in New York, before going to grad school in the Brown/Trinity MFA program, where I got my master's degree as an actor. It was there that we all met. In grad school we all studied acting, directing, and writing and discovered how much we love all those disciplines.

**Ben Steinfeld:** I was born outside of New York City, in Westchester, and I moved to Boston when I was five, and then I moved to LA when I was thirteen, so I don't really know where I'm from, but I always feel like I'm from New England. I went to Brown University for undergrad and also attended the Brown/Trinity MFA program, which is where I met Noah and the rest of the Fiasco gang. I actually came into theatre through the music door. I always sang; I've played guitar since I was a kid, and my family was musical, so music-making was always in my life. By the time I got to college, I knew that I liked acting and performing as much as I liked music. I dabbled in directing and ensemble play-making in college, but it wasn't really until grad school when my interest in things beyond acting started to kick in. Noah and I connected because we were both interested in the same sorts of things. I directed a short play in grad school that Noah wrote, Noah directed me in a play at one point, so we had gotten to try on different identities with each other.

**TS:** And was Fiasco Theater born in New York? Or while you were still at school?

**BS:** It was born in New York, but the conversations that led to Fiasco began when we were in school.

**TS:** What is the mission of Fiasco?

**NB:** It's an interesting question because we're in the process of reevaluating that mission. Currently, the mission statement that we have is to create joyful, actor-driven theatre and to put the actor at the center of the art and to offer training at low or no cost to the Fiasco community.

**TS:** Why such a provocative title for the company?

**NB:** We took it on for a couple of reasons. The word "fiasco" because it has theatrical roots. It has to do with a moment that might fail, in which an actor might have to fare fiasco, or "make the bottle" that night at the bar. It's also a reminder that you have to risk a total failure, if you want to have the hope of creating something wonderful. And it's a signal to ourselves and to the world that, while we take our work very seriously, we don't take ourselves too seriously.



Co-director of *Into the Woods*,  
Noah Brody



Co-director of *Into the Woods*,  
Ben Steinfeld

“...WHILE WE TAKE OUR WORK VERY SERIOUSLY, WE DON'T TAKE OURSELVES TOO SERIOUSLY.”

**TS:** And can you tell me a bit about choosing *Into the Woods*? Because, up to this point, it's been primarily Shakespeare, correct?

**BS:** That's right. Musicals are usually written, directed, and staged with a certain kind of hierarchy in terms of the rehearsal process, and so we thought it would be interesting to see what it would be like to bring our process of making a show to a musical. We very quickly came up with *Into the Woods* as the show that would be the perfect fit for us because it met so many of the criteria that we have when picking a show. It had to have lots of great parts (because we are a company of actors), and it had to be about something that we care about. It is such a compelling story, and there's all kinds of amazing theatrical challenges in it: how are you going to do the wolf? How are you going to do the giant? How are you going to tell this story with this number of people in the cast? How are you going to make all these musical events happen? To pick a line from the show that we've often quoted, it made us "excited and scared," and that's something that we look for.

**TS:** I read in a few interviews that you think the piece is about inheritance. Is that what you would still say it's about?

**NB:** Well, I think it's about multiple things. But, the idea of inheritances runs so strongly throughout the show, and it was very useful as one of our organizing principles. There are objects that we inherit from our parents and our grandparents, and they can take on great value. Mundane objects can take on a totemic power when they have a story or a past to them. But those inheritances can also be things like curses. They can be ideas. Family stories. Expectations.

**TS:** And when you say "inheritance," I'm sure DNA is part of that, too.

**BS:** That's exactly right. I think that one of the reasons that we've all connected to this story on a personal level, is that we are at the age where we have both parents and children. In all previous points in our lives, we would always see ourselves on the young side. Now, we find ourselves identifying just as much with the parental issues that are in the play as we do with the kids' point of view.

**TS:** How do you go about casting yourselves since you are also the co-directors?

**NB:** In the case of *Into the Woods*, we thought that Ben and Jessie would be a great pairing as Baker and Baker's Wife because of their temperaments, their voice ranges, and the acting challenges. Sometimes the casting creates interesting doubling or tripling opportunities that the actors will appreciate but will also resonate with the message of the production. In the case of *Into the Woods*, Andy

and I play the Princes, but we also double as the stepsisters and each play an animal. What we ended up finding was an interesting duo act that is throughout the production. It's a bit of complicated math, but we're thinking artistically and creatively as well as like a traditional casting director.

**TS:** Did you watch other productions as research? Did you reread the original Grimm stories?

**BS:** As an actor and director, I prefer not to see other people's interpretations. I had seen the PBS video as a kid, but once we found out we were doing this production, I never went back to that as a reference.

**NB:** Like Ben, I prefer not to view other productions so I can have an authentic response to the material as opposed to anyone else's interpretation. I purchased the Brothers Grimm stories and went back and reread all of the tales that pertained to *Into the Woods*.

**TS:** Did any changes have to be made in the score or in the libretto for the ten-person version?

**BS:** Here's what I'll say: we made a very, very small number of changes. We never intended to do anything except *Into the Woods* as written. Almost nothing about the score has changed, and we altered very little about the book. The goal is to make it feel like we're just doing the show, but those who know the story intimately will recognize that we have tweaked a couple of events in the show.

**TS:** Will you please talk about collaborating with the design team and how the show will manifest itself visually?

**NB:** When we started talking with Derek McLane, our set designer, we knew we weren't interested in having trees represent the woods. And we were interested in a space where all the

physical objects that represent inheritances could coexist with a piano, since we knew one would be at the center of the production. Derek took that and came up with this idea of expanding and exploding the piano so that the entire production, in some sense, was happening inside the piano. Upstage he has these layers of string that are evocative of the woods. On the sides of the stage are piano harps that are the guts of the piano and are incredibly tactile and evocative as well. He took our soup of ideas and worked that into a magnificent design.

**TS:** And how about working with Whitney and Darron?

**BS:** With Whitney, it was different because she has designed costumes for every Fiasco production. We have easy shorthand with her, and



Ben Steinfeld and Jennifer Mudge

# INTERVIEW WITH CO-DIRECTORS NOAH BRODY AND BEN STEINFELD CONT.

she's very good at providing Fiasco a base idea for costumes as part of the ensemble look, and then adds pieces to each person to distinguish when they're playing their different roles. At the McCarter Theatre, where we first did the show, we had been proceeding with a design where the base look for each character had been rooted in an era that is basically a hundred years ago. We got into dress rehearsal, and we all came to realize the costuming didn't match the rest of the production. To her great credit, Whitney agreed with us and threw out the majority of the costume design. With McCarter's support, in twenty-four hours Whitney and her team turned out a new base look for the costumes. The women, for example, ended up wearing essentially what they were originally wearing under their costumes as their costume.

We loved our meeting with Darron from the first second that we sat down with him. We knew that he understood what it meant to be flexible in the room. What actually excited us both about Darron is that he insisted on being in rehearsals. He sees himself as an active and ongoing collaborator in the room. He wanted to learn the Fiasco vocabulary; not just our production, but of our company. So he observed – sometimes he would share a thought, but sometimes he would just be there, walking around the room, listening, watching, and then creating. He allowed every sound that comes from the show to come from the stage. Every aspect of our collaboration with Darron has really taught us something.

**TS:** Do you have any advice for young people who would want to start their own company? And what is on the horizon for Fiasco beyond *Into the Woods*?

**BS:** I would recommend that rather than try to start a company, try to make a great play. I think the fundraising, the organization, and all that stuff should come after you've figured out what you care about artistically. The other piece of advice that I would give is that the people you are collaborating with are as important, or more important, really, than anything else.

As for Fiasco's future, we are actively pursuing musicals, Shakespeare, American classics, and work that is company devised.

**NB:** The advice that I would give to young companies is just let the work lead the way. Do the things that you are passionate about in the way that you are passionate about them. A company that starts just to get an agent, or to make a hit, is almost destined to fail because those are not the criteria that will help you make a good piece of art.

As far as what's on the horizon, right after *Into the Woods* we will be bringing our production of *Two Gentlemen of Verona* to the Theatre for A New Audience in Brooklyn. •



Ben Steinfeld and Noah Brody

"In general, our culture is trained to honor the individual genius. But there is such a thing as group genius which is built from the notion that the group can create something entirely unique and powerful and which is distinct from what the individual can create. And it is from this that the ensemble model is built."

-Theresa Chavez, Artistic Director of About Productions, from the 2003 Grantmakers in the Arts Conference



Steppenwolf Theatre Company in Chicago, Illinois

Ensemble-based theatre cannot be cleanly defined. For some companies, the ensemble of artists may change from production to production; for others, a core group of collaborators may always remain the same. Some ensemble companies create work based around a consistent theme, or directed towards a consistent demographic, or told through a consistent

set of storytelling mechanisms or aesthetic principles. Some companies devise work from scratch, though the concept of "devised" work is as difficult to define as the concept of ensemble theatre. Some companies create work based on an established text. And some companies (like Fiasco Theater) create work that retains all of the original text but reinterprets its style of presentation.

What ensemble theatre has in common, across its many forms, is a communal, artist-centered approach to theatre-making, in which traditional roles (writer, designer, dramaturg, actor, director) emerge out of the creative process (or not at all) rather than being rigidly imposed upon it. Though a hierarchical structure may eventually take shape (in fact, many ensemble-based companies cite the importance of one directorial vision), the collaborators in an ensemble company often wear many hats, or different hats at different steps in the process. Time is also an important part of the ensemble process: while "traditional" theatre companies often devote only four to six weeks to rehearsal, ensemble-based companies may create a theatre piece over many months—or even years.

Below is a brief sampling of some well-known ensemble theatre companies. Each listing is accompanied by a snippet of the company's mission statement or philosophy, evidence of the richly varied landscape of ensemble-based work—a

landscape that, in the last half-decade, has been rapidly expanding throughout the United States.

## The TEAM

**BROOKLYN, NEW YORK** [theteamplays.org](http://theteamplays.org)

"We combine aggressive athleticism with emotional performances and intellectual rigor, keeping the brain, eyes and heart of the audience constantly stimulated... We devise plays by examining a wealth of material, ranging from existing texts (fiction, theory, drama, etc.) to images taken from visual art and film, and then combining that research with original writing and staging."

**Notable Production:** *MISSION DRIFT*

**STEPPEWOLF THEATRE COMPANY  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS** [steppenwolf.org](http://steppenwolf.org)

"Steppenwolf's artistic force remains rooted in the original vision of its founders: an artist-driven theater, whose vitality is defined by its sharp appetite for groundbreaking, innovative work."

**Notable Production:** *AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY*

## DOG AND PONY DC

**WASHINGTON, DC** [dogandponydc.com](http://dogandponydc.com)

"We believe: The audience completes our ensemble. A highly collaborative, necessarily exhaustive and inefficient process ensures the most enduring ideas reach their fullest potential. The playfulness and generosity of the invitation to our collaborators amplifies the impact of the work."

**Notable Production:** *BEERTOWN*

## ELEVATOR REPAIR SERVICE

**NEW YORK, NEW YORK** [elevator.org](http://elevator.org)

"ERS's theater pieces are built around a broad range of subject matter and literary forms; they combine elements of slapstick comedy, hi-tech and lo-tech design, both literary and found text, and the group's own highly developed style of choreography."

**Notable Production:** *GATZ*

## LOOKINGGLASS THEATRE COMPANY

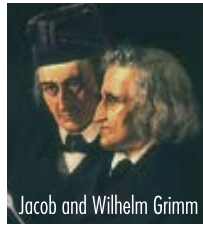
**CHICAGO, ILLINOIS** [lookingglasstheatre.org](http://lookingglasstheatre.org)

"Lookingglass uses visual metaphor, gesture and daring theatricality to create transcendent staging. Fiction and non-fiction are converted into stage pieces. Actors are often required to play multiple characters outside their traditional range."

**Notable Production:** *LOOKINGGLASS ALICE*

# THE GRIMM BROTHERS AND ONCE UPON A TIME...

Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, the oldest of six children, were born in 1785 and 1786 in Hanau, a market town near Frankfurt, Germany. Their father, a magistrate who maintained values of loyalty, hard work, and faith, died in 1796, leaving their mother with scarce resources to raise the large family. An aunt supported the brothers' schooling, where they excelled academically but were unpopular, due to their lower social status. Wilhelm suffered from asthma and struggled with illness all his life. These circumstances created a close bond between the brothers. When their mother died in 1808, Jacob and Wilhelm supported their younger siblings by working as librarians while researching and editing manuscripts.



Jacob's interest in medieval legends was sparked when a professor shared his private library. The brothers assisted a colleague in gathering a collection of folk stories, which led to their first edition of *Children's and Household Tales* in 1812. The book was not initially successful, but as Wilhelm revised the stories for a younger audience, its reception improved. Jacob's attention shifted to scholarly and political projects, but Wilhelm continued working on the *Tales* for most of his life. Wilhelm married at age 39, and Jacob lived as a bachelor with his brother's family.

Living most of their lives as Germans under Napoleon's control, the brothers worked to preserve their cultural heritage and to establish a unified, democratic Germany. Wilhelm died in 1859, and Jacob eulogized him as *märchenbruder*, or "fairy-tale brother." He died four years later while working on an ambitious German-language dictionary. Germany was unified in 1871, years too late for the Brothers Grimm to see during their lives. •

## CHILDREN'S AND HOUSEHOLD TALES

Many now-beloved characters were first introduced to the larger world by the Grimm Brothers, who tried to preserve the tales they heard in the authentic voices of the storytellers (mostly women). Their collection grew from an initial 49 to 210 stories

The importance of the woods in the stories reveals mixed feelings for German topography; on the one hand, the woods provided livelihood and supported farming and hunting; on the other hand, danger and death always

How many stories open with those four magical words: *Once upon a time*? You can brush up on your fairy tales with these summaries, but—**SPOILER ALERT!**— if you wish to be surprised when you see the show, read no further, or you will most certainly **NOT** live happily ever after.

## CINDERELLA

...there lived a young girl whose mother died, leaving her wealthy father to remarry. The stepmother brought her own two beautiful daughters, who called the young girl Cinderella dressed her in rags, and forced her to do hard work. Cinderella's father brought her a hazel twig, which she planted at her mother's grave and watered with tears, until it grew into a glowing hazel tree. One day, the king invited all the young women in the kingdom to a three-day festival for his son to choose a bride. Cinderella's stepmother forbade her to attend, so she went to the hazel tree for help. A white bird dropped a dress and silk shoes. When Cinderella arrived at the festival, the Prince danced only with her until midnight, when she fled. The next evening she returned and danced with the Prince, but fled again at midnight. On the third evening, the bird dropped a gold dress and gold shoes. This time, the Prince smeared pitch on the palace steps, so one of the golden slippers stayed behind as she fled. The Prince searched the kingdom for the foot that fit the slipper. When he arrived at Cinderella's house, the stepsisters cut their feet to deceive the Prince, but doves alerted the Prince to the blood dripping from their feet in the slipper. He returned and found Cinderella in the kitchen, tried the slipper, and recognized her. At Cinderella's wedding, birds struck out the eyes of the stepsisters, blinding them, as a punishment for their wickedness.



lurked in the shadows.

The stories were not initially meant for children, but Wilhelm noticed the growing market for children's picture books across Europe. By softening their violence, cruelty, and sexuality, he made the tales more accessible. Today, Grimms' Fairy Tales have been translated into over 160 languages and are enjoyed all around the world. Americans often first encounter the stories through Walt Disney's family-friendly movies, but there may never have been a Magic Kingdom without the hard efforts of the Brothers Grimm.



## LITTLE RED-CAP

... a young girl was known as Little Red-Cap because she would only wear a cap of red velvet given by her grandmother. One day, Red-Cap's mother sent her with a bottle of wine and a cake to her sick grandmother's, warning her not stray off the path in the woods. Red-Cap met a wolf, and, not recognizing his wickedness, she followed his advice to pick flowers for her grandmother. The wolf ran straight to devour the grandmother and then dressed in her clothes and laid in her bed. When Little Red-Cap arrived with the gifts, she felt uneasy and noticed her grandmother looked strange. She asked about her grandmother's big ears ("the better to hear you with, my dear"), big eyes ("the better to see you with"), and big mouth ("the better to eat you with")! The wolf swallowed up the girl and fell into a deep sleep. A huntsman passed by the house and heard the wolf's snores. Thinking the wolf may have eaten the old woman, the huntsman did not shoot, but instead cut his stomach with a scissors. Little Red-Cap and her grandmother sprang out. Then, they filled the wolf's stomach with stones and sewed him back up. When he awoke, the wolf fell dead. Little Red-Cap vowed never again to stray from the path or disobey her mother. Indeed, the next time she went to her grandmother's house, another wolf tried to entice her, but she paid him no mind. When he arrived at grandmother's house, they set a trap for this wolf and drowned him in a trough of boiling water. No one ever tried to harm Little Red-Cap again.

## RAPUNZEL

...after stealing rampion (a root vegetable) from a witch's garden, a man and his wife were forced to give their newborn baby to the witch as payment. The Witch called the child Rapunzel and raised the girl as her own. She locked the beautiful girl in a tower with no doors or stairs. The Witch visited the tower, calling "Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your hair to me," and the girl dropped her long hair from the tower. A prince heard Rapunzel singing from the tower and spied the Witch climbing her hair. One night, he climbed Rapunzel's hair. At first she was afraid, but Rapunzel accepted the Prince's marriage proposal, and they made a plan for her escape. The Witch learned of the plan and cut off Rapunzel's hair and banished her to a desert. When the Prince returned, the angry Witch surprised him in the tower. He jumped out to escape, piercing his eyes



on thorns. The blind Prince wandered the desert for years, until he finally found Rapunzel and the twins she had borne. Her tears fell into his eyes and healed them. Together they returned to his kingdom, where they were received with joy.

## JACK AND THE BEANSTALK

... a young boy named Jack lived with his widowed mother. The only source of income came from Milky White, their cow, until one day it stopped giving milk. At his mother's insistence, Jack took the cow to market, but on the way he met an old man and exchanged the cow for five magic beans. Furious, his mother threw the beans out the window and sent Jack to bed. The next morning, Jack awoke to find a giant beanstalk outside the window. He climbed all the way up to the top and found a large house. Jack approached the house belonging to a giant and his wife, hungry for food. The giant's wife fed him, and when the giant returned, she hid Jack in the oven. The giant could "smell the blood of an Englishman," but the giant's wife kept Jack hidden. After breakfast, Jack heard the giant counting his money. He stole a bag of gold coins and escaped home down the beanstalk. He and his mother lived well until the gold ran out, so Jack returned up the beanstalk. This time, he stole a hen that laid golden eggs. On his third trip, Jack stole a golden harp that plays itself. When the harp called for her master, the giant awoke and chased Jack down the stalk. Jack's mother got him an axe, Jack chopped down the beanstalk, and the giant fell dead. Jack and his mother lived happily ever after with the golden eggs and the golden harp. (NOTE: Jack and the Beanstalk is NOT part of the Grimms' collection.)

## THE BAKER AND HIS WIFE

...a childless baker and his wife wished more than anything to have a child. The witch who had cursed them promised to reverse the curse, IF they could bring her four items: a white cow, a red cape, yellow hair, and a gold slipper...

At first, the central plot of *Into the Woods* seems like it could have been pulled from the pages of Grimm. In fact, James Lapine created this original story in order to bring together the other fairy tales he selected for the show. The quest of the Baker and his Wife not only unifies the musical, but it also makes it contemporary. As they struggle to make a living, build a family, and maintain their marriage, they reflect the modern audience. We may not live next door to witches and fairy-tale forests, but many Americans can identify with their concerns. There is a fairy tale for today, and their "happily ever after" turns out to be as complicated as our own life stories.

# SONDHEIM ON CREATING INTO THE WOODS

The following is an excerpt from Stephen Sondheim's *Look, I Made a Hat: Collected Lyrics (1981 – 2011) with Attendant Comments, Amplifications, Dogmas, Harangues, Digressions, Anecdotes and Miscellany*. Thank you to Alfred A. Knopf for allowing us to share the author's insights with our audience.

After the exhilaration of *Sunday in the Park with George*, I wanted immediately to write another show with James Lapine. I suggested that we write a quest musical along the lines of *The Wizard of Oz*, the one movie musical I had loved in which the songs not only defined the characters and carried the story forward but were wonderful stand-alone songs as well. James replied that it would be frustratingly difficult to invent a fantasy quest that could sustain itself for two hours or more because there were too many possibilities: a shining irony when you consider that the last line of *Sunday in the Park with George* comes from the young artist looking at a blank canvas and exalting, "So many possibilities." But indeed, how do you go about inventing a picaresque adventure peopled with fantastic creatures? When you have infinite choices and no point to make, every plot is possible and every character is arbitrary except for the principals. In *Candide*, for example, Voltaire had a simple moral observation to propound and tailored a plot to illustrate it, but the episodes are arbitrary (which is one reason the musical *Candide* has had no definitive script and score since its premiere in 1956). We had nothing we wanted to say, merely a desire for a form, which is not a good way to begin writing a play. (Content Dictates Form.)

Then James came up with the notion of inventing a fairy tale in the tradition of classic fairy tales, one that could be musicalized and fleshed out into a full evening, which excited us but died aborning. After a couple of tries, James realized that fairy tales, by nature, are short; the plots turn on a dime, there are few characters and even fewer complications. This problem is best demonstrated by every fairy-tale movie and TV show since *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, all of which pad the lean stories with songs and sidekicks and subplots, some of which are more involving than the interrupted story itself. And those are all less than two hours long. It seemed to be an insoluble, self-defining problem until we remembered something he'd concocted a year before when we were looking for a quick way to make a buck.

It was an idea for a TV special: a story involving TV characters from situation comedies (for example, Ralph and Alice Kramden, Archie and Edith Bunker, Mary Richards

and Lou Grant, etc.) in a car accident which brings to the scene characters from the cop shows (T.J. Hooker, Joe Friday, Cagney and Lacey, etc.) who take them to the hospital where they are treated by Dr. Kildare and Marcus Welby and Ben Casey, etc. I loved the idea and proposed to James that we write a brief treatment and sell it to Norman Lear, the most imaginative producer of such fare. Lear loved the idea, too, and declared he couldn't wait to see the script. We explained that we weren't interested in writing the script, just selling the idea. He in turn explained that he wasn't interested in buying the idea, just in reading the script. This concluded our conversation. Now, in 1986, James came up with the notion of applying the TV idea to the Brothers Grimm. We would write a story in which the lives of famous fairy-tale characters would collide and intertwine in a mutual meeting ground, and where else but the woods, where so many of the stories take place? To weave them together, James invented his own fable, that of a Baker and his Wife, a pair who would go on a quest that would touch and involve such characters as Cinderella, Little Red Riding Hood, Jack, Rapunzel, the Three Little Pigs, Snow White and, of course, a Wicked Witch. The pigs and Snow White got left behind in San Diego, where the show tried out, but the others remained to populate an olla podrida of (mostly) farcical and (finally) tragic events. We ate our cake and had it, too: it would be a fairy-tale quest.

And ah, the woods. The all-purpose symbol of the unconscious, the womb, the past, the dark place where we face our trials and emerge wise or destroyed, and a major theme in Bruno Bettelheim's *The Uses of Enchantment*, which is the book that everyone assumes we used as a source, simply because it's the only book on the subject known to a wide public. But Bettelheim's insistent point was that children would find fairy tales useful in part because the protagonists' tribulations always resulted in triumph, the happily ever after. What interested James was the little dishonesties that enabled the characters to reach their happy endings. (Dishonesty was something Bettelheim preferred not to deal



Claire Karpen and Noah Brody

with, as the posthumous revelations about his falsifying his academic credentials would seem to indicate.) James was also skeptical about the possibility of "happily ever after" in real life and wary of the danger that fairy tales may give children false expectations. As his play *Twelve Dreams* had demonstrated, he was drawn not to Bettelheim's Freudian approach but to Carl Jung's theory that fairy tales are an indication of the collective unconscious, something with which Bettelheim would be unlikely to agree. James and I talked about fairy tales with a Jungian psychiatrist and discovered that with the exception of "Jack and the Beanstalk," which apparently is native only to the British Isles, the tales we were dealing with exist in virtually every culture in the world, especially the Cinderella story. African, Chinese, Native American – there is even a contemporary Hebrew version in which Cinderella wants to dance at the Tel Aviv Hilton.

In inventing the story of "The Baker and His Wife," James contributed his own cultural fairy tale, an American one. The Baker and his Wife may live in a medieval forest in a fairy-tale medieval time, but they are at heart a contemporary urban American couple who find themselves living among

witches and princes and eventually giants. Cinderella gets transformed into a princess, Little Red (which is how we always referred to her) gets eaten by a wolf and comes back to life, Rapunzel gets rescued by a prince, but the Baker and his Wife are merely trying to earn a living and have a baby. Their concerns are quotidian, their attitudes prototypically urban: impatient, sarcastic, bickering, resigned – prototypical, except that they speak in stilted fairy-tale language and are surrounded by witches and princesses and eventually giants. This makes them funny and actable characters, and their contemporaneity makes them people the audience can recognize.

In any event, the gimmick – or, more respectfully, the idea – of mashing the tales together gave us a form, much as gimmicks have done in the past (see Schnitzler's *La Ronde*). If we were to focus on the consequences of the little transgressions each character makes in pursuit of his or her heart's desire, it followed naturally that the first act would deal with the traditional telling of the tales up to the Happily and the second with the Ever After. The first would be farce, the second melodrama (still with laughs, of course). As I say, Content Dictates Form – or should. •



The ensemble of Fiasco Theater in *Into the Woods*

# THE PSYCHOLOGY OF FAIRY TALES

In the early nineteenth century, the Brothers Grimm and their imitators began to collect the oral folk and children's tales of their nations. The Grimms called these tales *Wundermärchen*, or wonder tales. Since that time, the folktales of almost every community on Earth have been written down. Surprisingly, a subset of these stories, those we call fairy tales, are similar across cultures. The same basic themes, characters, plots, and motifs recur in stories from Native American tribes, rural Chinese farming communities, and Iranian villages.

## FAIRY TALE CHARACTERISTICS:

1. The core plot of the story is short and not detailed.
2. They are timeless and spaceless. They seem to have always existed. They happen "once upon a time"—somewhere without a specific time, place, or culture.
3. They feature combinations of familiar plots, images, and motifs.
4. They rely on archetypal characters such as good mothers, bad witches, and beautiful princesses and archetypal symbols such as gold, forests, towers, and thorns to evoke a visceral response in a listener.
5. They take place in a supernatural land of wonder, where natural physical laws are suspended.
6. They often have happy endings. Hope and goodness triumph over elements of darkness.

Why are the fairy tales of different nations and peoples so similar?

One school of thought holds that the stories have a single point of origin in Babylon, or India, from which they spread. The Chinese and French versions of Little Red Riding Hood, for example, share a common ancestor dating back 2,600 years.

Others conclude that fairy tales are a corrupted explanation of natural phenomena: the sun, the lunar cycle, the seasons, storms. The golden-haired hero triumphs over the forces of darkness, just as the sun triumphs over winter, and spring returns.

Another theory posits that these stories are degraded versions of myths, or remnants of religious beliefs or rituals. In this case, the trickster character common to so many fairy tales has his origins in the Ulysses of Greek mythology.

In the twentieth century, followers of famous psychologists Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung developed new schools of thought about the origins and purposes of fairy tales.

In 1976, Austrian-American child psychologist Bruno Bettelheim published a book outlining a Freudian approach to fairy tales, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales*. (Since his death in 1990,

Bettelheim's academic credentials, theories about autism, and treatment methods have come under scrutiny and in some cases been completely discredited. His analysis of the psychological function of fairy tales remains a coherent approach to the topic.) In *The Uses of Enchantment*, Bettelheim makes the case that fairy tales use symbolism to present essential existential dilemmas—the fear of growing up, desire to live forever, fear that one is alone—in a way that a child can understand. The detail-free stories help children learn to cope with their own "primitive drives" and "violent emotions" and assures them that, like fairy tale heroes, they can overcome obstacles. In Bettelheim's view, fairy tales guide children through the process of healthy human development, teaching them to go out into the world independent of their parents, find themselves, find their partner, and live "happily ever after," knowing that by "forming a true interpersonal relation" they can live a fulfilled life.

The popularity of *The Uses of Enchantment* led many to conclude that it was a source for *Into the Woods*. But, as Stephen Sondheim explains, "[Lapine] was drawn not to Bettelheim's Freudian approach but to Carl Jung's theory that fairy tales are an indication of the collective unconscious."

The collective unconscious, according to Jung, is a shared



Cover of Bettelheim's book  
*The Uses of Enchantment*



Psychologist Carl Jung

part of the unconscious mind, made up of *primordial images* or *archetypes* from which innate human drives emerge. It's how the "structure of the soul spontaneously and independently organizes experiences." All human beings have access to this collective unconscious, and it influences human behavior on instinctive, ethical, moral, and cultural levels.

Jung wrote, "The collective unconscious — so far as we can say anything about it at all — appears to consist of mythological motifs or primordial images, for which reason the myths of all nations are its real exponents. In fact, the whole of mythology could be taken as a sort of projection of the collective unconscious... "

Marie-Louise von Franz, a Jungian psychoanalyst, wrote of the value fairy tales hold for understanding the collective unconscious. Unlike myths, fairy tales are not layered with cultural, national, or religious meaning. "Fairy tales are the purest and simplest expression of collective unconscious psychic processes... Every fairy tale is a relatively closed system compounding one essential psychological meaning which is expressed in a series of symbolic pictures and events and is discoverable in these." Each symbol is connected not only to a thought pattern but to an emotional experience.

In this view, the traditional fairy tale characters of *Into the Woods* emerge from the collective unconscious. They express a universal human journey: from the known and safe into the unknown in pursuit of their heart's desire. So, too, do the characters invented by James Lapine, the Baker and the Baker's Wife. Sondheim writes that that they are "at heart a contemporary urban American couple," but their quest has a universal resonance. Lapine and Sondheim are the conduit through which these characters and their associated archetypes have emerged from the collective unconscious. •

## THE WOODS

"The woods" or "the forest" is a common setting for folk and fairy tales. In many cultures, the forest symbolizes rebirth, the return of the spring, or the triumph of life over death. But forests are wild, dangerous places at the edge of civilization, outside the boundary of man's authority, past the edge of man's knowledge. The protagonist of a story often moves from the normal world into the lawless world of the forest, discovers something about herself, and returns, changed, to the normal world. In Shakespeare's plays, this "green world" is a place of metamorphosis and transformation outside of rigid social constructs. In this freer space, characters experiment and return to the normal world with new ideas about who they are and how they will live.



# INTERVIEW WITH MUSIC DIRECTOR MATT CASTLE

**Education Dramaturg Ted Sod interviewed the music director for *Into the Woods*, Matt Castle.**

**Ted Sod: Will you tell us where you were born and educated and how you got involved in the theatre as a music director?**

**Matt Castle:** I was born in Sacramento, California and lived there until age 17. I attended University of the Pacific for my undergraduate degree. I was in the music conservatory there, so almost all my classes outside general ed were music. I didn't know what I wanted to do as a career. I did music education because it seemed somehow legitimate to have a statement of career goal inherent in the curriculum. I took two years off, and then still not knowing, I went to grad school for a master's in composition at Northern Illinois, University of Illinois. I was 28 by the time I moved to New York. I came here to be an actor. As is the case with many actors when they first move to New York, I had a limited resume – community theatre and college shows. And I had no idea what was involved in being an actor in New York, so it took me a few months to figure out how to get a headshot and how to put together some form of a resume. I started taking whatever work I could get, and that included playing piano, which is what I had been doing for a living since I was in high school. It turns out that my experience as an actor, director, writer, and teacher all came in handy in the work that I do as a music director.

**TS: Tell us what the music director does on this particular production of *Into the Woods*?**

**MC:** It started as one thing, and it expanded into something else. The Fiasco folks knew as we went into production at the McCarter Theatre that they needed someone who was sufficiently strong as a piano player to hold up the show just with his two hands. It turned out that I would need to be able to reduce what I see on the page down to something that's playable by one person. And it is not easy to do full service to the music with just two hands on the keys. So, that was one prong of my job. The other was to interact with the actors because everyone in the room in a Fiasco show is involved with the table work. Since I'm also an actor and understand what they're doing as actors, I can be a full participant in the table work and had a lot to contribute there. And, moreover, I can translate what is happening in the music as text, non-verbal text, into something usable for the actors. It's just a musical/analytical tool that I have.

**TS: Is there any other instrumentation? I've seen other shows of Fiasco, and many in the company play instruments.**

**MC:** The part of the show that has expanded the most is the instrumental component. When we started at the McCarter, we had a permission slip to work on a piano-based version of the show, with the addition of other instruments where we might deem necessary, with the proviso that we do not use any orchestral material known to have been created by Jonathan Tunick. We could not do service to Jonathan Tunick's work without doing it in toto.

The more I learned about what the actors could do, the more inspired I got about the ways we could use instruments. The show is not fully, utterly re-orchestrated, but my husband and I are both engaged on



Music Director for *Into the Woods*, Matt Castle

the show as co-orchestrators. We're there to oversee and approve the use of instruments in the show however they're going to be used. For instance, we have an actor who plays cello very well, and an actor who plays bassoon very well, and more than one actor who plays guitar well. All three of those instruments appear fairly frequently in the show, and then we have a number of pianists. So while they don't ever come to share the keys with me – at least not in the two productions that we've done so far – their piano skills are still useful in other parts of the show.

The set is made partly of old piano harps that have been mounted on walls. And they are tuned by our sound designer, Darron West, so that if you hit them they make a noise. Darron's treated them with microphones. People can make all kinds of musical sounds, which contributes to the sound of the show.

**TS: Is it complicated wearing both hats, playing the show and musically directing? Or is that something you've done often?**

**MC:** It is a thing I've done more often than not.

**TS: Did Sondheim and Lapine see the show? Did they give you any specific notes?**

**MC:** Stephen and James both saw the show, and they both were warmly enthusiastic with what we had done, but they didn't take part in the rehearsal process. The artistic directors of Fiasco had a meeting with Lapine before we began rehearsal at the McCarter, and they got a clear sense from him of what he would and would not be okay with.

Sondheim did reach out to me directly and approved the changes that we had made to the score: cuts, changes of feel, changes of vocal range, changes of vocal arrangements in some of the choral moments. We never tamper with melody or melodic contour. We never tamper with the accompanying harmony. Beyond that, we're limited by how much counterpoint we can achieve with my two hands and the other instruments that we have on stage.

**TS: Can you give us a flavor for how you collaborated with Noah Brody and Ben Steinfeld, the co-directors?**

**MC:** I will try. The reality of how the rehearsal room works is it is democratic in terms of the airing of ideas, brainstorming for how to stage things, discussion of what characters are doing, what is happening in a scene. People who are not in a particular scene make observations about what is going on, a change that they saw somebody try and what was interesting about it, what maybe didn't work about it. That's not a dynamic that will work for every show and every group of actors. But with this particular cast it is brilliantly successful, and very stimulating. It's the most fully participating room of actors I've ever been in, which is really saying something.

**TS: So when they decided to bring some people in from outside the company – the understudies, for instance – were you involved in that casting process?**

**MC:** I was involved. I also went through a process of being vetted, interviewed, tried out, and then ultimately hired. I was outside the company until I became part of it. So I've had experience with Fiasco from both sides of the audition table, so to speak.

Casting understudies was a challenge. Of course, hiring understudies for a show that's already happened is always a challenge. Because what we do in our production has become so connected to the specific abilities of our 10 actors, finding four actors who can cover them reasonably well is a daunting task. The instrumental aspect of the show has been the one that had to give way. If we can't find someone who plays this instrument for this role, especially the bassoon that Liz Hayes plays (she plays Jack's mother), then we'll have to come up with another solution. We're creative people; we'll come up with something.

**TS: Can you talk about playing Sondheim? Is this the first time you've played a score of his?**

**MC:** I've played many of his shows. His music is made with such integrity of purpose, such excellence of craft and such passion for the story that it is rewarding to play every time. At home alone, in a piano bar, on a Broadway stage – it is always rewarding to play. His writing is layered and multi-faceted, and he takes great care to make sure that everything is there and works on every level. All I have to do is remember that I am the luckiest person in the world because I am on stage playing his music.

**TS: Is there a part of the score you love playing every night?**

**MC:** There are a few parts that stand out. Some of them stand out because it was so challenging to reduce the intricate orchestral arrangements. That's the case with "Your Fault" and "Last Midnight."



Then the ones where we've transformed the music in some kind of way like "Hello, Little Girl" and "Giants in the Sky" – the way we use the instruments and the way we characterize the music is not what people are accustomed to. The whole show feels like playing chamber music, which it literally is because there are one to ten singers, one to eleven singers including me. Everybody has an essential part to contribute. We collaborated on this and made it together.

**TS: What rarely-seen musicals would you like to music direct and/or conduct?**

**MC:** *City of Angels*. *The Secret Garden*. *Once Upon a Mattress*. *Mame*. I love those shows.

**TS: Do you have any advice for a young person who might want to be a music director?**

**MC:** Learn to play piano, improvise, become a singer. Understand how to harmonize your voice to somebody else's. Understand how singers sing and how they learn. Understand other instruments and the jobs that other people do in the theatre. Regard music as text and devote yourself to the study of how musical text serves character, emotion and story. •



# MILKY WHITE: ONE COW, MANY VISIONS

*Into the Woods* is such a rich and appealing musical that many directors have been eager to put their own spin on it over the years. In these wildly different productions, all design elements have, of course, changed drastically from one vision to the next. But perhaps no singular aspect of the musical has seen as many distinct interpretations as the cow, Milky White. Here, we look at several takes on Jack's loyal bovine pal and how they speak to the the vision for the production as a whole.

## ORIGINAL BROADWAY PRODUCTION, 1987

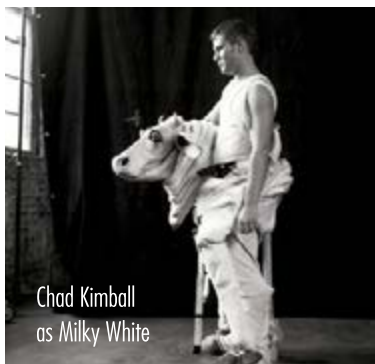
In director James Lapine's original production of *Into the Woods*, Milky White was a hard, plastic cow, made to be about the actual size of the real animal. With sad eyes and ribs on display to show his hunger, he was a rather pitiful creature. This Milky White was also fairly static, with immobile limbs and a set of wheels on which he could be pulled. Only his jaw could move, which was handy when it came time to eat the magical items requested by the Witch. Helpfully, this Milky White was light, making him easy to pick up and run off with when needed. With little personality of his own, this original take on the cow was more of a prop than a participant, making Jack's affection for his pet rather one-sided.



Original Broadway production of *Into the Woods*

## BROADWAY REVIVAL, 2002

With Lapine directing his own show once again, the *Into the Woods* librettist decided to take a distinctly different approach the second time around. In this interpretation, the show traded some of its darkness for a lighter touch, making the fairy tale piece friendlier to a young audience and casting younger actors as Jack and Little Red accordingly. But the biggest change was to Milky White. Critic Charles Isherwood wrote in *Variety*, "This revival...isn't wholly dependent on its scene-stealing bovine for the new spring in its step, to be sure. But you could say that Chad Kimball's nimble performance in this mute role...is emblematic of the way some minor tweaking has resulted in a major mood



Chad Kimball as Milky White

swing for this knotty musical." In other words, Milky White had gone from solid plastic to dancing flesh, with actor Kimball fitted into a cow suit from costume designer Susan Hilferty that allowed for movement and expressiveness, giving the animal a new and memorable on-stage presence that gave the production an added dose of whimsy along with a delightfully deeper onstage bond between Jack and his old pal. As Isherwood went on to say, Kimball somehow "manages to imbue Milky White with almost human complexity of feeling, without benefit of even a single Sondheim lyric."

## DELACORTE THEATER IN CENTRAL PARK, 2012

This revival played in the ideal setting of the outdoor Delacorte Theater under the direction of Timothy Sheader, who helmed an earlier version of the show in London's Regent's Park Open Air Theater. Sheader's vision presented *Into the Woods* as though the stories were being conjured from the imagination of a little boy who had run away from home and whose toys became the characters of these fairy tales. Keeping with this point of view, Milky White was depicted as a collection of brambles the boy might have seen forming a cow-like shape in the forest. He was given a slightly abstract cow's head and was manipulated by an actor, from the puppetry design of Rachael Canning. While not as strongly present as the Chad Kimball cow, this puppet version still had an impact on audiences. One critic wrote, "There can never have been so anthropomorphically moving a Milky White as the sad, responsive cow Jack tugs around the stage."

## FIASCO THEATER, 2014

In the current revival at the Laura Pels Theatre, the team from Fiasco has re-envisioned *Into the Woods* with a simplicity that allows clear storytelling to shine through. Stripped down to its basics, we are able to see the complexities of the piece with beautiful clarity, utilizing a smaller ensemble and a few key props that might be found discarded in any attic. Appropriately, this means that Milky White is not a big plastic prop, a puppet, or a scene-stealing, intricately-costumed man. Instead, he is simply one of the actors from the always-on-stage company, Andy Grotelueschen, who indicates that he is transforming into Milky White by adding a cow bell around his neck and an expression of concern for both his own fate and that of his dear Jack. Wordlessly, his face speaks volumes, with nothing more than honesty required, in a perfect example of the aesthetic that drives this production. •



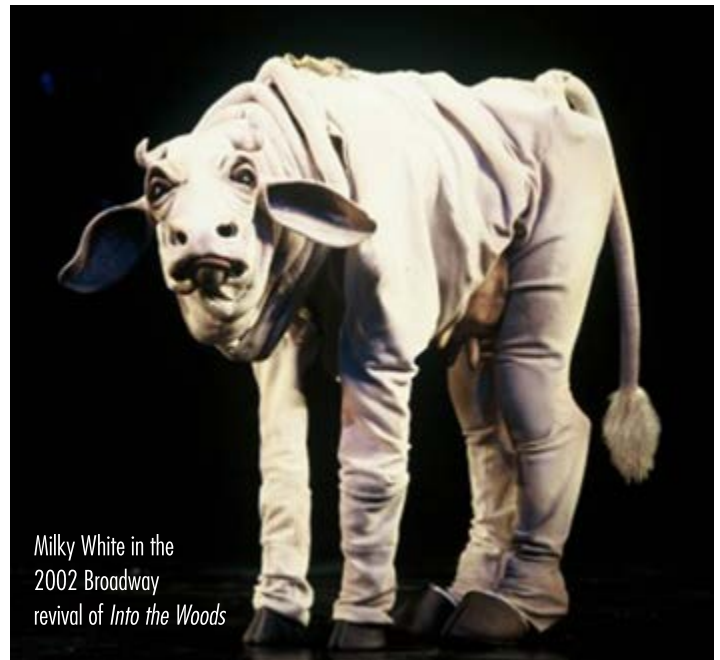
Stephen Sondheim, in an excerpt from his book *Look, I Made a Hat*, offers an analysis of one song from *Into the Woods*:

## I GUESS THIS IS GOODBYE

### JACK

I guess this is goodbye, old pal.  
 You've been a perfect friend.  
 I hate to see us part, old pal.  
 Someday I'll buy you back.  
 I'll see you soon again.  
 I hope that when I do,  
 It won't be on a plate.

This is the only song I've ever written that has no rhyme at all. It's so brief that it hardly qualifies as a song, but it's a continuation of the fragmentary approach that I had developed with Lapine for the "Day Off" sequence in *Sunday in the Park with George*. It seemed fitting that innocent, empty-headed Jack be so dimwitted that he couldn't even rhyme. But it's not so easy to make nonrhymes work when the music rhymes – that is, when the music has square and matching rhythms, as this ditty deliberately does. Just as the vowel sounds must match exactly in a good rhyme, so must they bear no resemblance to each other in a nonrhyming pattern. If "I'll see you soon again" were the fourth line, the approximate rhyme of "friend" and "again" would make for a sloppily imperfect rhyme. The word "back," however, is so shockingly different to the ear from "friend" that it emphasizes Jack's mindlessness. (When the word "again" does appear, it doesn't land on a phrase of matching music, so it feels fresh.) Not only are the vowel sounds from different realms, so are the consonants (soft in the first, hard in the second). The same principle applies to "again," "do" and "plate" and ratchets up the laugh at the image (which, incidentally, was Lapine's). Subtle as it may seem, the lack of rhyme makes Jack all the more appealing. •



Milky White in the 2002 Broadway revival of *Into the Woods*



Andy Grotelueschen as Milky White and Patrick Mulryan

# DESIGNER STATEMENTS

## DEREK MCLANE, SET DESIGN

When Fiasco approached me, they said they didn't want a forest, but they needed a container to put the show into. I felt I needed to create some abstract version of the woods. So I thought: What if it was all inside a piano? Upstage, there's a giant exploded piano harp, with hundreds and hundreds of piano strings in different layers, going from bass strings to treble strings. They're over-scaled, but they're laid out in a way that's very true to the pattern and angle of the strings you would find in a grand piano. On the sides of the stage are a number of stripped-down piano harps. All of this is open so everything can be lit-through—which is part of what gives it that evocation of the woods, even though nothing looks like the woods.

In a funny way, Sondheim's work—some of those shows have been done so many times that it's almost like doing a classic. There's such a long history of significant productions, so you actually feel an obligation to try something original. It would be a wasted opportunity not to. *(This quote was originally printed in American Theatre Magazine and is used by permission)*

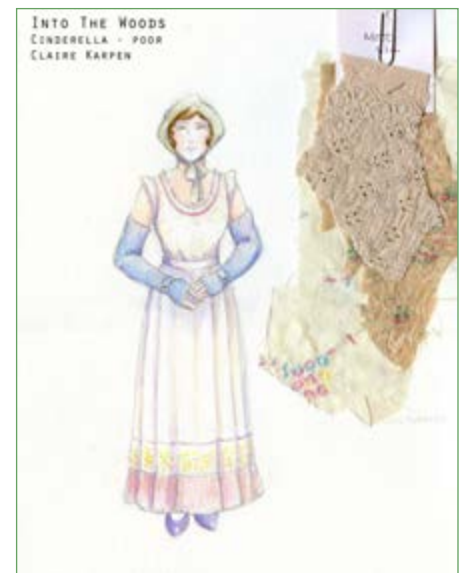
## CHRISTOPHER AKERLIND, LIGHTING DESIGN

Derek McLane's idea that he has created a container for this *Into the Woods* is so interesting to me. I like to think that my best work has simply allowed a play, musical, or opera to happen, rather than having decorated or added literal interpretation of atmosphere to it. This is what I think of as Elizabethan lighting; a tribute to the idea that Shakespeare and his company created 38 or so great plays with next

to nothing but text and performance. Though new to this production and the Fiasco folks, I've felt an immediate aesthetic kinship in our pre-production conversations. The lighting will have less color and fewer artificial textures than in typical musical theatre productions. I'll be looking for simple gestures that frame, enhance, and caress these hardworking performers.

## WHITNEY LOCHER, COSTUME DESIGN

Audience members familiar with other productions of *Into the Woods* will probably notice right away that certain characters and elements are missing from this production, most notably the Narrator character, who is replaced by all of the cast members taking turns as storytellers. Because it is the actor's role as storyteller at the heart of Fiasco's approach to every project they undertake, it is my job as costume designer to enable each actor to transition quickly and easily into different characters with the simple addition or subtraction of such things as a hat, cape, or jacket. Conceptually, this piece has been set in an attic of memory — filled with objects that could have come down through several generations. The costumes combine modern and period elements to capture a similar feeling of existing somewhere in between the Edwardian era and now. The color palette has been kept intentionally neutral so that the pops of color in added garments provide some fairy tale flair. It has always been imperative in my collaborations with Fiasco that the actors are never hidden or overwhelmed by the costumes and that my work helps to support and enhance their performances.



## DARRON L WEST, SOUND DESIGN

For the Sound Design of *Into the Woods*, the early discussions of how we were going to re-imagine it centered around the desire to make a chamber piece, but would utilize simple storytelling with only the things we absolutely needed to tell our story and to have the company of actors provide all the sound effects and music in the show. In the early creative stages, the rehearsal hall was filled with things you might find in your grandmother's attic or an old, dusty music store. Piles of instruments and odd things that make noise were scattered around the room. The instruments and items that appear on stage in the production are the ones that made the cut from the early days of rehearsals. Many of the actors are also musicians, so *Into the Woods* has been re-scored using mostly portable instruments. The entire score is performed with piano, guitar, cello, banjo, toy piano, bassoon, bells, autoharp, and French horn. Even "Little Red," Emily Young, dusted off her trumpet to have on hand for the princes' fanfare moments in the show. As rehearsals progressed, it was clear that we needed a textured tonal instrument to assist in the Witch's magic moments. So I brought my water-phone into rehearsal, which

became a major element for the magic sounds throughout the production. It's a beautiful handmade brass instrument with metal tines attached to a brass bowl that is filled with water, and the tines are bowed like a violin. Along with the traditional instruments, there are a countless number of sound effect makers manipulated by the cast in the show: coconut halves (for the princes' horses' hooves, of course), various small whistles, and water pipes for the bird sounds you hear as they advise Cinderella in the story. From the start, we knew that the piano would be the major musical element driving the production, and the piano score of *Into the Woods* is very lush on its own. Not to mention the extraordinary arrangements that Matt Castle did with the cast. Even the set on stage is a giant instrument and played frequently during the production. The giant piano harp walls have been rigged with contact microphones that pick up the vibration of the strings and, during the show, the strings of the harp walls are struck with any manor of things: mallets, drumsticks, metal pipes, guitar picks, sticks and even the actors' elbows. A fun fact about the piano harp walls is that on average it takes close to seven hours to complete the tuning before our technical rehearsals can even begin.



Derek McLane's set for the Roundabout production of Fiasco's *Into the Woods*

# PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES

## HOW DOES AN ENSEMBLE COLLABORATE TO CREATE A NON-LITERAL CHARACTER OR LOCATION ON STAGE?

This production of *Into the Woods* was created by Fiasco Theater Company, an ensemble of actors and actor-directors.

**WRITE** Ask students to write the names of fairy tale characters and settings on small sheets of paper or note cards, one character or setting per card. Have prepared cards with the characters and settings specific to *Into the Woods*: giant, beanstalk, palace, woods, grave, cow, witch, wolf, Little Red Riding Hood, Cinderella, Rapunzel, and Baker. Place all cards into a hat or bag.

**ACTIVATE** Play “ensemble squash.” Have students stand on stage. (Work with half the class at a time, or groups of at least four students, on stage.) Draw a card and say “1 - 2 - 3 ensemble squash” and read aloud what is written on the card, for example “castle.” Students must immediately and silently work together to become one complete castle: one student might become a moat, another a door, another a turret, etc. Repeat with other cards as time allows.

**REFLECT** For players: What was challenging about that game? How did you decide where to go and what to be? For audience: Which characters or settings were clear to you? Why? For everyone: How could you use this process when staging or devising a play?

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## HOW DO LYRICISTS WRITE SONGS ABOUT WISHES?

The first sung words Stephen Sondheim wrote for *Into the Woods* are “I wish.” Many musicals open with an “I want” song, where the protagonist expresses a wish or longing that sets up their adventure. (Ariel’s “Part of Your World” and Pippin’s “Corner of the Sky” are great examples.) Explore the lyric-writing process for this type of song.

**REFLECT** Imagine a Genie in a bottle will grant you ONE wish. (But this Genie doesn’t grant wishes for anything that can be purchased – it must be something money can’t buy!)

**WRITE**

- Brainstorm/free-write on the following prompts:
  - How would the world LOOK at you and what would you SEE if this wish came true? (Be detailed and specific)
  - What are three things you could DO, if the wish came true?
  - Describe in detail how you would FEEL if the wish came true.
- Circle 6 of your juiciest words. Find 1-2 rhyming words to go with your choices.
- Now, use your prompts and rhymes, and write lyrics for a song (or rap) about your wish. It’s fine to just focus on the lyrics without worrying about the tune. Or, you can imagine changing the lyrics of an existing song. It can also be a rap.

**ACTIVATE** Students can share their songs, either read, rapped, or sung a capella. (Extension: allow students to set the lyrics to music)

# POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

## HOW DOES A DESIGNER CREATE A FANTASTIC OR MAGICAL CHARACTER FOR THE STAGE?

This production of *Into the Woods* offered unique interpretations of both the Giant and Milky White, the cow. Other directors and designers have solved the challenge of creating these characters in different ways, as seen on page 16 of this guide.

**READ** Read a synopsis of the fairy tale *The Snow Queen*. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Snow\\_Queen](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Snow_Queen)

**ANALYZE** Working in small groups, have students create a list of adjectives that describe the Snow Queen.

**ACTIVATE** Using objects found in the classroom and/or provided supplies, have students build a Snow Queen.

## HOW DOES A THEATRE ENSEMBLE EXPLORE THE UNFORESEEN CONSEQUENCES OF A STORY?

Note to teachers: this activity can be customized to use any work of fiction or drama your class is reading.

In the second half of *Into the Woods*, the characters face the unforeseen consequences of their actions and choices and confront the difficulty of living “happily ever after.” Work in small groups (theatre ensembles) to create scenes that explore the unexpected effects of other stories, tales, or myths.

**PREPARE** Each group is given (or chooses) a character from a story, play, or book.

- Identify the important actions & choices this character makes during the story.  
How does the story end for this character?
- Next, imagine some unforeseen consequences and who is impacted (i.e., Jack did not foresee that the Giant’s wife would seek revenge, and this has a devastating impact for everyone in the woods).

**CREATE** Determine the given circumstances for a new scene, which occurs after the story’s official “end” and explores an unforeseen effect of the character’s actions.

**WHO** are the characters involved?

**WHERE** are they?

**WHAT** is happening?

**WHY** is this happening?

**HOW** does the scene begin and end?

Allow some time for students to rehearse an improvised version of the scene.

**ACTIVATE** Allow each group 3-5 minutes to share their given circumstances and present their improvisation.

**REFLECT** How does our perspective on a character or story change when we think about the consequences?  
How do our own actions and choices sometimes bring unforeseen consequences? Why does this happen?

# GLOSSARY

<b>BESEEMING</b>	To be fitting or suitable <i>The Baker's Wife tells herself that her actions in the woods are not beseeing.</i>	<b>DOLT</b>	A dull person <i>Jack's mother says that only a dolt would trade a cow for beans.</i>
<b>BIERS</b>	A structure that is used to hold up a coffin before burial <i>Rapunzel's Prince tells of how he cries on a princess's biers.</i>	<b>MALICE</b>	The intention or desire to inflict harm upon another <i>Cinderella believes that the prince laying pitch on the stairs is more than malice.</i>
<b>BLITHE</b>	Joyous <i>Rapunzel's Prince describes Rapunzel as blithe.</i>	<b>MANTICORE</b>	A monster in legends that is said to have a man's head, horns, the body of a lion, and a dragon's tail <i>The Baker suggests that the footprints on the ground could be those of a manticore.</i>
<b>BRITTLE</b>	Having a rigidity or hardness <i>The Wolf refers to Granny as brittle.</i>	<b>MOLLIFIED</b>	Softened in severity of feeling or temper <i>The witch was still not mollified after the Baker's father apologized for stealing the witch's greens.</i>
<b>CLOD</b>	Someone who is considered stupid; something of lesser value <i>Florinda calls Cinderella a clod when she pulls her hair too tightly.</i>	<b>PITCH</b>	Substance used for paving, similar to tar <i>Cinderella sings of how her prince put pitch on the stairs in order to prevent her from running away from the ball.</i>
<b>DELETERIOUS</b>	Causing mischief <i>The Mysterious Man describes himself as deleterious.</i>		

# RESOURCES

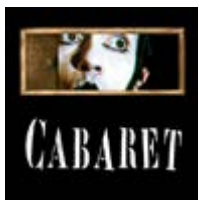
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## ROUNDABOUT THEATRE COMPANY

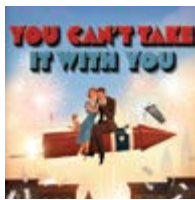
Founded in 1965, Roundabout Theatre Company has grown from a small 150-seat theatre in a converted supermarket basement to become the nation's most influential not-for-profit theatre company, as well as one of New York City's leading cultural institutions. With five stages on and off Broadway, Roundabout now reaches over 700,000 theatregoers, students, educators and artists across the country and around the world every year.

We are committed to producing the highest quality theatre with the finest artists, sharing stories that endure, and providing accessibility to all audiences. A not-for-profit company, Roundabout fulfills its mission each season through the production of classic plays and musicals; development and production of new works by established and emerging writers; educational initiatives that enrich the lives of children and adults; and a subscription model and audience outreach programs that cultivate and engage all audiences.

## 2014-2015 SEASON



Book by Joe Masteroff  
Music by John Kander  
Lyrics by Fred Ebb  
Starring Alan Cumming and Emma Stone  
Co-directed and choreographed by Rob Marshall  
Directed by Sam Mendes



By Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman  
Directed by Scott Ellis



By Tom Stoppard  
Directed by Carey Perloff



By Tom Stoppard  
Starring Ewan McGregor, Maggie Gyllenhaal, Josh Hamilton and Cynthia Nixon  
Directed by Sam Gold



Music & Lyrics by Stephen Sondheim  
Book by James Lapine  
Reimagined by Fiasco Theater  
Directed by Noah Brady and Ben Steinfeld



Book & Lyrics by Betty Comden & Adolph Green  
Music by Cy Coleman  
Choreographed by Warren Carlyle  
Directed by Scott Ellis



By Jeff Augustin  
Directed by Giovanna Sardelli

## STAFF SPOTLIGHT: DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT, LYNNE GUGENHEIM GREGORY

**Ted Sod:** Tell us about yourself. Where were you born and educated?

**How and when did you become a Director of Development?**

**Lynne Gugenheim Gregory:** I was born in Cincinnati, Ohio and moved to NYC when I was two. I was raised here on the Upper East Side, went to The Dalton School until I left for the original High School of Performing Arts, the "Fame" school. After studying theatre at the SUNY Purchase Conservatory to receive my BFA, I started "temp-ing" in offices to earn money while I auditioned. Fortunately for me, an executive took on a mentorship role and helped me transition into sales and marketing. After that, I transferred those skills back into my first passion, the theatre, to work in Development.

**TS:** Describe your job at RTC? What are your responsibilities?

**LGG:** The development department raises more than \$14M each year to support our operations. In addition we are raising \$50M as part of

our 50th Anniversary Campaign. We have a team of 17 and my job is two-fold – first, I fundraise from the Board of Directors and also from some of our most major corporations, foundations and individuals. Secondly, I lead the team, providing strategy, direction, support, encouragement, advice and training, where needed.

**TS:** What is the best part of your job? What is the hardest part?

**LGG:** The best part of my job is the people I get to work with. The hardest part is when something doesn't go the way we would wish.

**TS:** Why do you choose to work at Roundabout?

**LGG:** Theatre is my first passion and I actually do appreciate and enjoy most of what we produce here at the Theatre. It's critical to really love what it is I'm raising money for.

Learn more at [roundabouttheatre.org](http://roundabouttheatre.org). Find us on:



# WHEN YOU GET TO THE THEATRE

## TICKET POLICY

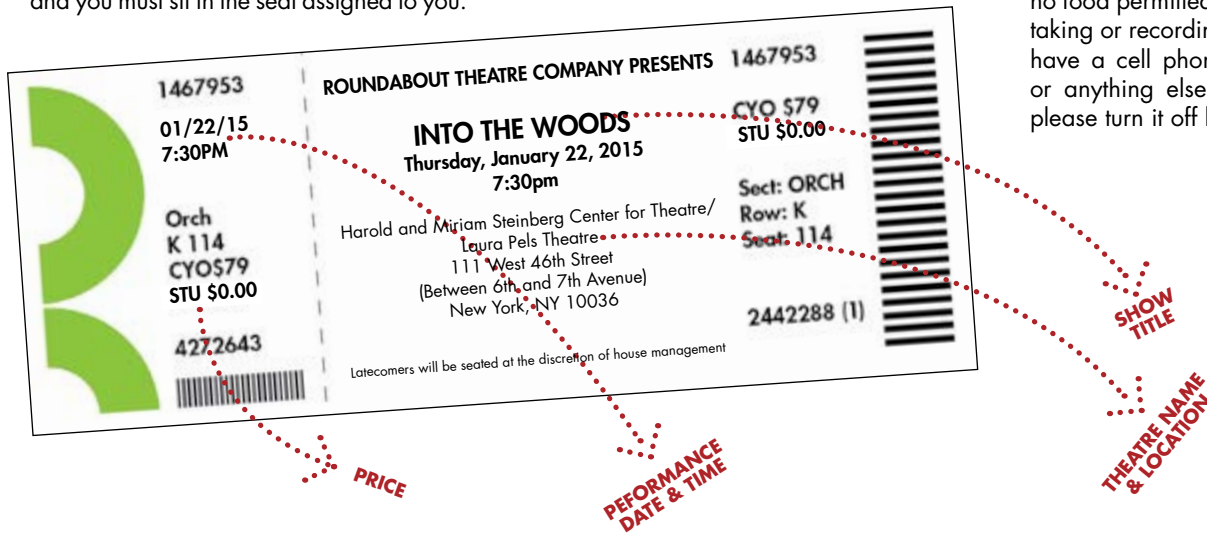
As a student participant in Producing Partners, Page To Stage or Theatre Access, you will receive a discounted ticket to the show from your teacher on the day of the performance. You will notice that the ticket indicates the section, row and number of your assigned seat. When you show your ticket to the usher inside the theatre, he or she will show you where your seat is located. These tickets are not transferable and you must sit in the seat assigned to you.

## PROGRAMS

All the theatre patrons are provided with a program that includes information about the people who put the production together. In the "Who's Who" section, for example, you can read about the actors' roles in other plays and films, perhaps some you have already seen.

## AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE

As you watch the show please remember that the biggest difference between live theatre and a film is that the actors can see you and hear you and your behavior can affect their performance. They appreciate your applause and laughter, but can be easily distracted by people talking or getting up in the middle of the show. So please save your comments or need to use the rest room for intermission. Also, there is no food permitted in the theatre, no picture taking or recording of any kind, and if you have a cell phone, beeper, alarm watch or anything else that might make noise, please turn it off before the show begins.



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