

LEARNING STAGE

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Study Guide by Shelley Graham, dramaturg

UVU Theatre Presents

THE WHOLE STORY



by Addie Wray Scott

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NEW WORK AT UVU

Utah Valley University Theatre has a long standing commitment to producing new work, which is a benefit to both the education and the artistic communities here in northern Utah. That commitment ranges from world premiers of new adaptations by professional playwrights, like *The Girl Who Drank the Moon* by Melissa Leilani Larson (pictured right), to full productions of student work, like *The Whole Story* by UVU alum Addie Wray Scott. And that's just on the main stage season! UVU Theatre also supports student writers in a variety of playwriting, screenwriting, and dramaturgy classes, as well as the annual *Short Attention Span Theatre*, a festival that showcases student-written, directed, and acted plays that are 10 minutes or less. Off campus, UVU has supported student-written scripts that have toured Utah elementary schools through the TYE Center, contributing to the broad community.



JANINE SOBECK KNIGHTON

Associate Professor of Playwriting, Screenwriting, and New Play Development

As dramaturg for this production, I wanted to learn more about the university theatre department's approach to new play development, and so I interviewed professor Knighton, who directs those efforts at UVU. Below are some highlights of that interview:

SG: *What steps have you taken to develop the theatre department's commitment to new work?*

JSK: The most important aspect was creating opportunities where as many students as possible could see behind-the-curtain in how a play is

developed. It could be experiencing for themselves in a writing class the amount of work and writing and rewriting (and more rewriting) that a playwright puts in. It could be participating in our annual New Script Workshop as an actor or director or dramaturg or designer as we explore [new work]. It could be in our Short Attention Span Theatre festival. *The Whole Story* is a perfect example. It started in the New Script Workshop, and as the other students worked with Addie, they developed a passion for the story. And their investment resulted in students being the biggest advocates for getting this play on our season.

SG: *Why do you see new work as a vital element of a theatre program?*

JSK: In my career, I have both read and seen a lot of plays. But every semester in my writing classes, I am surprised by the stories my students create: the new perspectives, the new insights, the new questions. Reading their stories makes me a better person and a better artist, and it continuously reminds me that the world will always be better when we allow new voices to tell their unique stories.

SG: *What are some of your favorite moments with students as you have worked on scripts?*

JSK: I am of course delighted every time I have a student who takes their work all the way to full production - and have been fortunate to see several of them have the opportunity to do so. But the best moments are the students who enter a class thinking they don't have a story to tell and watching them realize that not only do they have a story to tell, but that those stories have the ability to impact, delight, and intrigue their classmates. And that maybe, just maybe, they should write some more.

M. CHASE GRANT

Director

Watching Grant in rehearsals, one of the first things I noticed as dramaturg was the careful attention he paid to the text, treating it with the same reverence that he would in approaching the work of Shakespeare. He often asks his actors to "Check that line," suggesting they may not have it memorized exactly right. I was so impressed with his approach to new work, and I asked him a few questions about his philosophy of new play development, from a director's perspective. Here's what he had to say:

SG: *What appeals to you, in general, about the process of directing a new play, an un-proven script, if you will?*

MCG: The most exciting element of a new work as compared to something "proven" is perhaps the same thing that keeps Vegas casinos in business: the chance that you may pull three sevens and have a hitherto unknown hit on your hands. There's something about working with new scripts that really gets to the essence of live theatre in the first place; there's a thrill of moving our craft forward in new and different ways. It's an exciting gamble that energizes the whole process, from production team through to the actors. I especially enjoy collaborating with a living author; as someone who specializes in Shakespeare, it's a completely different and refreshing change of pace to work with the author and get a very clear sense of their intent to help guide the staging. What's been delightful in this process is the willingness of our playwright to consider the challenges of moving the work from page to stage, and Addie has been an absolute joy to collaborate with, both in pre-production and during the rehearsal process.

SG: *What has appealed to you about directing Addie's script in particular? Were there specific moments of joy or discovery for you in the rehearsal process of The Whole Story?*

MCG: The most appealing part of working on this script is easily the author themselves. Addie is someone who has had no issue taking constructive feedback regarding some of those 'near-impossible-to-stage-moments' and finding incredibly satisfying solves in redrafts. This same energy has extended into the rehearsal room. It feels like we are all working together to tell a new story, and there's a vitality and whimsy in that, that you generally don't find in more classic and established works. Without giving too much away, one of those tricky staging moments in the script involves the transformation of a shoe into a glass slipper, and our in-rehearsal discovery and solve for that challenge is one I'm particularly proud of and excited to share with our audience.



FIND THE FAIRY TALES



While *The Whole Story* is a new play, you may notice several references to other fairy tales in this story. While watching tonight, see if you can spot elements of the following tales:

- Cinderella
- Sleeping Beauty
- The Princess and the Frog
- Jack and the Beanstalk
- The Princess and the Pea
- Snow White

ADDIE WRAY SCOTT

Playwright Interview

SG: *What is something that you gained from studying at UVU that prepared you for the intense artistic demands of an MFA program in dramatic writing?*

AWS: UVU gave me a place to be myself and be confident in it. Through my education here, I felt supported with the resources to fulfil my goals, try new things, and help my peers do the same. Now in my graduate program, I can confidently share my plays and

experiences. I know who I am, no matter how many times I may be rejected, experience failure, or feel like giving up. I've got a huge support system cheering me on as I go.

SG: *What do you love about Jillian's (whole) story?*

AWS: I love Jillian's story because it's about a girl whose dream is "cliché" but she fights for it anyway. She has (almost) unwavering optimism in the face of people to tell her her dream is insufficient, impossible, or invalid, and in the end chooses kindness over power. Jillian is proof that innocence is not ignorance, and that forgiveness is so much more satisfying than revenge.

SG: *What are some moments in rehearsal that you feel like were "aha!" moments for you, either in the story or the process?*

AWS: It's amazing to me that I can write a script and then watch actors take my pages to create something even better. Chase kindly asked me not to share ideas on the script in rehearsals until the end of each day or during breaks. This would look like me biting my tongue, worried that my script needed to change or be edited immediately...until the end of rehearsals when I couldn't believe the incredible work I'd just seen. Often the things I thought needed editing would be resolved by the end of rehearsal. And when I did share edits, they were implemented by the actors so beautifully! The cast was invaluable, as was Chase, Emily, Makelle, and the rest of the creative team.



I WONDER

Dramaturg's Note

by Shelley Graham

Once upon a time. Happily ever after. These are familiar phrases from the fairy tale world we return to time and again. Are there no new stories? What draws us to these fairytales again and again?

According to Laura Packer of the National Storytelling Network, it is because "they are, at their most basic, the stories of our lives in their most stripped down form... They are a shortcut to a common understanding of the way the world works." Fairy tales have endured across centuries and various forms because they are versatile, adapting to cultural shifts while maintaining their core elements.

Their archetypal characters and simple yet profound plots make them ideal for reinterpretation, whether in short stories, poems, musicals, films, or TV shows. Each medium enhances the tales in unique ways; they often subvert traditional narratives, reflecting contemporary values like gender equality and cultural diversity, while retaining their original magic. As Packer states, "Fairy tales feed our imaginations. The wondrous is matter-of-fact in these tales, so we are encouraged to look for wonder in our own lives. We are given permission to see the world as one of possibility."

Their endurance speaks to their ability to evolve without losing their enchanting essence: the ability to spark wonder.

Wondering how you can learn more? Go behind the scenes at the dramaturgy website, bit.ly/uvuwwholestory



A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE FAIRY TALE

The history of fairy tales stretches back thousands of years, predating written records. These stories were originally part of oral traditions, passed down from generation to generation. Rooted in folklore, they often served as moral lessons, entertainment, and reflections of societal norms and anxieties. Fairy tales have evolved over time, shaped by the cultures and contexts in which they were told. Early precursors to fairy tales include mythological and didactic stories, such as those found in *Aesop's Fables* or ancient Indian texts like the *Panchatantra*.

IMPORTANT FAIRY TALE FIGURES

Giambattista Basile (1575–1632):

An Italian writer who compiled *The Tale of Tales (Pentamerone)*, one of the first known collections of fairy tales, including early versions of "Cinderella" and "Rapunzel."



Catherine D'Aulnoy (1650 - 1705):

A French noblewoman and literary figure who first coined the term, "fairy tales," using their elaborate settings and complex plots to weave tales of romance and social commentary.

The Brothers Grimm (Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, 1785–1863):

German scholars who collected and published *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, preserving many iconic stories like "Snow White," "Hansel and Gretel," and "Rumpelstiltskin."

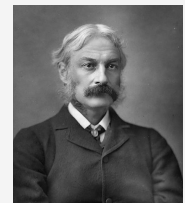


Hans Christian Andersen (1805–1875):

A Danish author famous for his original tales such as "The Little Mermaid," "The Ugly Duckling," and "The Emperor's New Clothes."

Andrew Lang (1844–1912):

A Scottish folklorist who compiled the *Colored Fairy Books*, a series that gathered fairy tales from various cultures, introducing them to English-speaking audiences.



Citations

Grenby, M. O. (Matthew Orville). "Tame Fairies Make Good Teachers: The Popularity of Early British Fairy Tales." *The Lion and the Unicorn*, vol. 30 no. 1, 2006, p. 1-24.

Packer, Laura. "Why We Need Fairy Tales." National Storytelling Network, 2012, storynet.org/why-we-need-fairy-tales/.

Besson, Anne. "From the Aristocracy to the Playground: A Short History of Fairy Tales | Fantasy - BnF." fantasy.bnf.fr/fantasy.bnf.fr/en/understand/aristocracy-playground-short-history-fairy-tales/.