

PASSING THROUGH

a new musical



GOODSPEED MUSICALS
AUDIENCE INSIGHTS

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PASSING THROUGH

a new musical

JULY 26 - AUGUST 18, 2019
THE TERRIS THEATRE

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Characters

ANDREW – A 23-year-old recent college graduate who's not sure what to do next. He decides he will walk across the country looking for answers. Open-hearted, smart, and kind, he begins the journey a little naïve, but learns more than he could have ever predicted.

ANDREW'S MOM – Loving and protective, she's scared for Andrew but understands his reasons for taking his trip. Like many moms, she sees what her son still needs to face before he does.

ANDREW'S DAD – A professor who had an affair with a student and left Andrew and his Mom when Andrew was young, which has left Andrew with a great deal of rage towards him.

KARIE – An angry young widow from Alabama whom Andrew meets on the road when she is stopped with a flat tire. Although she's initially hostile to Andrew, their paths will cross in an unexpected way.

MAGGIE AND CHUCK – A middle-aged couple in Virginia who takes Andrew in. Formerly travelers like Andrew, they finally settled down, and they encourage Andrew to follow the song of his soul.

LEE – A former preacher who is living at a homeless shelter and shows Andrew the ropes. Although he's warm and friendly to Andrew, he reveals a dark side that Andrew doesn't know how to address.

MISS EMMA – An African-American woman who just celebrated her 102nd birthday, she is Andrew's roommate in a New Orleans hospital. She has lived through terrible things, and she shares her story – and her philosophy – with Andrew.

DENNIS – A 72-year-old ranch owner who takes Andrew in along his journey. Although he's proud of his ranch, he never had time to make a family, and he's feeling the consequences of it.

PAUL – A young Navajo man who has returned to the reservation to be with his father after his mother passed away. Although he's skeptical of Andrew's journey, he provides the help he can.

Synopsis

SHORT TAKE: The spoiler-free synopsis

After graduating from college, 23-year-old Andrew doesn't know what to do with himself. A friend jokes about walking across America, and Andrew decides to do it. His mother is terrified, but he sets off from his home in Pennsylvania with a sign around his neck reading "Walking for Answers".

He soon realizes he is wildly unprepared, especially when he comes across three shady characters who prove their warning to him – that you can't trust anyone – to be true. But then he meets Maggie and Chuck, a pair of fellow travelers who have since settled down. They tell him to listen to the song of his soul, and he changes his sign to say, "Walking to Listen."

As he gets more comfortable, he meets many different people from all walks of life. One day he stops to help Karie, a young woman with a flat tire and learns that she's a widow who thinks it would be best for her baby son to be left with her mother and for her to take off. Andrew, whose own father left his family when he was younger, is horrified and leaves her there. The encounter brings up his

unresolved anger toward his own father, who left him and his mother for a new life. He collapses and wakes up in a New Orleans hospital, where his roommate is Miss Emma, a 102 year-old African-American woman who tells him about what she's lived through. Although he's ready to quit his walk, she advises him to just keep walking.

He does, and eventually his journey picks up some national attention. He meets more people, including Paul, a Navajo man who warns Andrew about the dangers of the desert, where Andrew must walk next. Before he can, Karie finds him – she has tracked him down to say thank you, because he made her see that she was making the wrong decision for her son.

He sets off into the desert and soon finds himself lost, out of water, and alone. With the very real possibility of death looming, and with no closure in his relationship with his father, Andrew is angry at himself for taking on this journey. Will it end in the desert, in tragedy?

Synopsis

SPOILER ALERT!
Read the short take for no spoilers.

ACT 1

An old man is on the phone with his boss: there's a young guy who says he's walking across America – he doesn't seem crazy, so can he sleep in the store? From there, we flash back to a series of recent college graduates, each with ambitions for conventional success. But not Andrew, who doesn't know what to do next or how to become the man he wants to be. A friend makes a joke about walking across America, and the idea sticks: Andrew has found his path. As he preps for the trip, his mother is terrified for him and fears he is walking out on his problems just like his father, who left the family, did. Andrew reassures her, and he puts a sign around his neck – 'Walking for Answers'.

He sets off and quickly realizes he is wildly unprepared. He comes across three shady characters who prove their own warnings to Andrew – that he can't trust anyone – to be well-founded. In Virginia, he meets Maggie and Chuck, a married couple who understand his yearning for the road. They tell him that he'll hear the song of his soul and listen to it. Inspired by their story, he changes his sign to read 'Walking to Listen'. Things are going well, but during a phone call with his Mom, she sings about how hard this trip is on her. She wants Andrew to call his father, but he refuses to speak to him, still angry that he abandoned of the family. Andrew keeps walking and meets Lee, a preacher who is friendly to Andrew but deeply racist, which forces Andrew to confront his own silence in the face of it.

After being taken in and generously fed on Thanksgiving, he stops to help Karie, a young woman on the road with a flat tire. She's hostile to him, and when he sees her car is full of suitcases, she admits the truth – her husband, an Iraq war veteran, committed suicide after he returned home and left her with a son she feels unable to raise. She's leaving her son with her mother and taking off. Andrew is horrified and tells her that her son needs her – then he leaves her with her flat tire. The encounter brings up his pain and anger at his own father, and he passes out in the road.

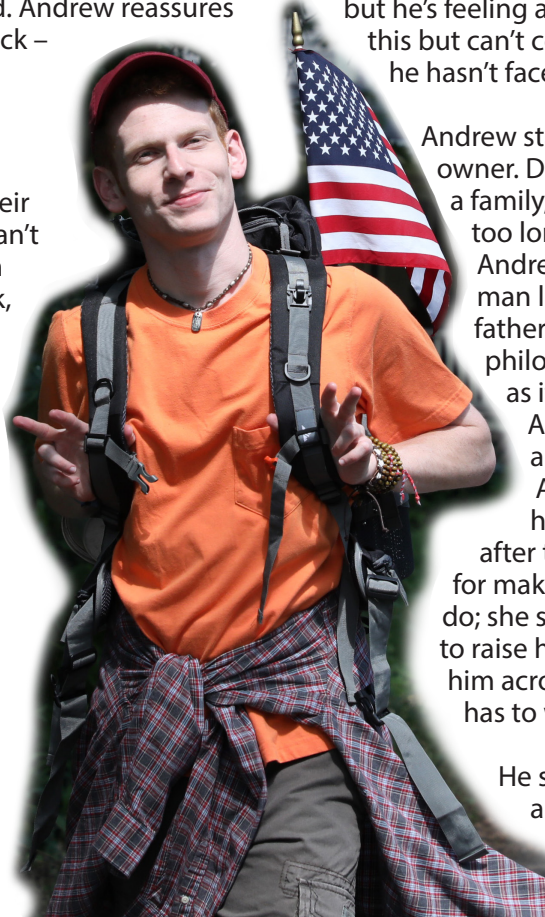
When he wakes up, he is in a New Orleans hospital. His roommate is Miss Emma, a 102-year old African-American woman who tells him about all that she's lived through. She tells him he has to just keep on walking. Although he's given the all-clear by the hospital to continue his journey, he feels it's time to quit and buys a train ticket home. He calls his father but reaches his voicemail. He hears Miss Emma's message in his head.

ACT 2.

Andrew has decided to continue his journey and has ended up in Jasper, Texas, in the middle of a Monarch Butterfly celebration. His journey has attracted media attention, and he's already learned a lot from his trip, but he's feeling a little unsettled. His mother senses this but can't convince him to face the only thing he hasn't faced yet – his anger towards his father.

Andrew stays with Dennis, an old ranch owner. Dennis never found the time to have a family, and he tells Andrew that life is too long a journey to travel alone. Next, Andrew stays with Paul, a young Navajo man living on a reservation with his father. Andrew learns about the Navajo philosophy of Hozho – that everything is as it's supposed to be. Paul also warns Andrew about the dangers of walking alone in the desert, the next part of Andrew's journey. Before he faces it, he's at a diner, where Karie finds him after tracking him down. She thanks him for making her see what she was about to do; she subsequently went back to her family to raise her son herself. She offers to drive him across the desert, but he refuses – he has to walk this part of his journey himself.

He sets off with Paul's warnings in mind and soon finds himself lost, out of water, and alone. He's angry at himself for setting off on this journey at all and predicts what the headlines will say if he's found dead. Just then, he sees a figure: his father. Andrew has the confrontation with his father he's been avoiding and finally forgives him. He realizes that as valuable as the trip has been, it's time to stop wandering. He finds his way back to the road and realizes his father wasn't really there. Energized from the encounter nonetheless, he sets off. With the help of the people he has met along the way, he finishes his journey and reaches the ocean, celebrating all that he has learned.



Max Chernin as Andrew. ©Diane Sobolewski

Meet The Creative Team

ERIC ULLOA (Book) is the author of *26 Pebbles*, which had its world premiere at The Human Race Theatre Company. The play was featured in *American Theatre Magazine* and *The NY Times*, won the Kennedy Center Citizen Artist Award for 2017, was named one of the Top Ten Plays of 2017 by Samuel French, and was one of the top-produced plays nationally of 2018. Eric is the writing assistant to Academy Award winner Alex Dinelaris on his upcoming screen adaptation of Frank Wildhorn and Leslie Bricusse's *Jekyll and Hyde: The Musical*. Eric is the book writer of the musical *Molly Sweeney*, based on the play by Brian Friel, which was a part of the Bay Street Theatre 2017 Festival of New Works. He is the author of the play *Reindeer Sessions*. On the other side of the footlights, Eric was in the original Broadway company of *On Your Feet: The Story of Gloria and Emilio Estefan*. Eric has appeared on The 2016 Tony Awards, The Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, and A Capital Fourth. Follow the journey! Instagram: theulloa Twitter: eulloa03

BRETT RYBACK (Music and Lyrics) is an actor, composer/lyricist, and writer. He is a recipient of the ASCAP Foundation's Cole Porter Award. His works include *Nate the Great* (licensed by TRW), *Joe Schmo Saves the World* (NAMT, ASCAP/Dreamworks Workshop), *The Tavern Keeper's Daughter* ("Best Musical," Pasadena Weekly), and *Liberty Inn* (LA Ovation Award nomination, Best Music/Lyrics). His award-winning plays *Weird* and *A Roz By Any Other Name* are both published in The Best American Short Plays 2007-2008. His musical *Passing Through* was developed at the Rhinebeck Writers Retreat and the Johnny Mercer Writers Colony at Goodspeed, where it was featured in their Festival of New Musicals Festival. As an actor, he originated the role of Marcus Off-Broadway in *Murder for Two* and has performed at numerous regional theatres, including Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, Theatreworks Silicon Valley, South Coast Rep, The Ahmanson, Mark Taper Forum, La Jolla Playhouse, Milwaukee Rep, and Geffen Playhouse. Film/TV appearances include *Modern Family*, *How I Met Your Mother*, and *Hail, Caesar!* Brett is currently developing a narrative musical podcast called *In Strange Woods*. He created the online accompanist site PlayThisForMe.com, and he teaches musical theatre at the University of Southern California. He is @btryback on Instagram and Twitter, and please visit www.brettryback.com.

IGOR GOLDIN (Director) Previously at Goodspeed: Adam Gwon/Michele Lowe's *The Proxy Marriage* (2019 Festival of New Musicals), *Passing Through* (2018 Festival of New Musicals). Most recent: *Grease* (Finger Lakes Musical Theatre Festival), *Austen's Pride* (ACT of CT), *Newsies* (Engeman), *Matilda* (w/Mara Greer, Regional Premiere, Tuacahn). NYC: *Yank!* (Drama Desk nomination, Outstanding Director of a Musical), *With Glee* and *A Ritual of Faith* (both *New York Times* Critic's Picks). 11 new musicals for the New York Musical Festival (3 NYMF Awards for Excellence in Direction). Regional: World Premiere of Eric Ulloa's *26 Pebbles* and *A Christmas Story* (both at The Human Race Theatre); *Gypsy*, *Oklahoma, 1776*, *Memphis*, *West Side Story* ("Encore" Theatre Award, Best Director), *The Producers*, *Evita*, *The Music Man* ("Encore" Theatre Award), *Twelve Angry Men*, *South Pacific* (Engeman); *Crossing Swords* and *Tick, Tick...BOOM!* (American Theatre Group); *Sweeney Todd* (SALT Award nomination, Director of the Year) and *Austen's Pride* (both at Finger Lakes Musical Theatre Festival); *Academy* (Tuacahn New Works Festival); *Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice* (La Mirada/McCoy Rigby). Coming up: *Austen's Pride* (Seattle 5th Avenue) and *Matilda* (Engeman). Top 5 Finalist for the SDC Joe A. Callaway Award for Distinguished Direction. Proud SDC member. Thanks to Brett, Eric, Marcos, Matt, Trey, Adam, Steven, Cory, Tracy, August, Jay, Naomi, Donna Lynn, Anika, and all the good people at Goodspeed. Love to Jeff.

MARCOS SANTANA (Choreographer) is thrilled to be making his Goodspeed debut. Born and raised in Puerto Rico. Broadway as Associate Choreographer: *On Your Feet* and *Rocky* (Tony nominations), *Guys and Dolls*. Regional: *In The Heights*, *Man of La Mancha* (Westport Country Playhouse); *Singin' in the Rain*, *In The Heights* (Olney Theatre Center); *West Side Story*, *Newsies*, *Kiss Me Kate* (Maltz Jupiter Theatre); *Evita* (Bay Street Theatre); *Iggy, Ada, Rosie* (TheaterWorksUSA); *Man of La Mancha* (Shakespeare Theatre Company); *Randy Newman's Faust* (City Center Encores!); *The Pirates of Penzance* (Stratford Shakespeare Festival); *White Noise* (Royal George Theatre); *My Fair Lady*, *Guys and Dolls* (John W. Engeman Theater); *Brazil Brazil* (New Victory Theater); *Paul Simon's Capeman* (Associate Choreographer) Delacorte Theater; *Amor Cubano*, *88 Keys* (Playlist Productions); *Fortress of Solitude* (Associate Choreographer) The Public Theater/Dallas Theater Center. Film/TV: *Chasing Papi*, *Across the Universe*, *The Producers*, *Annie*, *Diva Las Vegas*, *The Nikki Cox Show*, *Pop Stars*, *Tony Awards*, *Stephen Colbert Show*, *Good Morning America*, among others. This is for Nova and Nahuel.

MATTHEW R. MECKES (Music Director) is pleased to be returning to Goodspeed after serving as Music Director for the FNM reading. He recently served as Goodspeed's Music Assistant for two years. Regional credits include *Man of La Mancha*; *Peter and The Starcatcher*; *In The Heights*; *Sweeney Todd*; *Batboy: The Musical*; *Seussical*; *Always Patsy Cline*; and many more. At Goodspeed, he's assisted on numerous productions including *Rags* and *Cyrano*. Currently he is serving as the Music Assistant on the new Michael Jackson musical *Don't Stop 'Til You Get Enough* under the Music Direction of Tony Award winner Jason Michael-Webb. He would like to thank Brett, Eric, and Igor for trusting him to bring this music to life. Special thanks to John, Jane, and Dixie for providing their endless support.

WRITERS' NOTES

BY BRETT RYBACK & ERIC ULLOA

A forty-minute radio piece about a guy walking across the United States isn't the usual stuff of musicals. Yet Andrew Forsthoefel's trek across America was not only a story that inspired us; it sang to us and demanded that we tell it through this art form.

At the heart of *Passing Through* there are really two journeys. There is the physical journey from Pennsylvania to California via the Appalachian Mountains, through the swamps and plains of the South, and into the dry open deserts of the Southwest. Then there is the emotional journey that moves Andrew from pain and isolation to forgiveness and fellowship.

We used music to create a sense of location, changing it to reflect the different folk styles of each region Andrew passes through; music that includes bluegrass, gospel, country western, Mexican ranchera, Navajo-inspired melodies, and even that uniquely American creation, barbershop. And also through song, we gave voice to the quiet, personal emotional life of Andrew and each character he meets along the way. Inspired by the poems of Robert Frost, we used language that was vernacular and plain, and we elevated it to a sort of folk poetry.

We first arrived at Goodspeed and the Johnny Mercer Writers Colony in 2015 with the seeds of an idea and the song that would get Andrew out the door and on his journey. We returned to the Colony in 2016 with a complete first act and began stepping into Act Two. 2017 saw us at the Rhinebeck Writer's Retreat as we polished

the first draft of the show. And 2018 had the very first reading of *Passing Through* at Goodspeed's Festival of New Musicals.

Now, here we are in 2019, with the first developmental production at The Terris Theatre, ready to put it on its feet and share our story with you. We hope to learn all of the lessons that only a physical production will be able to teach us. In this next phase, we implement a mountain of elements that we have not yet seen until this point. Fully-realized direction, choreography and the language it creates, sets, lights, costumes, sound design, original orchestrations, and a host of other details. Every mistake is an opportunity to further strengthen our show, and every success reinforces the work we've all put into it these past four years.

And you, our beloved audience, are the way in which we learn. So we invite you to be a part of this process. If you see us after the show, please stop us and give us your thoughts. We are excited and hungry to hear how our show affected you and further ways in which we can enhance the experience.

We both believe in the healing properties of art, and we invite you to experience a story that is at once incredibly epic and achingly intimate. The themes of hope, loss, optimism, reconciliation, connection, and grace are as resonant as ever in America today. *Passing Through* celebrates the rich diversity of this country and reminds us that though we are many strands, we are all woven together into one beautiful fabric.



Brett Ryback and Eric Ulloa. ©Diane Sobolewski

HISTORY OF *PASSING THROUGH*

The beginnings of the musical *Passing Through* are found in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, in 2011, when a young man named Andrew Forsthoefel decides to walk across America wearing a sign reading “Walking For Answers”. His journey, which covers over 4,000 miles, takes him almost a year.

He turns the story of his journey into a piece for the celebrated radio program *This American Life*, which aired in 2013 (he later writes a book about his journey, called [Walking to Listen: 4,000 Miles Across America, One Story at a Time](#).) Writer and performer Eric Ulloa hears the program while driving and is so moved he has to pull over because he is weeping too hard to drive. In November of that year, Eric is cast as a performer in *The Most Happy Fella* at the Goodspeed and learns about the developmental work Goodspeed does, including the Johnny Mercer Colony, a musical theatre writer’s residency. Eric and his new

collaborator, composer Brett Ryback, are accepted into the Mercer Colony in 2015 with the rights to Andrew’s story. During their residency they write four songs and complete a sketched-out version of the first act. They return to the Colony the following year to complete a draft of Act One, a sketched-out version of Act Two, and a few more songs. Once completed, the show is selected for the Festival of New Musicals in 2018, under the direction of Igor Goldin. Andrew Forsthoefel is in the audience for the presentation.

After the success of the piece at the Festival, Goodspeed announces that *Passing Through* will be featured in Goodspeed’s 2019 Season at The Terris Theatre. In February of 2019, the piece is given a week-long developmental reading in New York to work on the script and score. In July of 2019, *Passing Through* opens in its world premiere production at Goodspeed musicals.

COMPOSING *PASSING THROUGH*

In *Passing Through*, the main character Andrew embarks on a journey across the United States in the hopes of learning from people different from himself and discovering what he is meant to do next in life. His journey is surely a physical one, but it is also an emotional one; each new place introduces him to people who both broaden his understanding of the world and force him to confront a personal turmoil that has lain dormant throughout most of his adolescence and young adulthood.

One of the challenges for the writers in adapting this story into a musical was how to create a cohesive show out of numerous vignettes that involve distinct characters in vastly different settings. Other than their interactions with Andrew, what unites these people who are scattered across the United States? How would they focus the narrative in a way that allows the characters who Andrew meets on the road to be unique and authentic to the real individuals while also unraveling Andrew’s personal odyssey?

That’s where composer and lyricist Brett Ryback takes the reigns. He set out to find inspiration for the lyrics beyond Andrew’s own words used in his memoir, [Walking to Listen](#). Having read Andrew’s book and listened to his podcast, Ryback was struck by the simple yet profoundly effective of language used by everyday people to describe a feeling or a situation. He was determined to root his lyrics in this simple and visceral vocabulary, so he turned to the poems of Robert Frost. Ryback describes Frost’s poems as addressing “really big ideas and an immense amount of emotion” with ordinary, even plain, speech and diction. In addition to Frost, the lyrics to an album called *The King is Dead* by the band The Decemberists also served as a source of inspiration. As a complement to Frost’s work, these lyrics utilize grand, poetic words to discuss simple, pastoral themes. Influenced

by these two distinct sources, Ryback arrived at a vocabulary that was simultaneously earthy and grand.

With a lyric vocabulary and style established, the next piece linking each character in the story is the musical composition. In a score that covers 4,000 miles of geographically and culturally diverse terrain, Ryback interweaves recognizable motifs with authentic melodies and rhythms to create a score that is indicative of both Andrew’s personal and physical journey. In preparing to compose this piece, Ryback went through two primary exercises to determine what his score would sound like. First, he created a research playlist of songs that represented the diversity of music that *Passing Through* would require. Listening to this playlist, he developed a sense of the commonalities these different soundscapes shared and, thus, how they could come together to tell Andrew’s story. He also explored juxtaposing opposing musical styles to see if he could discover something new out of the contrast. As a lover of Romantic music, he began sifting through Beethoven’s sonatas and piano pieces for melodies that evoked the existential experience Andrew had on his journey. Then, he put those melodies up against the folk music he knew was native to so many of the places Andrew visited. The result was a “big, sweeping, grand kind of sound” that he knew would be the foundation of the *Passing Through* score.

With orchestrator August Eriksmoen and music director Matt Meckes on his team, Ryback’s score carries familiar motifs that represent Andrew’s personal journey into genres and musical styles indicative of the different places he visits along the way. To do this, the music team experiments with instrumentation, orchestration, and rhythm. On the next page, we trace Andrew’s physical journey and highlight what audiences can expect to hear musically with each new place he discovers.

A MUSICAL JOURNEY

CHADD'S FORD, PENNSYLVANIA: The "walking theme" is introduced as soon as we meet Andrew. The sounds of his hometown are guitar- and piano-forward, simultaneously folksy and orchestral.

VIRGINIA: Playful Appalachian bluegrass music with a gritty, woody feel in which the banjo and mandolin are first incorporated as primary instrument sounds.

THE CAROLINAS: Farther south, the music of the Carolinas is soulful Americana reminiscent of the work of Aaron Copland. At this point, the orchestration introduces the versatile French horn that creates sweep and swell within the music.

ALABAMA: A saturated kind of folk that leans on harmonica for a deep, rich, southern feel. One might even imagine sweet, sticky molasses as Andrew travels through Alabama.

NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA: Supporting the weight and triumph of the history of the region, southern gospel drives the music and the stories Andrew hears in Louisiana.

TEXAS: As Andrew passes through different parts of Texas, we hear silly, optimistic, boot-stompin' country music based in harmonica and steel stringed guitar. There's even a "hootenanny breakdown" to look forward to!

NEW MEXICO: With Chicano-folk influence, New Mexico brings nylon string guitar and accordion into the mix, while stripping away the orchestral qualities of the score. Here is a "front porch folk" that evokes a beautifully simple tune.

ARIZONA: As Andrew moves through the desert, a sort of frontier he must cross to reach the end of his journey, he is accompanied by Navajo-inspired music, a spiritual, prayerful sound with a simple melody over a driving drum.

CALIFORNIA: Finally at the end of his journey, Andrew experiences the vastness of the Pacific Ocean, which is mirrored in the ethereal quality of the music. At this conclusion, melodies, rhythms, and familiar soundscapes from across the country reappear, reminding Andrew of the places he's visited, the people he's met, and the lessons he's learned along the way.



COMING OF AGE MUSICALS

From *Hair* to *Passing Through*: The Enduring Popularity of the Coming-of-Age Musical

In *Passing Through*, audiences have the opportunity to experience the world alongside Andrew, a young college graduate who embarks on a journey to walk across the United States, from Philadelphia to California, and collect stories along the way. Though Andrew's specific story is a unique one, his need to make sense of the world and his place in it is a universally recognized desire. This central idea is what makes *Passing Through* the quintessential coming-of-age story: Andrew sets off on his journey with a need to find purpose and enlightenment, and he finds out that the world is messier, more complex, and even more beautiful than he previously imagined.

From the Age of Aquarius to a funeral home in small town Pennsylvania, stories of young people navigating the vast and uncertain world of adulthood have made profound impacts on the art of musical theatre itself. Check out the list below for a few examples of such musicals, which span over fifty years, and see how these coming-of-age stories made their mark.

Hair (1968)

*"Where do I go
Follow the children
Where do I go
Follow their smiles
Is there an answer
In their sweet faces
That tells me why I live and die?"*
-"Where Do I Go?"

Created by James Rado and Gerome Ragni at the height of 1960s hippie culture, *Hair* was the first piece of musical theatre to use rock music in the score, reflecting the rebellious attitudes of the time. The story centers around Claude, a hippie whose anti-war beliefs and unconventional lifestyle anger his conservative parents, who demand that he either gets a job or joins the army. Part of *Hair's* enduring appeal lies in its messages of love, acceptance, and activism. By showcasing a narrative that glorifies activism and depicts its protagonists as active participants in the world around them, Rado and Ragni provided audiences with the opportunity to see what happens when a community comes together to choose peace over violence and empower young people to make positive changes in the world.

Pippin (1972)

*"Everything has its season
Everything has its time
Show me a reason and I'll soon show you a rhyme
Cats fit on the windowsill
Children fit in the snow
Why do I feel I don't fit in anywhere I go?"*
-"Corner of the Sky"

Stephen Schwartz's hugely popular musical follows the journey of Pippin, a young prince who dreams of one day finding a life full of purpose and adventure. As Pippin grows older, he finds himself forced to choose between a life of comfort and safety or an opportunity to risk his life and his ideals for a chance at glory. As his journey unfolds, Pippin learns that his life doesn't have any easy answers, and that each action he takes will have wider consequences in the world around him. Like Andrew, whose world grows in complexity as he travels farther from his home, Pippin learns that it is impossible to make choices in life that provide him with complete and total happiness. *Pippin* teaches that life is made up of these types of impossible choices; however, this does not mean that life is ultimately not worth living.

Merrily We Roll Along (1981)

"We're what's happening.

Don't you know?

We're the movers and we're the shapers.

We're the names in tomorrow's papers.

Up to us, man, to show 'em!"

"Our Time"

With a book by George Furth and music and lyrics by famed composer Stephen Sondheim, *Merrily We Roll Along* turned the coming-of-age narrative on its head by telling the story of the protagonist's life in reverse. The story revolves around Franklin Shepard, a once-talented songwriter with a dream to develop Broadway musicals who abandons both his dream and his relationships with others to become a wealthy producer of Hollywood movies. As the story moves backwards in time, the audience sees snapshots of important moments in Frank's life, witnessing firsthand how his jaded opinions give way to the optimism and creativity of his youth. In a way, *Merrily We Roll Along* serves as a cautionary tale, urging artists and audiences alike not to forget the fire and passion of their youth, when opportunities seem endless and exciting, even when the world threatens to dull that spark.

Once on This Island (1990)

"I'm here in the field

With my feet on the ground

And my fate in the air

Waiting for life to begin!"

"Waiting for Life"

Once on This Island tells the story of Ti Moune, a peasant girl living in the French Antilles, an archipelago in the Caribbean Sea. As a young girl, her life was spared by the gods who watch over the island, saving her from a destructive storm by placing her in a tree. Now that she is older, however, she begs the gods to reveal her true purpose, as she longs for a life of adventure and excitement, like the wealthy grand hommes (those island residents decendent from the French who drive their cars through the island. What follows is a story of sacrifice and passion as Ti Moune falls for Daniel, a grand homme whose car crashes outside of her home. Ti Moune ultimately agrees to make the ultimate sacrifice, which alters her destiny forever and proves to the gods that love will always have power over hate, greed, and jealousy. Though Ti Moune risks everything to find her purpose,

her actions prove to the gods that her strength lies in her kindness and determination, and soon others on the island hear of her story. In the end, audiences discover that Ti Moune and Daniel's story has passed through hundreds of generations, proving not only that love has universal power but that storytelling has a lasting impact, as well.

Spring Awakening (2006)

"On I go

To wonder and to learning

Name the stars and know their dark returning

I'm calling to know the world's true yearning,

The hunger that a child feels for everything they're shown."

"All That's Known"

Spring Awakening took the Broadway world by storm in 2006, featuring an all-star ensemble cast and alternative rock music written and composed by singer-songwriter Duncan Sheik. Based on Frank Wedekind's 1891 German Expressionist play, the musical centers around a group of German teenagers who are coming to terms with their identities and starting to question the authorities around them. These questions center around their emerging sexuality, a topic that adults around them have largely treated as taboo. However, as the story continues, it is these taboo topics that ultimately lead to tragedy. *Spring Awakening* addresses complex themes, such as loss, sexuality, shame, and academic achievement, through the lens of young adulthood. As a result, audiences see the impact that the characters' choices make on their lives and the lives of those around them.

Fun Home (2015)

"I thought it was supposed to be wrong

But you seem okay with being strong."

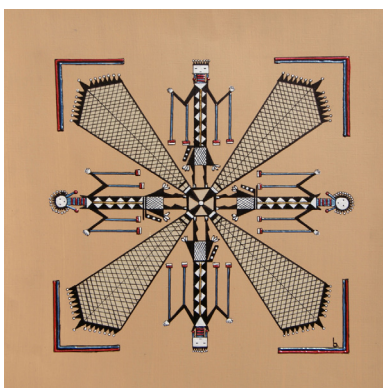
"Ring of Keys"

The first Broadway musical featuring a lesbian protagonist, *Fun Home* is based on the autobiographical graphic novel by Alison Bechdel, an American cartoonist and critic. The musical features Alison as the main protagonist at three stages in her life, showing her coming to terms with her own sexuality and struggling to maintain the relationships that mean the most to her. Critics praised *Fun Home* for its refreshing and honest portrayal of sexuality, occupying, as a critic for the New York Times states, "the place where we all grew up."

Hózhó

A Navajo Concept of Interconnectedness

In *Passing Through*, the character of Paul introduces Andrew to the idea of Hózhó, a Navajo philosophy. He exhibits Hózhó through his understanding that everything is the way it's supposed to be, despite conflicts he experiences with his traditional family. After he left his hometown for college, he had new experiences that led him to develop perspectives and beliefs that differed from those of his family, which created a barrier between Paul and his family, who have never abandoned their hometown or changed their ways of life. However, even with the frequent disagreements they have, Paul still returns home to care for his father and his late mother's garden, which serves as an example of Hózhó. This concept comprises a significant part of the Navajo culture and plays an important role in Andrew's walking journey.



Andrew understands Paul's lesson by concluding that he is meant to walk through the desert and arrive in California, despite his fears. He feels that his whole life, including his father's abandonment, has prepared him for this long walk. However, Paul warns him not to mess with the desert since Hózhó also says that humans must respect the power of nature or danger will strike. Later on, Andrew and his father reflect on the chaos of the sky and how it makes sense when all the stars come together. Things are meant to be as they are, just as Hózhó promises.

History and Meaning:

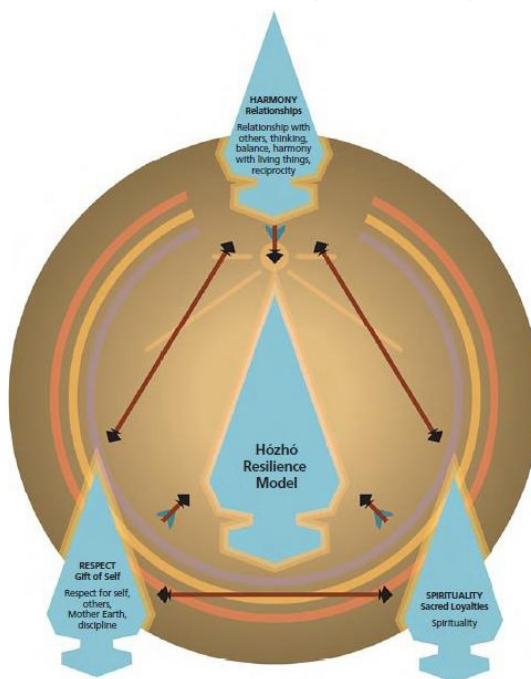
Hózhó emerges from Hózhóójí Nanitiin, Diné (Navajo) traditional teachings given to the Diné people by the holy deity Yoolgaii Asdzáá (White Shell Woman). This complex wellness belief system, not easily translated into English, can be understood as both a way of life and a state of being. A tentative definition for Hózhó is a philosophy that represents the way in which the connected state of goodness, peace, and beauty throughout all things results in the universe's well-being. A simpler translation is a state of harmonious relationship with one's total surroundings that leads to a beautiful life. Hózhó followers believe that the presence of such harmonious interconnection brings about good health. They follow Hózhó principles to guide their lives through self-empowered thoughts, speech, and actions.

In the song "Navajo Prayer/Lost," Paul awakens the desert lands and acknowledges Andrew's fears in crossing them. Paul chants the phrase "Sa'ah naaghai bik'eh Hózhó," which encompasses the principles of Hózhó and is helpful in trying to understand this concept.

- **Sa'ah:** the Navajo concern, attitude, and emphasis on life and death as goals
- **Naaghai:** the continuous reoccurrence of the completion of the life cycle
- **Bik'eh:** according to
- **Hózhó:** a state of harmonious relationship with one's total surroundings that leads to a beautiful life.

Hózhó Today

Today, Hózhó remains a core part of Navajo Native American culture and lives on through schools, healthcare systems, and missions. As an educational philosophy, it states the purpose of learning for the Navajo people, which is to acquire knowledge that will lead one closer to a state of balance, harmony, and happiness. The Diné Educational Philosophy is adapted for many educational institutions and features Nitsáhákees (Thinking), Nahat'á (Planning), liná (Living) and Sihasin (Assuring). At Diné College, the phrase "Sa'ah naaghai bik'eh Hózhó" serves as the educational framework to communicate Navajo history, language, and culture while "fostering social responsibility, community service and scholarly research that contribute to the social, economic and cultural well-being of the Navajo Nation."



In terms of lifestyle, the Diné Hózhó Wellness Philosophy is broken down into attributes to achieve this state of being—spirituality, respect, reciprocity, discipline, thinking, and relationships. The concept has also been presented as a resilience model and in sacred Navajo texts.

Excerpt from The Fundamental Law of the Navajo Nation (2015)

**THE HOLY PEOPLE ORDAINED
THROUGH SONGS AND PRAYERS, THAT
EARTH AND UNIVERSE EMBODY THINKING,
WATER AND THE SACRED MOUNTAINS EMBODY
PLANNING,
AIR AND VARIEGATED VEGETATION EMBODY LIFE,
FIRE, LIGHT, AND OFFERING SITES OF VARIEGATED
SACRED STONES EMBODY WISDOM.
THESE ARE THE FUNDAMENTAL TENETS
ESTABLISHED.
THINKING IS THE FOUNDATION OF PLANNING.
LIFE IS THE FOUNDATION OF WISDOM.
UPON OUR CREATION, THESE WERE INSTITUTED
WITHIN US AND WE EMBODY THEM.**



**ACCORDINGLY, WE ARE IDENTIFIED BY: OUR DINÉ NAME,
OUR CLAN,
OUR LANGUAGE,
OUR LIFE WAY,
OUR SHADOW,
OUR FOOTPRINTS.**



**THEREFORE, WE WERE CALLED THE HOLY
EARTH-SURFACE-PEOPLE.
FROM HERE GROWTH BEGAN AND THE
JOURNEY PROCEEDS.
DIFFERENT THINKING, PLANNING, LIFE
WAYS, LANGUAGES, BELIEFS, AND LAWS
APPEAR AMONG US,
BUT THE FUNDAMENTAL LAWS PLACED BY
THE HOLY PEOPLE REMAIN UNCHANGED.
HENCE, AS WE WERE CREATED WITH
LIVING SOUL, WE REMAIN DINÉ FOREVER.**

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