



A Unique Opportunity for Presenters of *My Father's Dragon*

October 26, 2016

Dear Presenter,

As we begin the process of producing our next touring show, *My Father's Dragon*, based on Ruth Stiles Gannett's classic children's book, we are thrilled to announce a very special collaboration with our long-time presenting partners at Purdue University. **Amanda Mayes, Ph.D., Manager of Education at Purdue Convocations, will be leading a research study examining the impact of a live performance on a student's literacy skills.** This is an important opportunity to gather significant data related to the live performing arts and literacy learning, and we're very pleased to be a part of it.

Initially, the study was to only involve students attending our performances of *My Father's Dragon* in the West Lafayette, Indiana area. As we discussed the project further we realized that **since children across the US and Canada will see the production during its tour, why not gather data wherever it plays?** Additional data from students across a wider geographical and cultural range can only strengthen the study and its possible outcomes. Dr. Mayes has agreed to include and support participation from our presenters across the country that would be interested in gathering data from their community related to our performances of *My Father's Dragon*.

The quantitative information to be obtained from this particular kind of study is almost nonexistent in the field and could provide a complement to the usual audience surveys, and attendance/income data. For organizations that serve young students and schools with the intent of supporting literacy curriculum and cultivating positive character traits and social skills, **this data could prove to be invaluable in documenting the impact of live theater and prove persuasive in making the case for financial support for providing access to the arts.**

Thanks to the vision, expertise, leadership and generous efforts of Dr. Mayes, we are delighted to be able to share this significant opportunity with our valued presenters across North America.

If you're interested in learning more about Dr. Mayes' study, please refer to her Research Prospectus on pages two and three of this document. As usual, our wonderful colleagues at the Brad Simon Organization will be booking the tour and working in tandem with Enchantment and Purdue to maximize the data set for the study. To download this document and inquire about tour bookings, click through to The Brad Simon Organization website [HERE](#). To access the online application form to participate in this project click [HERE](#).

We look forward to bringing *My Father's Dragon* and this unique research opportunity to your community!

Warmest regards,

Landis Smith
Artistic Director - Production

Jennifer Smith
Artistic Director - Literary & Education

Leslie Reidel
Artistic Director - Resident Stage Director

*Igniting Children's
Imaginations Everywhere*

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Special Opportunity for Arts Presenters

Participate in a National Research Study on The Impact of a Live Performance

Fellow Arts Presenters,

We all believe the performing arts are capable of amazing things. Specifically, theatre is a universal phenomenon that cuts across cultures and societies. Theatre teaches us lessons about:

- expression
- ourselves
- history
- people from cultures other than our own
- social change and how society can be self-reflective
- creativity

And most importantly:

- theatre is an excellent way to learn

Even though we believe theatre is a powerful tool, arts organizations have done little to understand the impact live performances have. I invite you to help change that. Based on a small study discussed in the article [Learning from Live Theater](#) authored by Greene, Hitt, Kraybill, and Bogulski, I have developed a plan for a larger study to examine the impact of a live performance of Enchantment Theatre Company's *My Father's Dragon* on the literacy skills of some of our youngest patrons.

This type of research is minimal in the field and your participation will help us all to build a case for the performing arts as a necessary part of every child's education. Please join me in this potentially field defining work. All participating arts organizations will be recognized in all publications resulting from this research.

Sincerely,

Amanda Mayes, Ph.D.

Manager of Education

Purdue Convocations

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Examining the Impact of a Live Performance of *My Father's Dragon*: A Literacy/Theater Project

Amanda Mayes, Ph.D.

Project Abstract

Schools continue to narrow their focus to subjects included on standardized tests. Justifying subjects and activities not covered on those assessments is increasingly difficult. As a result, subjects like theater are overlooked in favor of math, science, and literacy initiatives. Although research suggests involvement in the arts has positive academic impacts, few studies with experimental designs are exploring the impact of live performances on literacy initiatives. This study seeks to broaden the understanding of the ability of arts integration to support literacy in early readers, broaden the types of tools used to assess educational outcomes, and understand the role cultural institutions play in producing educational outcomes.

Project Description

The primary goal of this study is to understand the intrinsic and academic/literacy impacts of a live performance. In order to meet this goal, schools will be recruited to have their students attend a live performance of *My Father's Dragon* by Enchantment Theatre Company. This show is based upon the book of the same name by Ruth Stiles Gannett. This book has a grade level reading equivalent of 4.8. Students in grades K-5 will be targeted to attend the performance. All students who participate in the study will be provided with a copy of the book. Students in grades K-3 will have the book read to them in advance of the performance. Students in grades 4-5 will read the book in advance of the performance.

Schools will be randomly assigned to either the treatment or control group. Schools assigned to the treatment group will attend the live performance after reading the book, then will complete a comprehension assessment within 48 hours of the live performance. Schools assigned to the control group will read the book, complete the comprehension assessment, then attend the live performance. The evaluation tool will assess knowledge of the characters and plot, vocabulary, tolerance levels, and empathy.

This study will help to build the body of research examining the intrinsic benefits of a live performance and start to construct the body of knowledge on the academic impacts of the performing arts. All participating arts organizations will be recognized in all publications resulting from this research.

Cost for Presenting Organizations

- Each copy of the book= \$2.80
- Purdue will provide funding for all data analysis and assessment materials

Program Plan

1. Review of current literature- fall 2016/early spring 2017
2. Full development of study design including research questions, methodology, program assessments- spring 2017
3. Select schools who are willing to participate- late spring/early summer 2017
4. Send list of participating schools with approximate number of involved students to Dr. Mayes- late spring/early summer 2017
5. Obtain Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for a study working with human subjects, approval application must include a list of all presenting arts organizations and schools participating in the study- summer 2017
6. Dr. Mayes will either randomly assign schools to the treatment or control group or assign schools in matched pairs to the treatment or control group- midsummer 2017
7. Funding for student copies of books attained, additional study funding for data analysis obtained- midsummer 2017
8. Treatment AND control group schools will either have the book read to them or will have students read the book prior to their performance date. Treatment group schools will attend the live performance, then take a literacy test within the week following the performance. Control group schools will complete the test prior to attending the live performance- fall 2017/spring 2018
9. All literacy tests, consent and assent forms, and any other study materials should be returned to Dr. Mayes- fall 2017/spring 2018
10. Data analysis begins- early summer 2018
11. Preliminary results complete-late fall 2018/early spring 2019
12. Study ready for publication- spring 2019

Further Questions

Please contact Dr. Amanda Mayes at Purdue University with further questions via email at asmayes@purdue.edu or via phone at (765) 494-2695.