

Educational Resource Guide

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SOUTH
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CIVIC
THEATRE

Here are a few things you can discuss with your class to help them understand what to expect at a live theatre production

- Theatre features live on-stage actors. They have spent many weeks rehearsing for the performance.
- The audience is a very important part of the performance. Appreciation and enthusiasm for the performers is shown by close attention, participation, and applause at the proper times. The success of the play/musical depends on the appropriate interaction between cast and audience.
- The theatre is a very special place. Its atmosphere is entirely different from your home where the television is always available.
- It is easy to identify with live actors. You can see how they use their bodies and voices to convey different emotions.
- Actors wear costumes and make-up to help create the impression of the characters they play.
- There is much more to most live performances than actors. Special sets, effects, lighting, music, costumes, and of course, the audience add to the total experience.

Introduce your students to the following theatrical terms

Box Office	Makeup	Acts & Scenes	Play	Actor
Playwright	Props	Spotlights	Costumes	Curtain Call
Lobby	Director	Stage	Stagehand	Makeup



Photos from *Stupid Humans* by Peter Ringenberg

Discuss the role of the audience and proper theatre etiquette

- Arrive on time: It's important to arrive at the theater at least 15 minutes before the show starts. This will give you enough time to find your seats and settle down before the performance begins.
- Dress appropriately: Dressing appropriately for the theater means wearing neat and clean clothes. Avoid wearing anything too revealing or casual.
- Turn off your phone: The most important thing to remember when attending a theater performance is to turn off your phone. The sound and light of a phone can be very distracting to both the performers and other audience members.
- Avoid talking during the performance as it can be very distracting to both the performers and other audience members. Save your comments for the end of the show.
- Avoid singing or participating: Sing or participate if and only if you are invited to do so. Your participation is often very important.
- Clap at appropriate times: Show the cast and crew your appreciation for their hard work with applause. Applaud after each number and at the end of the show. Don't clap during the performance unless it's a musical and the performers indicate that they want the audience to participate.
- Be respectful to other patrons: Be respectful to other patrons. Avoid doing anything that could disturb them, such as kicking their seats or talking loudly.
- It is easier for you (and the rest of the audience) to see and hear the performance if you stay in your seat and listen very carefully. Try your best to remain in your seat once the performance has begun. Be sure to use the restroom before the show starts. Getting up in the middle is very distracting for the cast.

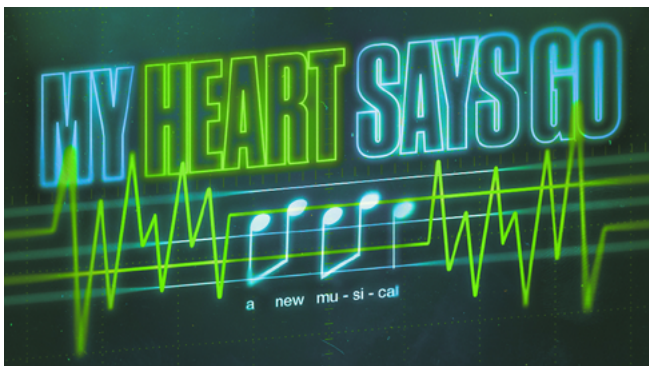
Watch the trailer for *My Heart Says Go*



Discussion Questions by Tatiana Botero

1. What is the main theme of *My Heart Says Go*, and how does it relate to your own life experiences?
2. How do the musical elements, such as the songs and choreography, contribute to the storytelling and emotional impact of the show?
3. What do you think are the strengths and weaknesses of Indigo and Clara, the main characters in the musical, and how do their personalities and actions affect the plot?
4. In what ways does the setting of the musical play a role in the events and themes explored in the story?
5. What message or lesson do you think the musical conveys about the importance of following your heart and pursuing your dreams?
6. What are some of the key conflicts and challenges faced by the characters in the musical, and how are they resolved?
7. How does the diversity of the cast and characters in *My Heart Says Go* contribute to its overall impact and relevance in today's world?
8. What do you think makes *My Heart Says Go* stand out from other musicals you have seen or heard?
9. Overall, how did the musical make you feel, and what ideas or emotions did it leave you with?

Listen to the music from





Jorge "Jay" Rivera-Herrans

Lyrics and Music for *My Heart Says Go*

Interview by Tatiana Botero

Photo credit by: José Pita Juárez

Raised in Dorado, Puerto Rico, Jorge Miguel Rivera-Herrans (nicknamed "Jay") is an artist dedicated to storytelling. He graduated from the University of Notre Dame in 2020. While at Notre Dame, Jay participated in many plays and musicals at the university and at the South Bend Civic Theatre. Some of his accomplishments are: Stupid Humans (Indigo), In The Heights (Usnavi), The Great Writer (Young Man), Spring Awakening (Melchior), Between Riverside and Crazy (Oswaldo), Next To Normal (Gabe), and Grease (Doody). After his graduation in 2020 he was invited back to the university to perform in Jesus Christ Superstar (a musical

that was canceled due to Covid.) He played the main character of Jesus. Jay is now busy creating his next project, EPIC the musical, based on the story of The Odyssey. This will be a completely sung through musical for which he has written the lyrics and created the music for over 30 songs. It has 4 sagas and is being released one saga at a time. Check him out, it is up on all platforms. For this upcoming production of My Heart Says Go here at the South Bend Civic Theatre, I was able to interview Jay and to get some insights to his creativity and way of working that I would like to share with our audience.

Q: How does your identity influence your work?

A: I feel as though I am a very energetic person and that tends to carry over into my songs! :)

Q: Where do you get your inspiration from?

A: Nowadays, most of my inspiration comes from video games and anime. At the time of writing what was originally titled Stupid Humans, however, there was a lot of inspiration from Hamilton and Into the Woods.

Q: Can you talk to us about the story of the musical and its main character Indigo?

A: The story is mildly inspired by my own life; I grew up wanting to study medicine and then ended up switching to theatre in college. This created a huge rift in my family, especially between me and my father. Thankfully, we're reconnecting and we've never stopped loving each other. In this story, Indigo drops out of Med School to pursue his dreams of songwriting, while his father wants him to have financial stability.

Q: The difficulty of following your dream and the dream/paths that your parents want for you?

A: At the time I was constantly fighting the feeling of being a disappointment. I couldn't see myself doing anything other than songwriting anymore and my parents couldn't believe it. I knew they were hard on me because they loved me, but it didn't make it easier. I still remember the arguments with my dad about how I was "ruining my life." I'm glad we're now closer to figuring everything out together.

About the development of an idea

Q: Can you talk to us about how a university student develops a class project into a full production musical?

A: *Thankfully, Matt Hawkins was around to make this happen. I had entered his classes showing off snippets of my work. It was his idea to create the Musical Theater Lab class and essentially give us all the space to workshop, choreo, songs, dramaturgy, etc.*

Q: What were the steps you took to develop a new musical and write the music and the lyrics?

A: *When I write music and lyrics, I always try to achieve 3 things: 1) Do the components of the song capture the emotion of the moment it's conveying? 2) Is the music something I would actually enjoy listening to over and over again? 3) Is the tune "catchy?" By "catchy," I don't mean it needs to be a pop song on the radio, more so is it easy to remember the vocal line and the melody and other components after hearing it? These three goals ultimately mean writing many different song drafts until the right song is found. :)*

Q: What was the timeline from concept to being put on stage at the South Bend CIVIC?

A: *If I remember correctly, the first production of Stupid Humans was back in February 2019, followed by an online seminar process with Apples and Oranges later that year, which resulted in us changing the name to My Heart Says Go. Then I believe there was an online workshop the next year, where we gave the story and characters more focus and fleshed them out. We then recorded the Concept Album earlier this year. And now we're here. :D*

Q: What advice would you give to a young student including what classes/programs will help the student to be able to produce a musical.

A: *For any young students trying to write a musical, my biggest piece of advice would be to not be afraid to do specific research on the storytelling aspects that interest you. There are many wonderful classes that will get you better acquainted with storytelling, but ultimately you are the only one who knows the kind of story you want to tell. I can't count how many hours I've spent watching YouTube video essays on storytelling aspects from "how to create suspense" to "how to build strong character arcs" and such. In terms of what classes/programs will help the student produce a musical, all I can say for sure is that you NEED to put your work out there somehow, even if it's not ready or if it's incomplete. This can be as simple as signing up for musical theater classes and explaining to the professor that you are there because you are writing a musical and you want to learn how to make it better (this is literally what I did for Stupid Humans) or it can be more along the lines of documenting your process of creating the piece online (this is also what I'm doing for my next musical, EPIC). Any classes/programs about the development of new musicals are extremely helpful, just make sure you are doing what you can to share your work!*

About the modern storytelling style

Q: Modern style of music: rap / hip hop (fast pattern)

A: *Since this was my first time writing a musical, at the time I leaned very heavily on what I liked from the musical theater world, which came mostly from Hamilton and Into the Woods, both of which have a lot of exciting and fast paced components in their songs.*

Q: Other than Lin Manuel Miranda, are there any other music theatre influences that guided your process/writing for *Stupid Humans/My Heart Says Go*?

A: *While I was writing Stupid Humans, I was still figuring out what kind of music style felt right to me. Other than the inspirations stated above, I mostly just leaned on a lot of pop music. Nowadays, most of my inspiration comes from video games and anime.*

Q: Using DJ vs full orchestra

A: *I get excited at any versions of the music, whether that be using the DJ, an orchestra, or a mixture between the two!*

Q: What challenges, if any, come with producing a musical in this style?

A: *There is no "right" way to write a musical; there are so many vastly different processes and so no matter what anyone tells you, everyone is just trying to figure it out however they can. :) This isn't necessarily a bad thing, for me this challenge is the root of creativity!*





Matt Hawkins

Playwright and Director of *My Heart Says Go*
Interview by Tatiana Botero

Photo credit by: ND photos

Matt Hawkins came from Chicago where he was a faculty member at Northwestern. Currently he is a professor at the University of Notre Dame department of Film Television and Theater. He is the director of the Musical Theater program and the New Works Lab which promotes the next generation of new artists to have their pieces be heard and worked on. Jorge "Jay" Rivera Herrans' My Heart Says Go, originally called Stupid Humans, was the first work done in the New Works Lab. Matt still works professionally directing at regional theaters or choreographing when time allows. We have been lucky at the South Bend Civic Theatre where Matt has been involved in many productions over the

years. For this upcoming production of My Heart Says Go here at the South Bend Civic Theatre, I interviewed Matt for about 75 minutes to get some insights to his creativity and way of working that I would like to share with our audience. Those of you that know Matt know he had a lot more to say, but because of space limitations, here is a very condensed account of my interview.

Q: Where did you get your inspiration to create the New Works Lab?

A: It's a good question. I think the stars aligned. My background is a lot about new work. When I was an artist in Chicago, I started a theater company with a few of my colleagues and peers from undergrad, and it was all about writing new work. I think that curiosity is just in my DNA. When creating new work you have to be curious. It's a huge research endeavor. When I got to Notre Dame, I didn't really know I wanted to create the New Works Lab class but I met Jay. He was in my performance class which is basically a class on how to act a song. One of the assignments was to bring in a song from any musical that you want. Jay brought in a song, and sang it. I asked, What is that song? He told me it was a song from his musical. I asked him to bring me more of his stuff. And so we started working off the clock. I wanted to test Jay's commitment and work ethic because he was a very skilled composer and lyricist. I asked him to come back in 2 weeks and give me some character analysis or character essence or talk to me about the dramatic action and every week he would come a week early and he would just hang out in my office. I thought well, we got a lot to work on, but he's got the drive. I basically went to the faculty and said we're gonna do this new show next year but in reality we only had a few songs. I told Jay, "I convinced them, so now we are going to do it". I created a class to workshop his new work. This felt right. I actually know how to do this. This is a skill set of mine and a passion of mine. And then I realized working on new work with other students allows them to learn. It's a great classroom setting to allow them to debate and to argue and to question their own philosophies and their own intentions and their own aesthetics. [...] And the last thing I'll just add is that I'm a big fan of the Journeyman Apprenticeship Model. I have [in this show] a student dance choreographer and an assistant stage manager and they are learning so much about time management, teaching, and leadership. The difference, I think, from a Notre Dame perspective, is that it is very rare that any undergraduate gets to experience doing this level of new work and see it to the production level. In most cases you're having a staged reading not a fully realized production at one of the Notre Dame stages.

Q: Can you talk to us about the story and its main characters

A: *[Originally] it was a two act musical, and now is a one act [musical]. There were some great characters in Stupid Humans that did not need to be in this one, because it felt like 2 plays in one, and we both agreed. So we lost some people to gain more real estate. [We wanted the Indigo and Clara character] to have more real estate and learn from one another.*

[When changing from Stupid Humans to My Heart Says Go there was an interesting conversation between Matt and Jay about accessibility and the idea that anyone should be able to play any role. In Stupid Humans the main character of Indigo was played by Jay but in My Heart Says Go it is played by Madi Boveri.]

If you look at all of the relationships, the parent child relationship is the main thing throughout when it comes down to family. The last song it's the epilogue. It's the curtain call, but it is about not giving up. And for me, yes, it's about following your dreams and your hopes and your heart at the end of the day. It's not giving up on those you love, no matter what. So that's really what it comes down to.

Q: Can you talk to us about writing the story and Jay writing the music and lyrics (Which came first)?

A: *Stupid Humans (the original title) turned into My Heart Says Go. We put it out to festivals a lot [and we got a] lot of criticisms which was great. That is also what the Lab [class] does. It allows you to understand criticism and take it, investigate it [and work it.] [at one point] Jay just turned to me and said, Can you start writing with me? Can you write the book? I was hesitant at first [...] but we know how to tell the story together. So I said, okay. That's when I got the research funding, and then I came on. [Before] I was just a collaborator, as a director. But I wasn't a writer yet on the project.*

I don't think we took away the coming of age story, the youthfulness, the excitement, the exuberance that's all still there. But I think once we added my voice [...] there's a little more empathy towards the parents, and to the adults, but not without losing the youthful hopefulness [of the story]. But there's a maturation to it now, I think, and I think by the end you get to see the father and the child having a mutual understanding for one another.

[In my conversation with Matt, the idea of the South Bend Civic Theatre experiment came up. The model is to be offered as a package that has the script, all the music transcribed, audio tracks, provide design and costume elements, even programming lights with lighting cues. Anything to make the musical very accessible and easy to reproduce in schools and community theatres. Schools can pick and choose what they want to do: a full production or maybe have the choir sing some songs.]

Q: How is it to direct your own work?

A: *It's interesting because I feel like I direct it when I'm writing it. I know how the scene goes, and so, when an actor looks at it, it probably looks a little anemic. It looks a little like there's not a lot of information [here]. I like the sparseness of it. But then that puts a lot of heavy lifting on the actor. So that's fun. Where I get into trouble is, if I'm directing something, and I can't make it work. The writer in me goes. "Oh, just change. Just change the line." Which is okay. But sometimes I want to be challenged to make the thing work. [...] It's actually really invigorating. What's really challenging is if you don't know the play or the musical well enough. That's where you struggle. I luckily know this thing inside and out. So, no matter what question comes from a production standpoint [I know the answer]. I know who's in the scene. I know that transition. I know we have a quick change problem over there, and I know we got to add music here. When characters have questions [I can tell them], "This is where you start, this is where your turn is, and there is your emotional moment." So that's what's exciting.*

Q: What advice would you give to a young student?

In short Matt said, **listen to your heart and follow it. Listen to what is inside you!**





Jeffrey Barrick

Production Designer for *My Heart Says Go*
Interview by Tatiana Botero

Jeffrey Barrick is the very talented Production Designer at South Bend Civic Theatre, and has been designing and scenic painting since 2001. He has also worked as a graphic designer, product designer, as well as having worked in film and commercials. Barrick is also an accomplished muralist. As a Fine Artist, he works in various mediums and has sold his personal work in a number of galleries in the Michiana area. Jeff designs most of the sets at South Bend Civic Theatre, and shepherds the design process for guest designers. He is also the Civic's Scenic Lead, and paints every production.

Q: Where did you get your inspiration for the set design?

A: When I read the script for My Heart Says Go, I immediately thought of the Shakespeare quote (and I paraphrase greatly here) " the world is a stage, and everyone has their entrances and exits..." Which led me to think of doors marked exit, and how Indigo exits her life from medical school... exiting out of one chapter of life and into another...out of one act and into another act, like on a theatre stage. This led me to think of theatre spaces.

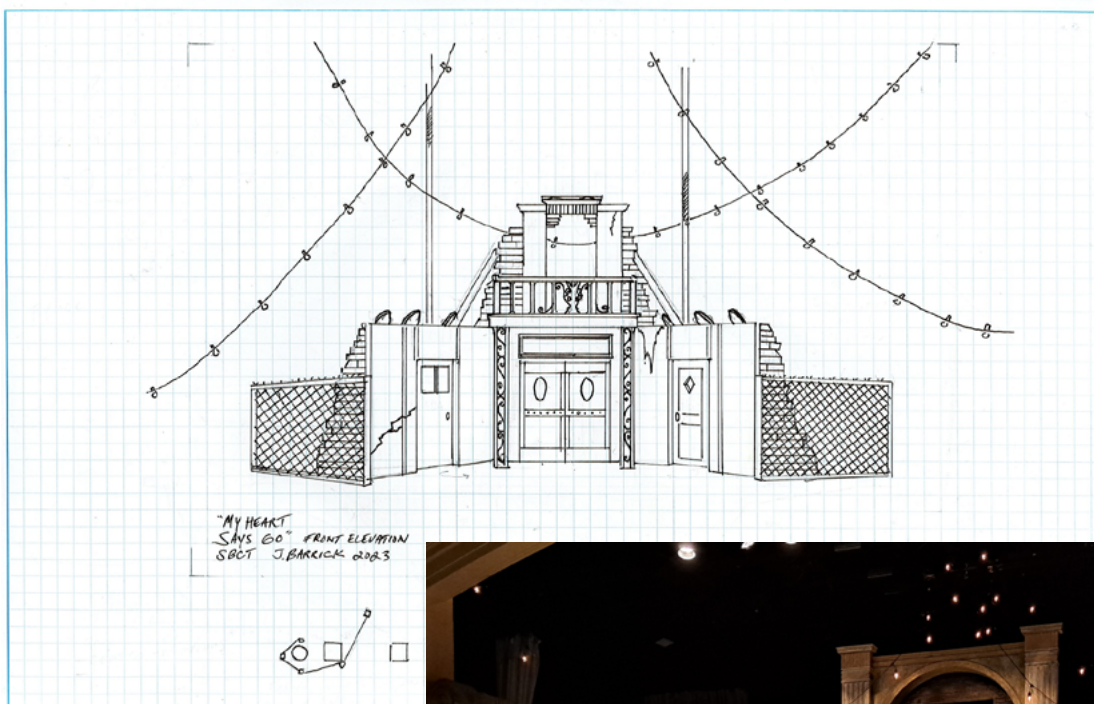
Collectively as a production team in collaboration with our Director Matt Hawkins, it was decided to make the underground club, and the doors for each of the apartments all part of the same unit. Bearing in mind what I had conceived of earlier, I thought--- what would be cooler or more fascinating for an underground club, than an old abandoned theatre? A space that always seems elevated and provoking, and even when in a state of decay always seems to still carry a certain dignity and sense of a potential phoenix rising from the ashes. And a phoenix rising from the ashes can describe the experience we often have of moving from one chapter in life to another.

Q: Can you describe the role of a designer?

A: The role of a designer, or better still, the "role" of a set, is layered. A set should enhance the words or overall concept, as well as the action and performance of the actors. A good set should also tell you something about the story without being able to say a word. Visual elements and cues should communicate at least some of the essence of the story on their own. A successful set design should evoke a visceral emotional response from the audience. — conscious or unconscious...it should make them feel something. Ideally, I feel that a good set, and all the other elements of a set, such as scenic painting and set dressing, should also reveal something of the characters who inhabit that world. For a good set, the designer needs to keep all of these visual cues balanced, and be aware of a visual hierarchy, as well as important concepts such as color harmony. Much like the actors in a production, there are stars and co-stars and supportive players in all the visual elements as well, which also call for a careful balance. A successful set should not distract from the action, but should enhance, inform, and elevate.

Q: What goes into planning and designing the set for a play or musical?

A: In beginning a design, I read the script first. Then I give it some mental/intuitive/emotional time to see what may surface. This is an ongoing part of the process. Then I start doing research as needed to find visual imagery that may support or inspire the direction I may be headed. Then after meeting with the director, things usually come into greater focus or even sometimes scaled down. As time goes on, collaboration also takes place with the lighting designer, which is also a very important and exciting part of the process, as the work of the set designer and lighting designer can really enhance the final product. Time goes by, and there are more sketches and research and concept time. Once a final design is agreed upon, with the use of scaled renderings, construction can begin. Once principle construction is complete, or near completion, scenic painting will begin, with the final stage being set dressing, where furniture and related elements are added to the set.



Jeffrey Barrick's
My Heart Says Go
Scenic Design for
South Bend
Civic Theatre
and the completed set.

(Photo: Jeffrey Barrick)





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