

Eurydice – Show Proposal

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Playwright: Sarah Ruhl

Statement of Intent

I love this play. I didn't think I was going to love this play, but I do. It made me cry. It made me very happy and very sad. It made me laugh. This is the kind of show that brings something weird and new and different to the stage. It's spooky and beautiful and funny and powerful, and HOT DAMN do I ever want to direct it for you!!! And now, for your reading pleasure, my proposal for the play *Eurydice*, by Sarah Ruhl.

Synopsis

Eurydice is a more modern adaptation of the story of Orpheus, told from the perspective of Eurydice, his bride. The Orpheus myth is a well-known tragedy – a man blessed with incredible musical ability sings his way into the Underworld to rescue his wife, who died on their wedding day of a snake bite. He is allowed to bring Eurydice back to life, but he must not look back at her. He looks. She dies a second death, and is forced back into the Underworld forever. The story of *Eurydice* does not greatly differ from the original tale in plot, but its presentation is what sets it apart and breathes new life into the story.

Here's a more detailed outline of the plot:

Eurydice and Orpheus are in love. On the day of their wedding, Eurydice leaves the party temporarily and meets the Nasty Interesting Man, who stands in for the original story's snake. He tells her that he has a letter for her from her deceased father, and that she can have it if she comes back to his nearby apartment. Tempted by the promise of a letter from her father, she goes back to his apartment, where he attempts to seduce her, and she falls down the stairs leading away from his snake pit of an apartment, killing her.

Orpheus is devastated and determined to get her back. In the Underworld, Eurydice steps off of the elevator that deposits you there after you've died. She has been dipped in the River Styx's waters, and has therefore forgotten how to read and write, and lost all concept of family, love, and time. Eurydice's father finds her and teaches her to read, to write, and to remember her life. They are able to spend time together in a way that they couldn't after he died. The script goes on to show short vignettes of Orpheus' struggle to get Eurydice back, and Eurydice remembering her life and her love for him. The Lord of the Underworld takes an interest in her, though, and decides that he will marry her.

Shortly after the Lord of the Underworld has made his claim on Eurydice, Orpheus sings his way to the land of the dead. He is permitted to take her home, and after a painful goodbye to her

father, Eurydice follows Orpheus at a distance. He cannot look at her. With each step, Eurydice remembers their love more and more, and cannot help but call out his name. Orpheus looks back, and they are slowly torn apart as they realize that their one chance at being reunited in life is gone. This moment takes forever and no time at all. Meanwhile, Eurydice's father is inconsolable at being separated from his daughter again. He dips himself in the River to make himself forget.

Eurydice is pulled back to the Underworld, where she finds her father, near catatonic and thoughtless. She desperately tries to teach him, but he's forgotten too much. In a fit of despair at being forced to marry the Lord of the Underworld, losing Orpheus, and losing her father again, she too dips herself in the river.

Orpheus steps out of the elevator, but he is too late.

Statement of Overall Themes

Eurydice is a sad play, but it still has many comedic moments to lighten the heavier themes. There are overarching themes of sadness and loss, but also themes of fighting for love, the joy of family, and the beauty of life. There is romance, and there's a lot of life and light in the Underworld, for being a place full of dead people. The Stones, a trio of dead? Undead? People who just want everyone to follow the goddamned rules provide comic relief, as well as acting as judges and bad influences, preying upon the pain that the other characters feel. It is as much a play about loss and desperation as it is about love and family.

Warning of Sensitive Content

In addition to the heavy themes of the play, there are a few scenes with kissing between Orpheus and Eurydice (and general "we're SO in love!!" googly heart eyes behaviour). Whether or not this is communicated through, uh, mouth contact, or not, is really up to the actors' comfort levels. There are a lot of ways to show physical and emotional love without actually kissing, but the physical display of emotion will still be somewhat important to the show. Actors would be asked about their comfort levels with kissing and/or showing affection onstage when auditioning, and these scenes would be rehearsed in a safe space to make sure that no one is uncomfortable (and if they are, then we will stop!). It's very important to me as a potential director that my cast is comfortable, both for their own sake and for the show's – if someone is uncomfortable onstage, it's going to carry through to their performance, and make them have a bad time.

There is one other scene that may be intense for viewers and actors - the scene where the Nasty Interesting Man attacks Eurydice and tries to make her stay with him. A lot of the physicalization of this scene can be accomplished through body language and use of the stage, without a need for a lot of spooky touching or actual stage violence. At worst, the actors would be standing close together with the Nasty Interesting Man grabbing Eurydice's wrist (again, very contingent on actor comfort levels). I think that the fear adds a lot to the scene, but I also think

that we need to strike a balance between making people uncomfortable to tell the story, and just making people uncomfortable.

Why Should Sock 'n' Buskin Produce this Show?

Sock 'n' Buskin should produce *Eurydice* because it is hauntingly beautiful, tells a classic story with a twist, and will still manage to make audiences laugh! It touches on themes that everyone goes through – love, loss, coping. It features a strong female lead, and has many different roles – from romantic, to ditzy, to spooky. It's a show full of emotion, passion, and life, especially for a play that's all about dead people. I was in love with this play from the first scene, and it has so many deeply moving parts that are so incredibly satisfying to read and to picture on a stage. It's the kind of show that has foreshadowing that punches you in the gut when you realize what's happening, and the playwright is an absolutely amazing writer. *Eurydice* is a great way to explore concepts that SnB doesn't always go for, and begs the audience to feel along with the characters. It also made me cry when I was reading it, so if it can do that, it's probably pretty decent.

On a more technical note, this is a play for 7 people, which is fairly middle-of-the-road in terms of size. It includes at least 2 roles of variable gender, so it has some flexibility in terms of cast composition. Most costumes could be pulled from the SnB costume room, or from actors' closets. The set will be very DIY-able, considering that I don't want to make an ACTUAL RAIN MACHINE (if you want some serious tech envy, Google Dartmouth's production of this show). The set should still be large enough for at least some movement. SLB or KM would be the ideal locations for this show because either would allow for a lot of cool lighting, and real greyouts/blackouts. *Eurydice* is available for licensing through Samuel French, which is convenient, and it seems like no one has ever heard of this show, so it doesn't seem particularly likely that any other companies will grab it from between our fingers.

A cast list would include:

EURYDICE
HER FATHER
ORPHEUS
A NASTY INTERESTING MAN
GRANDMOTHER
BIG STONE
LITTLE STONE
LOUD STONE

Note! The Nasty Interesting Man is the Lord of the Underworld, and the Grandmother is likely double cast as a stone – this is one of the differences between the version of the script that I read (Amazon version) and the production version available for licensing on Samuel French.

Director's Statement of Production Concept and Aesthetic

Overall Aesthetic

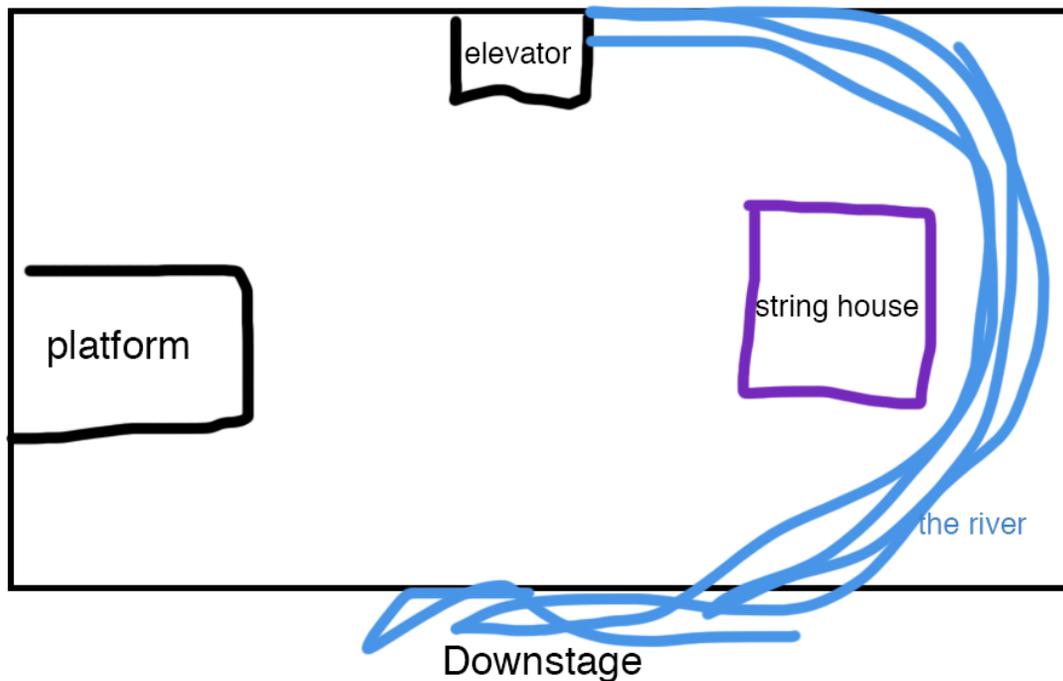
This play should feel very ethereal, especially in the Underworld. It should feel real and fake, magical, confusing, all at once. It should use cooler colours (blues, purples, teals), and should feel very flowing. It should almost feel like a memory. The colours, lighting, and somewhat abstract design of the set will help to communicate this. The costumes should also be simple and flowing, not distracting from the acting. Lighting and sound will play a major part in helping to show flow, time, and distinct locations.

Set

There are a few bigger set pieces here, but most of them can (and should!) stay put throughout the show. There are 3 main elements of the set that are most important to me.

1. A big old platform block, stage right. This platform (like the one from Fahrenheit), should have stairs for easy access. This will serve as a way to create levels, and to help show the distinction between the Overworld and Underworld, and the upstairs/downstairs levels of the Nasty Interesting Man's house.
2. An elevator sized box at the back of the stage, tall enough to fit a human comfortably inside. This box will be open in the front and back, but will have a painted gauzy curtain or old-timey gate on the front. The box will be painted black, and be lined with a shiny/plastic-y material (think table cloth cover, like your grandma had because she didn't trust you with the nice linens), then lined with remote control fairy lights, and lined with more gauzy fabric. It would have thin strips of clear plastic/fabric hanging from the ceiling. Turning the fairy lights to a twinkle setting and pairing them with rain sounds (and maybe misting the actors with a bit of water before they go onstage) will create a diffused and stylishly abstract rainy elevator, as well as a neat lighting piece.
3. A long stream of gauze/tulle fabric to stand in for a river. This would be present throughout all scenes as well, and hopefully be draped around the front of the stage and over the rainy elevator.
4. It would be great if we could hang 4 fishing line loops from the ceiling (or some high point) stage left so that we could make a little string house. How this is actually done will be incredibly dependent on the actual space, so I don't have any concrete plans for how this would be done yet.

Go to the next page for a sample set design!



Lighting

My ideas for lighting involve using colours and white spot lighting to help differentiate between the Overworld and the Underworld. The Underworld should usually have lighting that looks a little off, a little tinted, and be very diffused throughout the scenes. The Overworld scenes, on the other hand, should have bright lighting, and be somewhat simple. During the scenes where Orpheus is figuring out how to retrieve Eurydice from the underworld, there should be a single white spot on him. The lighting here is a tool to help show loneliness, and to show the lack of time and reality in the underworld.

Sound

This is a fairly quiet play – no sirens or spooky noises. Most of the sound design in this show will centre around the use of water sounds, like rain or a running river, or the ocean. The sound will mostly be a part of the background – audible to the audience, but still reasonably quiet. In scenes with water, I particularly want to make sure that there are at least some water sounds, considering it is such a driving force of the show. I think it would be very powerful to end the show by fading to a blackout with only the sounds of water in the background.

Costuming

Most of the costumes should be simple. Costumes in the Underworld should look relatively flowy and somewhat timeless (where possible). Eurydice should usually be wearing something flowy, but cute (fabrics like chiffon or tulle in pale colours, simple top). Eurydice will also need a wedding dress, which should be thrifted or found in the costume room. The men in the show will probably be wearing suits, or shirts and slacks.

The stones should wear grey, and have little grey hats, but still have a little bit of whimsy to them – imagine a person who is CONVINCED that they are a rock, but are pretty clearly not a rock (like... a neighbour who is pretty sure they're the lawn police and have noticed that your grass is exactly *2mm!* longer than it should be).

The Lord of the Underworld should be wearing a T-shirt and a child's crown, and, I hope, ride a tricycle.

Major Props

- A tricycle, for the Lord of the Underworld
- A garden hose
- An umbrella
- A bunch of string

Tentative Production Plans

My plans for this show involve blocking the movement early so that the actors can settle into the production and the motion as soon as possible, so that there's more room for working through emotion and feeling in each scene. I also would like to aim for some rolling off-book dates so that the scenes with the most motion can be practiced off-book early enough in the production. I would also like to aim to have each scene called to rehearsal at least twice, with all-cast rehearsals on the weekends.

- Week 1: Read through, general blocking
- Week 2: More polished blocking, especially for the more intense scenes (i.e., Eurydice and Orpheus' re-separation & the Nasty Interesting Man's apartment)
- Week 3: Scene Work – continue to explore characterization and emotion. Try to be off book for the more intense scenes.
- Week 4: Off book date! Italian run! More scenework!
- Week 5: ... The actual off-book date. Work on the flow of each scene specifically. Throw a metronome at someone.
- Week 6: Polish that emotion off, flow, scenes, make sure that all props are available for practice where possible. At least one full run.
- Week 7: Polishing, full runs.
- Week 8: Tech and dress.

List of Production Team Roles to be Filled

I would be directing the show, but would require a stage manager and potentially an ASM.

Where to Obtain Script/Performance Rights

For performance rights and the performance script, Samuel French.

I also have a copy that I am comfortable with passing around so that people can read it – it's not an identical version to the performance copy, since I got mine on Amazon, but it should be very similar – I just couldn't guarantee that I'd get a copy in time to write this proposal.