

Researching Theatrical Adaptations

by Kristen Barrett

INTRO

As an English and Drama double major, I am deeply interested in adapting novels/novellas/short stories into theatrical productions. Ever since I acted in a one-act adaptation of William Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, I have felt drawn to this literary and artistic practice that seems like a perfect marriage of my two majors. To better pursue this interest, I would like to spend winter break viewing and analyzing theatrical adaptations as I work on my own adaptation of *Passing* by Nella Larsen, a Harlem Renaissance novella and one of my favorite pieces of literature. Funding from the Miller Arts Scholar program would allow me to purchase the source materials, show tickets, and educational materials pertinent to my research. Travel/lodging funding is unnecessary since these productions are showing in my hometown at the Nashville Children's Theatre and at the Tennessee Performing Arts Center. In order to broaden my perspective of theatrical adaptations, I chose shows adapted from different types of source material. *The Snowy Day & Other Stories* is based on children's books by Ezra Jack Keats; *Cinderella* and *Nashville's Nutcracker* are based on fairytales; and *Jersey Boys* is based on the lives of Frankie Valli & the Four Seasons. I believe that these shows' variety will kindle my inspiration as I work on adapting *Passing* and provide a base knowledge for me when I adapt other types of source materials. All in all, through this project, I will strive to gain a better understanding of theatrical adaptations by studying them for two months and then by starting my own adaptation of *Passing*.

TIMELINE

- Thanksgiving Break
 - Acquire original texts/historical texts for shows:
 - *The Snowy Day, Whistle for Willie, Goggles, A Letter to Amy* by Ezra Jack Keats
 - *Cinderella* by Charles Perrault
 - *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King* by E. T. A. Hoffman
 - *Jersey Boys: The Story of Frankie Valli & the Four Seasons* by David Cote
 - Acquire original texts/educational materials needed for adaptation of *Passing*:
 - *Passing* by Nella Larsen
 - *In Search of Nella Larsen: A Biography of the Color Line* by George Hutchinson
 - *Passing Novels in the Harlem Renaissance: Identity Politics and Textual Strategies* by Mar Gallego
 - Acquire Tickets to Shows
 - *The Snowy Day & Other Stories* Ticket
 - *Cinderella* Ticket
 - *Jersey Boys* Ticket
 - *Nashville's Nutcracker* Ticket

- Write up Guided Reading and Viewing Questions

Explanation: During Thanksgiving Break, I would organize my materials. Additionally, I would create a comprehensive list of reading and viewing questions to guide my research. For the Guided Reading Questions, I would ask questions pertaining to the original texts' tone, dialogue, and themes. For the Guided Viewing Questions, I would focus on comparing and contrasting the theatrical adaptations to the source materials.

- December
 - Read/View *Nashville's Nutcracker*, *Cinderella*
 - Reread *Passing*
 - Read *In Search of Nella Larsen: A Biography of the Color Line* and *Passing Novels in the Harlem Renaissance: Identity Politics and Textual Strategies* by Mar Gallego

Explanation: In December, I would delve into my research by viewing *Nashville's Nutcracker* and *Cinderella* after reading their respective source materials. It is necessary for me to familiarize myself with the source materials of the shows so that I can compare and contrast the original content to the adaptation. After this step, I will reread *Passing* and deepen my understanding of Nella Larsen's life and of racial passing during the Harlem Renaissance through analyzing two educational texts.

- January
 - Read/View *Jersey Boys*, *The Snowy Day & Other Stories*
 - Create working draft of *Passing*

Explanation: In January, I would finish my research and start adapting *Passing*. More likely than not, I will begin writing my adaptation before January, but my goal is to have a first draft done before the spring semester starts.

BUDGET

Original Texts/Historical Texts for Shows	
<i>The Snowy Day</i>	\$6.00
<i>Whistle for Willie</i>	\$5.79
<i>Goggles</i>	\$6.99
<i>A Letter to Amy</i>	\$4.76
<i>Jersey Boys: The Story of Frankie Valli & the Four Seasons</i>	\$34.99

<i>Cinderella</i>	public domain/no cost
<i>The Nutcracker and the Mouse King</i>	public domain/no cost
Subtotal	\$58.53
Show Tickets	
<i>The Snowy Day & Other Stories</i> Ticket	\$18
<i>Cinderella</i> Ticket	\$20
<i>Jersey Boys</i> Ticket	\$180
<i>Nashville's Nutcracker</i>	\$90
Subtotal	\$308
Original Text/Educational Materials for <i>Passing</i>	
<i>Passing</i>	\$11.63
<i>In Search of Nella Larsen: A Biography of the Color Line</i>	\$22.66
<i>Passing Novels in the Harlem Renaissance: Identity Politics and Textual Strategies</i> by Mar Gallego	\$89.99
Subtotal	\$124.28
TOTAL	\$490.81

CONCLUSION

In essence, I want to embark on this project because I believe it is an intellectually and artistically stimulating endeavor which will deepen my understanding of theatrical adaptations and challenge my creativity as I begin my first adaptation project. I would greatly appreciate the financial support of the Miller Arts Scholar Minigrant in order to make this ambition of mine a reality. Thank you for your time and consideration.