

“Ah, Music, A Magic Beyond All We Do Here”

**An Analysis of *Matilda the Musical* and Its Application in Creating Musical Adaptations of
Children’s Literature.**

Selected Songs from *The Boy Who Lived*:

A Musical Adaptation of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*

by

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Abstract

This thesis explores the world of adaptation and the transformation from book to musical theater stage. I study adaptation by examining adaptation theory, as seen through Linda Hutcheon's text *A Theory of Adaptation* and an exploration of the adaptation from book to stage according to Vincent Murphy's *Page to Stage*. Using these texts and theories, I explored the adaptation of children's literature to the stage, with a close reading and analysis of Tim Minchin and Dennis Kelly's *Matilda the Musical*, an adaptation of Dahl's children's novel, *Matilda*. With insight from Gilles Deleuze's work on repetition, difference, and rhizome, this analysis into the adaptation process guided me in producing an original musical adaptation of J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* entitled *The Boy Who Lived*. The analysis and my own adaptation process revealed the key components for creating musical stage adaptations of children's novels, with further insights into the reader and audience's role in the success of the adaptation.

Lay Summary

Linda Hutcheon's *A Theory of Adaptation* and Vincent Murphy's *Page to Stage* look at the creative process of adapting works to the theatrical stage. Using their insights into the process, I analyze Tim Minchin and David Kelly's musical adaptation of Dahl's novel, *Matilda*, and examine how they transformed the novel to the musical theater stage. The analysis created a basis for adapting children's literature successfully to the stage, which I used as I transformed moments in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* into stage scenes and songs. The process of creating *The Boy Who Lived* furthered my understanding of the musical adaptation process and allowed me to create key aspects and considerations for adapting children's literature, especially focusing on young audiences and important aspects of musical theater.

Preface

This Master of Arts thesis is an original, unpublished, independent work of the author, Caitlin Boyle, as a partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Master of Arts in Children's Literature Program at the University of British Columbia.

This is the academic portion *only* of a hybrid academic/creative thesis. The creative portion consists of a set of songs for a musical adaptation entitled *The Boy Who Lived*, written exclusively by Caitlin Boyle.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Motivation for Research

Over the course of my education, I have studied children's literature from several different perspectives and lenses, including education, library science, and now through this Masters' program, publishing and production. My lifelong passion for literature and reading continually guides my learning and has now sparked an interest in the production side of literature and how it relates to its audience. As a former teacher, I know the importance of engaging in a text in order to gain a stronger understanding of the story, its characters, and the significance of events and actions within the story. Readers are the audiences of the literature they consume, thus the story's 'performance' must be entertaining and engaging enough for the reader to want to continue 'watching' the story unfold. With theatrical adaptations of literature, the reader receives a visual and immersive reading experience, one that transforms a story on the stage. My passion for singing and for music led me to discover musical theater, which I find exciting and engaging. It produces a strong emotional reaction and connection with the performance. This connection inspired me to see many productions over the years and has, more recently, encouraged me to look closely at the musical production process, as well as the relationship of the shows to the work of children's literature they are adapted from.

One of the most notable and most successful musical adaptations is *Matilda the Musical* (Minchin & Kelly, 2010), which has been nominated for many awards and winner of several, including the Tony for the Best Book of a Musical. I had the pleasure and opportunity to see this musical in London's West End and was not disappointed. The show was transformed magically to the stage and its songs were both catchy and spoke to the heart and power of Matilda and her dreams. The transformation of Roald Dahl's book, *Matilda* (1988), into a musical show adds

more magic to the original story, provides Matilda with a stronger voice, and is visually captivating – as captivating as the original text. *Matilda*'s successful adaptation to the stage gave me a model to reference when creating my own musical adaptation. Furthermore, my analysis and dissection of the process guided me as I worked on my adaptation of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (Rowling, 1997).

The fictional prediction made by Professor McGonagall in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, "Harry Potter ... every child in our world will know his name" (Rowling, 1997, pg. 14), ended up becoming true in the real world as well. *Harry Potter* is a phenomenon expanding beyond the book world into films, merchandise, amusement parks, and stage theater (Gunelius, 2008). With a five-film prequel series in the works, this phenomenon is nowhere near its completion, begging the question: what's next? Well, in the unauthorized production world, many fans have created their own musical interpretations and adaptations of the books, including *A Very Potter Musical* (StarKid Productions, 2009), *Potter Puppet Pals* (Cicierega, 2006), and *Wizard Rock* (Wikipedia, 2002). On the other hand, official productions of the *Harry Potter* canon have been produced, including the *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* (Heyman & Yates, 2016) films and the very successful stage play, *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* (Thorne, 2016).

I chose to adapt *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* because this series and the magical world that J.K. Rowling created have been a part of my life since I began reading these books at age 9 and have continued to influence me ever since. Rowling's messages, characters, and storytelling seems to transform the lives of everyone who reads the series and inspires them to become better readers and better people. In addition to this series' popularity and influence on me, its transformation into many other formats and mediums has encouraged me to create yet

another type of adaptation. Choosing musical theater as my platform was due not only to my interest and passion in musical theater productions, but also to my own experience with singing and performance, which aided me during the adaptation process.

1.2 Purpose of Study

This thesis explores adaptations of literature and how these types of adaptations bring new insight into the original work through its portrayal in the theater, its actors, and in several cases, its integration of music. This includes a brief look at the cultural features of adaptation, as well as the educational benefits and merits of student exposure to theatrical adaptations of literature. The purpose of this thesis is to understand the relationship between adapted works and their original source materials, through the lens of adaptation theory and the mechanics of the adaptation process. My research attempted to answer the following questions:

1. In what ways does an analysis of *Matilda the Musical* provide insight into the adaptation process?
2. How can these insights be applied to the adaptation of other children's novels, specifically *Harry Potter*?

My investigation involves a hybrid approach, looking both theoretically and practically into adaptation and the adaptation process. Through my analysis of *Matilda the Musical*, I gain insight into the adaptation process and the relationship between adaptations and the original work, providing a contribution to critical discussions about adaptation theory and offering an alternative perspective on producing adaptations of children's literature for the theater. My hybrid thesis also involved placing myself in the role of an adaptor as I created numbers for a musical adaptation of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. I became the writer, lyricist,

and composer of the adaptation, although I did seek out insights and contributions from those who are knowledgeable about specific aspects of the production process.

1.3 Significance of Study

In recent years, several children's books have been adapted for the stage and more significantly, for the musical theater stage. Research within adaptation theory as it relates to children's literature is limited to classic children's books, print adaptations, and movie adaptations. My investigation aims to explore adaptation as it relates to children's literature and alternative forms of adaptations. In the words of David Wood, credited with creating stage adaptations of Roald Dahl's works, "there is still this slight stigma about creating work for children, which is ironic, really, because children are the future – and one would think the theater profession in general would appreciate the importance of children's theater" (*American Theater*, 2014, pg. 28).

The theater is used as a visual medium for the transformation and adaptation of literature. What does it offer the audience and its producers that film or other visual media cannot? There is a lack of critical interpretations and research on theatrical adaptations of children's literature, though some researchers have looked into the academic benefits of providing opportunities for students to experience stage adaptations of literature. Researchers Janine Certo and Wayne Brenda conducted a study examining how "blending reading, experiencing, seeing, and responding to multiple works of literature can help teachers address specific literacy issues of middle school, urban, reluctant readers" (2011, pg. 23). The experiential portion of the study provided students with the opportunity to see one of their current pieces of literature adapted to the stage in a theatrical performance. The study resulted in significant growth for the reluctant

readers and encouraged teachers to incorporate theater and arts into their curriculum in order to engage their students and improve literacy comprehension. The idea of deliberately integrating theatrical experiences into the curriculum has been gaining more ground within the last few years. For example, the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History has recently partnered with Lin-Manuel Miranda, creator of *Hamilton* (2015), to create a *Hamilton* Education program, promoting history and the performing arts. This innovative program's integration of history and the arts "will allow teachers to bring American History to the classroom in a new way and help students find their own connections to the Founding Era" (2017). Making theater and the arts meaningful for students while also allowing teachers to follow their curriculum is a way for theatrical adaptations to benefit their audiences.

Though there are many studies and research done with theater education and reader's theater, which are both beneficial to students (Sloyer, 1982, Flynn, 2004, Young & Rasinski, 2009), I have chosen to limit the scope of this thesis to students as an audience rather than creators of theater. With that being said, I have seen firsthand how well drama can integrate into the classroom curriculum. When I was a student teacher during my undergraduate work at the University of Texas at Austin, I created an integrated social studies and language arts unit on the Civil War. In this unit, I read a historical fiction novel, *My Brother Sam is Dead* (Collier & Collier, 2001), to my students in order to give them an idea of life during that time. I also had them explore historical documents depicting certain experiences and items from the time period. Their culminating unit project was to create a character that might have lived during that time and perform a short speech in that character's voice. This monologue-type assignment allowed them to speak from someone else's perspective, while allowing me to assess their knowledge of what we had studied. Although engaging students in theater performance and production is

valuable to their educational experience, I want to show that those experiences also produce positive learning outcomes for students as well.

1.4 Rationale and Criteria for Text Selection

The primary theoretical framework I use is adaptation theory, as described and researched by Linda Hutcheon (2012) in her text *A Theory of Adaptation*. Her research looks closely at adaptation with a critical examination of adaptations while also investigating how the theory relates to the adaptation process. Adaptation, as defined by Hutcheon, is “a process of appropriation, of taking possession of another’s story, and filtering it, in a sense, through one’s own sensibility, interests, and talents” (2012, pg. 18). This effectively describes how I approached the adaptation of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*. Additionally, Hutcheon suggests that, “If we know that prior text, we always feel its presence shadowing the one we are experiencing directly. When we call a work an adaptation, we openly announce its overt relationship to another work or works” (2012, pg. 6). Since I explored the relationship between adaptation and original text, Hutcheon’s critical perspective was valuable as I investigated this relationship within the context of children’s literature and adaptations. As noted earlier, Hutcheon’s work on adaptation theory is seen as the primary research and guiding criticism in this field. Her revised edition of *A Theory of Adaptation* (2012) explores not only her well-known perspective on adaptation and its leading theories, but additionally provides insight into how adaptation is evolving with the growth of media and cultural influences. Adaptations are not limited now to just text, stage, and film, but to graphic novels, varieties of theatrical modes (musicals, opera, radio), video games, and many more besides.

With the focus of my research on children's literature's transformation to the musical stage, additional sources were needed to extend my understanding of how this type of adaptation is unique to other formats. For this, I looked to Vincent Murphy's text *Page to Stage* (2013), in which Murphy develops a guide to creating stage productions from literary works. Murphy (2013) reasons that the "challenge (of adapting to the stage) often provokes adaptors to find a unique way of telling a story in order to share the experience they had in reading the literature" (pg. 5). Stage adaptations, according to Murphy, bring those telling the story and their audience together for a shared experience. Although Murphy's text looks at adaptations of adult literature, his exploration of the stage adaptation process and his insight on adaptation as a whole are valuable when analyzing *Matilda the Musical* and for my work adapting *Harry Potter*. His guide, along with Hutcheon's rationale, support my analysis and production process.

With theatrical adaptations of children's literature becoming more popular and successful, choosing a musical adaptation was relatively straightforward. I knew I wanted to select a musical that was firstly adapted from a piece of children's literature, and secondly, was critically acclaimed and/or award winning. I had the opportunity to see *Matilda the Musical* while visiting London's West End and found the production enjoyable and well done. After selecting this production as the focus of my deconstruction, I noticed several parallels between *Matilda* and *Harry Potter*. Both Harry and Matilda grow up in environments filled with neglect, one with intolerable guardians and very little affection. They soon find an escape from their harsh homes; Matilda finds solace in her local library and in Miss Honey's classroom, and Harry, upon finding out he is a wizard, leaves for Hogwarts. Magic aids them during difficult times, and most significantly, when pitted against an enemy (Matilda vs. Ms. Trunchbull, Harry vs. Quirrell/Lord Voldemort). The similarities and parallels in these two works of literature provide

me with a strong foundation from which I began to build and create an adapted musical production.

1.5 Review of Chapters

Chapter 2 of my thesis is a review of literature pertaining to adaptation theory, theatrical adaptations of literature, as well as the impact and benefits of musical theater adaptations of literature on young audiences in regard to literacy and comprehension.

In chapter 3, I elaborate on my methodology, discussing my choice to explore musical theater adaptations of children's literature and how this focused inquiry supported my deconstruction of *Matilda the Musical*, along with my own production process in creating a musical theater adaptation of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*.

Chapter 4 includes my exploration of *Matilda the Musical*, its relationship to the original text by Roald Dahl, and how its adaptation to the stage can be considered 'successful' and pertinent to understanding the adaptation process.

In chapter 5, I explain in depth my creative and adaptation process in producing several scenes, including script, lyrics, and composition, for a musical adaptation of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. This ethnographic-like discussion also includes my own personal influences and reasoning behind my choice in both the medium of the adaptation and the piece of children's literature.

In chapter 6, I share my concluding thoughts about adaptation and its future relationship with children's literature, the theater, and importance in education.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Adaptation Theory

The concept of adaptation, though present for a significant period of our literary history, and the perimeters within which adaptations are defined, continue to be widely debated among producers and scholars. Many postmodern theorists look at adaptation in a cultural and contextual way, while others take a formal and aesthetic approach. Within the last decade, research in adaptation studies has expanded the range of facets are included, going beyond just literature and film, but into “a multiplicity of adaptations, among them games, radio, theatre, television, dance, music, history, and other media” (Cartmell, 2017). While looking for insight on adaptation, I observed many scholars referencing the same theorist and text: Linda Hutcheon’s *A Theory of Adaptation* (2012). Her research explores adaptation as a concept and process, delves into theories surrounding adaptation, and engages in a discussion of literature-based adaptation. Though cited in many articles, her perspective and approach have received mixed reactions from other adaptation scholars.

Adaptation critic Kamilla Elliott posits that theorists must look at the principles of adaptation itself, rather than the empiricism present in Hutcheon’s work (2017). That being said, Elliott also identifies that there is diversity in the field, despite the heavy emphasis of research on literature-to-film adaptation. Hutcheon explores this diversity, as she attempts to look beyond just this one type of adaptation, but at the variety of media available to adaptors. Elliot argues that Hutcheon’s postmodern perspective on adaptation is skewed, that it does not focus on the formal aspects of adaptation and does not promote the aesthetic value of the process and production (2014, pg. 579). Theorist Julie Sanders finds that Hutcheon’s principles only work within the limited frame of adaptation, arguing for a deep look at appropriation’s role in

adaptation: “appropriation frequently affects a more decisive journey away from the informing source into a wholly new cultural product and domain” (2006, pg. 26). Theorist Colin MacCabe, however, supports Hutcheon’s postmodern approach, saying, “the fact is that people are still interested in how and why (filmmakers) adapt books and what they did to adapt them” (MacCabe, Murray, & Warner, 2011, pg. 7).

Hutcheon, in her text, *A Theory of Adaptation*, has chosen to explore new approaches and platforms for adaptation, as well as those created in response to fan culture. She notes that “fan culture has taken imaginative possession of the fate of its favorite stories,” and that it is important to consider more than just fiction-to-film (2012, xix). The “ever-widening range” of adaptations seem to present the adaptation process as one of participation; “rather than develop wholly new works, audiences take ownership...adapting the stories that they most identify with” (2012, xxv). Hutcheon appears to allude to Henry Jenkins’ exploration of fan culture and fan-created content. Jenkins defines transmedia storytelling as:

“A process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience. Ideally each medium makes its own unique contribution to the unfolding of the story.” (2007, *Transmedia Storytelling 101*)

He argues that a successful production of transmedia storytelling involves filling the gaps of the narrative and focusing on specific characters and plotlines. Though many adaptations may only be translated into one other medium, the idea that a story can be told through and in many different platforms has been a strong motivator for non-traditional adaptations to be created.

Adaptation, as viewed and described by Hutcheon, is “a process of appropriation, of taking possession of another’s story, and filtering it, in a sense, through one’s own sensibility,

interests, and talents” (2012, pg. 19). According to theorist Perry Nodelman, “what distinguishes the most important literature is its ability to engender new interpretations” (Bixler, 1994, pg. 101). In short, adaption involves transforming a text in a creative and engaging way, while still keeping the heart of the text present in its new form. Hutcheon chooses to look at adaptation as a process, one that requires certain steps and considerations to be made in order for the transformation to be successful. Using the basic questions Who? What? Where? When? and How?, she is able to delve into every aspect of adaptation, using each question as a tool for her analysis and critical discussion. As each quality is examined, I further explore Hutcheon’s theoretical content with a theatrical lens and within the context of children’s literature.

The first step Hutcheon takes in defining adaptation is looking directly at *what* forms can adaptations take. The adaptation process should be “a creative and interpretive transposition of a recognizable other work(s)” (2012, pg. 33), without just replicating the original text. This means that whatever form the adaptation takes, the original story must be clearly present, but have unique elements and attributes that distinguish it from the original. Even remakes of films, though essentially retelling the same story using the same medium, can be considered adaptations, due to the changes in actors, context, and overall production style. Originality and creativity are necessary for any adaptation and are crucial to the success or failure of any transformation.

The two main forms adaptations take are films and theatrical productions, which add visual and aural elements to the purely textual story. With either medium, special considerations and constraints must be made and realized by adaptors. Hutcheon’s perspective on live performance involves looking at “a variant of adaptation – open(ing) up multiple reception points, from critical vantages to spectator enjoyment” (Pellegrini, 2013). Hutcheon suggests that

“a novel, in order to be dramatized, has to be distilled, reduced in size, and thus, inevitably, complexity” (2012, pg. 36). In essence, a novel, which takes many hours and sometimes days to read, must be condensed to a two-and-a-half-hour film or show. Hutcheon does argue, however, that this time restraint allows the producers to highlight the major themes of the story and explore characters at a potentially deeper level (2012, pg. 42). Within Hutcheon’s chapter on forms, she challenges several conceived ‘clichés’ of adaptation, one of which is the idea that written texts are able to portray internal motivations of characters, whereas visual and aural modes can only achieve external character elements. An example she shares to counteract this claim, in the case of musicals, is “when characters break into song, they imply that ‘life cannot be contained in its ordinariness, but must spill over into it, and into rhythm, singing and movement’” (2012, pg. 45). When translating to the musical theater stage, Hutcheon suggests that music “connects us to the spectacle by invoking a dimension of depth of interiority, borrowed from the responses of our own bodies as we listen to the insistent production of rhythms, tone, colors, and changes in dynamics” (Kramer, 1991, pg. 156). In this way, musicals are able to share the internal motivations of characters through song and music, rather than through the narration presented in the novel. Additionally, the merger of music and words “should theoretically result in a more satisfactory image of the mental universe” than either can do individually (Weisstein, 1961, pg. 18). Hutcheon offers commentary on the cliché that ‘showing’ media are only able to tell a story in the present, stating that the stage has temporal issues, as live performances take place in the present and in real time (2012, pg. 65). Live performances must occur in real time, even if the story takes place in a different time. Stage producers, however, can create opportunities to share past events with their audiences. Films, as well as theatrical productions, have the ability to provide signs or clues into the passage or

passing of time (i.e. calendar pages, faded scenes). These adaptive techniques must be applied to many of the visual media when shifting from written text to performance.

The adaptation's medium is not the first thing to be considered at the start of this process; *who* will be transforming the text into its new form must be established. Hutcheon remarks on the complexity and sometimes uncertain nature of who should be credited as the adaptor, especially when translating to film or the stage, since performances are a collaborative practice (2012, pg. 80). As to the reasons adaptors choose to transform a text, Hutcheon asks: "what motivates adaptors, knowing that their effects will be compared to competing imagined versions in people's heads and inevitably be found wanting?" (2012, pg. 86). The answer remains to be clearly defined, although several ideas are discussed and examined within Hutcheon's text. Audiences tend to be a factor in many adaptations coming to life, whether due to the popularity of the literary text, the success of similar adaptations, or even to fan culture surrounding the novel.

As adaptors consider their own reasons for adapting a literary work, they must also recognize the audience as a contributor to their creative process, and as their largest critic. Hutcheon examines the audiences' influence on this process in the fourth chapter of her text: *How* will the adaptation be experienced, received, and affected by the audience? Sanders posits that "the spectator or reader must be able to participate in the play of similarity and difference perceived between the original, source, or inspiration to appreciate fully the reshaping or rewriting undertaken by the adaptive text" (2006, pg. 45). The repetition that an adaptation creates for its audience "brings comfort, a fuller understanding and the confidence that comes with the sense of knowing what is about to happen next" (2013, pg. 114). However, the retelling must incorporate creative transformations, whether that involves choosing a different theme, focusing

on a different character, or adding elements that enhance the story in some way. “The triumph of successful operas and musicals is how they reinvent the familiar and make it fresh” (McNally, 2002, pg. 19). And, indeed, the addition of song, dance, and music allows these productions the benefit of being original from the get-go. “Music adds such an enormously new dimension to a piece, it’s enough for any audience (or critic) to absorb at one hearing” (McNally, 2002, pg. 24). In the process of transforming a text, it remains vital that adaptors stick as closely as possible to the original in order not lose its authenticity and familiarity for its audience. Chris Columbus, director of the first two *Harry Potter* films, kept audiences at the forefront of his adaptation, saying “people would have crucified me if I hadn’t been faithful to the books” (2012, pg. 123). Even in musicals, the necessity of sticking to the original text remains true: “If the characters and the situation are familiar, listeners can relax and let the music take them somewhere new and wonderful” (McNally, 2002, pg. 24). Whether it is a play, musical, or film, each medium can bring different degrees of immersion and critical traditions to its transformation, and adaptors “working from one mode to another has to take into account these different ways of involving the audience” (2012, pg. 134).

Hutcheon explores the knowing audience versus the unknowing audience; that is, an audience that knows the production or performance is an adaptation and is familiar with the original text, versus one that is unaware of this aspect and/or have no knowledge of the original story or text. There is an “intertextual pleasure” (2012, pg. 117) in adaptation for a knowing audience, especially with the adaptation includes additional content that surrounds the original text, but that doesn’t necessarily appear in the text itself. The idea of filling gaps in a story from another source and transforming a story into another medium fall in line with Jenkins’ concept of transmedia storytelling. Many newer mediums, primarily those found online, are greatly

involved in transmedia storytelling, but can traditional modes of adaptations be considered true adaptations if they participate in this kind of extension of the original text? Hutcheon appears to argue both sides of this issue; there is an understanding that knowing the original text is beneficial and entertaining to that audience, but it's also valuable to be unaware of the original text, as it allows this audience to simply experience the work on its own (2012, pg. 127). Conrad Alexandrowicz applied this concept when translating poetry into physical theater, a process that was experienced by a "partially knowing" audience, one that most likely did not see the performance as an adaptation, but its own original work (2015, pg. 126). Hutcheon suggests that seeing an "adaptation as *adaptation* involves, for its knowing audience, an interpretive doubling, a conceptual flipping back and forth between the work we know and the work we are experiencing" (2012, pg. 139). Though the duality of audiences' prior knowledge assists adaptors with the transformation process, "the context in which we experience the adaptation – cultural, social, historical – is another important factor in the meaning and significance we grant to this form" (2012, pg. 139).

The final two topics, *where* and *when*, are examined in Hutcheon's final chapter. "An adaptation, like the work it adapts, is always framed in a context – a time and a place, a society and a culture," (2012, pg. 142) and, indeed, many adaptations shift the time, place, and culture to fit the present or to recreate the story by making changes to these elements. Even as the adaptation process takes place, change is inevitable; "whether an adapted story is told, shown, or interacted with, it always happens in a particular time and space in a society" (2012, pg. 144). For example, Roohollah Roozbeh explored how Hollywood transformed *A Thousand and One Nights* to the screen, focusing on the cultural implications of this adaptation, as this Oriental tale is steeped in cultural context and history (2017, pg. 21). As adaptors choose their medium, they

must reflect on what context and reception the mode will have, which will in turn, determine the changes that might be made to the setting and style of the adaptation. Several theorists (Elliot, 2014, Meerzon, 2015, Cartmell, 2017) agree that the cultural and historical context must be accounted for and serve a purpose within an adaptation. Even when an adaptor chooses the where and when of their adaptation, “the meaning he or she establishes within that frame of reference can change over time” (2012, pg. 148).

Hutcheon wraps up her theoretical exploration with reflections on two questions that still resist clear answers. Describing the love-hate reaction to adaptation as a dichotomy, including the “mixture of affection and sense of transgression or even guilt,” (2012, pg. 169) Hutcheon effectively reflects many theorists’ ideas about adaptation. The first of her remaining queries is defining what is *not* an adaptation and when defining adaptation as “an extended, deliberate, announced revisitation of a particular work of art,” (2012, pg. 170) it leaves out elements such as intertextual allusions and music. The refashioning of a work involves a (re-) interpretation and a (re-) creation of that original text, whether in parody form, a spin-off, or a musical composition. But, it seems debatable that some adaptations of literature to film, which are then remade into another version of the film, might not truly be considered transformations of the original text. Some examples of this are *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (Burton, 2005), *Jumanji* (Kasdan, 2017), and *Beauty and the Beast* (Condon, 2017), which all came from an original text, but all had remakes of their original film adaptations. It’s hard to determine, without talking to the adaptors and producers, from what source or sources they reference and/or used when transforming the story to another film version. This ambiguity doesn’t seem present within Hutcheon’s reflection, but the determination of how far the realm of adaptation extends does

appear to remain unclear, even Hutcheon asks whether museum exhibits can be considered adaptations – the answer: maybe.

Lastly, Hutcheon asks what the appeal of adaptation is and if it can be determined. As stated in earlier chapters, adaptors have numerous, and sometimes complex, reasons for why they've chosen to adapt a work or why they feel an adaptation should be done. Audiences enjoy experiencing the familiar, but they also find it refreshing to see these familiar stories transformed, whether to a different mode or just within a different context. "It is the repetition but without replication, bringing together the comfort of ritual and recognition with the delight of surprise and novelty" (2012, pg. 176).

2.2 Literature to Stage

As adaptors, when we claim our creation as an adaptation, we are tying our production to an established work. Vincent Murphy (2013) makes this connection in his commentary on adapting for the stage: "this challenge often provokes adapters to find a unique way of telling a story in order to share the experience they had in reading the literature" (pg. 5). Murphy compares the pleasure of adapting to the pleasure of reading – both allow you to "engage your own imagination and experience with the art at hand, in making manifest those personal" (2013, pg. 18).

Murphy (2013) suggests that:

"Adaptors have a range of options when transferring literature from the page to the stage. They can use a largely uncut and barely edited text. They can cut and paste large verbatim sections of the original but leave out other large sections. Or they can create a

wholly new version, inspired by the original text yet thoroughly transformed for the stage.” (pg. 5)

Adaptations of literary work are by no means unusual or uncommon in creative fields, such as film, TV, and alternative literature. Even within the theatrical and stage community, many stage plays are adaptations of original literary work. Theatrical adaptations involve changing narration into scenes and stage directions, transforming the original story, characters, emotions, and dramatic moments. In the case of musical theater, the adaptation must shift not only into the visual format, but the auditory one, with the addition of song. This process involves so many considerations, both with the original work and the medium it has been chosen to be adapted to, in addition to its visual transformation to the stage. In order to be successful and create strong connections to the characters, these “performances need to be faithful representations in sound of the composer’s conception” (Leech-Wilkinson, 2013, pg. 3) or interpretation of the text. Additionally, “if the adapter is not significantly and measurably moved by the novel, for whatever reason, the play will suffer accordingly” (Brady, 1994, pg.10).

Murphy, in his text *Page to Stage* (2013), defines six building blocks to transform literature to the stage. Each block, in essence, reflects the considerations discussed by Hutcheon for creating adaptations, although Murphy outlines these attributes with the production process as the prominent guide, rather than the general elements and rules of adaptation and the theory surrounding the production. Building Block One is to “find literature that compels you,” that entices you enough to “look to the stage as a place to share what engaged us” in the text (2013, pg. 17). There should be a pleasure and a desire to transform a particular story, which should be meaningful to both you and eventually, your audience. Since adaptation involves some sort of creative interpretation and transformation, the story’s theme should be clear to the adaptor, or at

least defined before beginning the process. Murphy describes this decision as it relates to the original reading experience: “The pleasure of adapting into another medium, like the pleasure of reading itself, is in the permission you have to engage your own imagination and experience with the art at hand, in making manifest those personal discoveries” (2013, pg. 18).

Murphy shifts then to Building Block Two - dialogue and narrative - which describes the deliberate changes and choices that must be made when writing the script and shifting from text to performance. An adaptor must try to “capture the musicality that (readers) have heard in the narrating voice of the original work,” and by doing so, can add variety and nuance to the characters and their different points of view (2013, pg. 57). Though this process is difficult to manage, Murphy is able to provide examples and techniques for representing the nuances in the original narration within the context of a theatrical script. “What makes narration work is the degree to which the audience hears the narrative not only as commentary but also as a revelation of the characters’ inner lives” (2013, pg. 55). Murphy insists “language drives literary adaptation, by its very nature. And the skill to cull both evocative narrative and workable dialogue from the text is the great challenge of the adaptor” (2013, pg. 47). Literature’s driving goal and intrigue is its ability to create a world, characters and believable action with only words, which encourages the reader to create mental pictures of the story. Murphy stresses that “whatever their approach, adaptors must stay true to what compelled them to adapt the literature in the first place” (2013, pg. 39).

The most crucial element of any theatrical production is the characters and their relationships with one another. Murphy’s third Building Block emphasizes the importance of bringing to life the inner thoughts and motivations of the characters, which must be drawn out of the narration of the original text. Adaptors must “share the hidden diary of (character)

motivations, making our own choices about what to reveal about the characters and how by selecting actions and dialogue that illuminate them” (2013, pg. 60). Most novels follow a central character, through which we experience the story – “what they discover, what obstacles thwart their desires, who they relate to or not,” (2013, pg. 61) drives our interest while following the plot. Their relationships tend to also move the story along, while also creating tension, conflict, resolution, and growth. These relationships are both complex and contradictory; “sometimes a plot is the story of a relationship, balancing perspective and emphasis between the characters” (2013, pg. 68). Many pieces of children’s literature are character and relationship-driven, with growth being a central theme of the story as a whole. Though theme, narrative, and character provide the contextual basis for a theatrical adaptation, there are several elements that enhance the overall narrative as it moves from the page to the stage.

In Building Block Four, Murphy focuses on creating an “evocative stageable image,” which requires looking closely at the work and “finding literal details” that will shape the environment of the adaptation (2013, pgs. 76-77). “By its nature, literary adaptation in moving from one medium to another requires flexible strategies for how to best realize the work in a theatrical context,” (2013, pg. 82) which will enable the textual descriptions and setting to come to life. However, adaptors must be aware of the limitations and strengths of creating a piece of live theater, including the imagination of the audience. Additionally, Murphy emphasizes in Building Block Five that constructing a clear storyline within the confines of the stage take thought and a careful look back at the original text. Murphy suggests that, “just as personality is too immense to define but character can and must be captured to be playable, so constructing a storyline involves making choices as you build your script” (2013, pg. 90). Events within the story, though provocative in the narrative, can be challenging to keep suspenseful and continue

to build the tension present in the novel. This is reflected in the work by theorist George Bluestone, who states that, “presentational medium(s)...cannot have direct access to the power of discursive forms. Where the novel discourses, the [visual] must picture” (1957, pg. 47). There is often a need to understand and portray the past experiences of characters in order to find the motivation behind their actions and choices. It is “like an archaeological dig to find information” (2013, pg. 97) about the characters that is relevant within the context of the performance.

According to Murphy, adaptors often try to take too much expository text and information from reflective sections of the novel, which should just be condensed or left out of the script altogether (2013, pg. 99). Hutcheon states that adaptors must consider the differences in how time is represented, a thought mirrored in Murphy’s discussion on how film and theater operate in “a compressed time, where the excitement of viewing is in the knowledge that the story will unfold before us within the two-hour traffic of performance” (2013, pg. 48). Bluestone identifies with this struggle as well in adapting novels, saying “a fifty-hour novel has the advantage of being able to achieve a certain density...simply because the reader has lived with it longer” (1957, pg. 50). Though there are time restraints for theatrical adaptations, creating a strong visual for the audience will increase their engagement in the production, allowing the time confines to not hinder the performance.

Murphy’s final Building Block relates to three performance terms - language, image, and movement - terms that can guide the playable actions available to the adaptor during the transformation of the novel. Language, Murphy says, “is action when the words a character speaks change the course of the story” (2013, pg. 105). Additionally, “the visual world shapes the audience’s experience of a play” in a powerful way and creates forward momentum in the plot (2013, pg. 108). Context, as Hutcheon described in her exploration, can strengthen a

production's connection to the original work and give the piece a fresh appearance as it transforms on the stage. The movement of the characters and the action found in the scenes are "important, defining, non-verbal physicalizations that change the course of the story" (2013, pg. 110). The performance vocabulary can have more weight or importance during critical moments in the plot or for its characters. As all of the Building Blocks come together, "a successful adaptor continues to take the lead of the original material to find that balance all the way through to the final shape of both form and content" (2013, pg. 130). The choice to transform a text to the stage is a powerful way to bring a story to life. In Murphy's words, "the raw power of live theater allows the paradox of both dynamic immediacy and meditative perspective" to be present, creating a unique and engaging experience for its audience (2013, pg. 123).

Murphy's text, though helpful in its commentary for amateur or novice adaptors, lacks the depth and wide array of examples available for critique and insight. According to Jane Barnette, Murphy's text "barely mentions dramaturgy (or contextual research, for that matter) at all; instead, Murphy creates a step-by-step guide for novice adapters of literature for the stage..." (Romanska, 2014, pg. 294). Murphy's guide, though lacking some discussion of the theater in critical terms, is able to move smoothly through the adaptation process. Critic Miriam Chirico finds that the narrow sample group "prohibits examining the multiple ways directors have physicalized literary works, which is a signatory feature of this genre" (2013, pg. 120). This text would have benefited from a large sample size, which would have allowed for stronger connections between Murphy's insightful commentary and real-world examples of the adaptation process. Considering my amateur status, Murphy's text does provide useful information and guidance for transforming literature to the theatrical stage, especially for beginning adaptors.

2.3 Deleuze's Theories of Repetition, Difference, and Rhizome

Gilles Deleuze's text "Difference and Repetition" along with several of his theories, can assist in determining how incorporating differences into an adaptation can have merit, not only within the adaptation's essential retelling of the story, but in how elements of the original novel are portrayed within the production and how they are interpreted by its readers and its audience. Deleuze's theories "enhance our understanding of what makes young readers return to the same book time and time again or read something which is quite near to the original apart from minor variations" (Newland, 2013, pg. 194).

In researching Deleuze, it became evident that to truly understand his theories, I would need to find a guide to find the relevant content within Deleuze's theories. James Williams' book *Gilles Deleuze's Difference and Repetition: A Critical Introduction and Guide* breaks down and analyzes Deleuze's theories, allowing readers to understand the meanings and structure behind Deleuze's work. In Williams' guide, he examines Deleuze's theories and hypotheses and how they relate to a variety of subjects, while also broadening the interpretation, allowing it to be applicable to a wide range of topics. Deleuze's difference theory, according to Williams, is the "condition for changes in actual things" (2013, pg. 61) and essentially can enhance and expand the context of the original "thing". Williams also posits that "real difference is a matter of how things become different, how they evolve and continue to evolve beyond the boundaries" (2013, pg. 65).

An effective way to incorporate Deleuze into my analysis and discussion was to explore the ways the theories relate to children's literature. Some relevant research was done by Jane Newland who explores how Deleuze's theories of repetition and rhizomes provide insight into children's literature, specifically when it comes to series fiction and narration. Within the scope

of children's literature, several of Deleuze's concepts were able to help construct a deeper understanding of the structure authors implement when writing series fiction and fiction for young readers.

Newland's application of Deleuze's rhizome hypothesis, the interconnectedness of voices established by the reader in the text, to children's literature provides a means for establishing voice in both the written characters in the novel and the voice of the reader. Newland suggests that "the character speaks in a voice that may be designed to resemble the reader's, and sees and experiences things that might relate to the reader" (2009, pg. 16), which brings the reader closer to the text and the characters themselves. The creators and producers involved in telling the story to kids must be considered: "there is not simply the voice of the speaking character or the third-person narrator to consider, but also echoes of the voices of other individuals involved in the production and provision of books for children and adolescents" (Bakhtin, 2001, pg. 263). Additionally, when looking at the rhizome of texts, Newland observes how "our response, the feelings and thoughts we have when we read, directs our interpretation and our evaluation of texts" (McGillis, 1996, pg. 16), a view that relates closely to Murphy's considerations when adapting a book to the stage.

According to Nodelman, children's literature presents "a serious challenge to conventional ideas about interpretation and distinctiveness" (Newland, 2013, pg. 193), which causes the adaptation of this kind of literature to become even more of a challenging process. Deleuze's statement "difference inhabits repetition" finds relevance when relating to series fiction, that each reading of the text, or subsequent texts in the series, result in a difference of interpretation. This sameness becomes meaningful for young readers when moving from text to text, but the value of the sameness is only relevant if the text encourages the reader to explore

and respond to the text in a varied way. In Deleuzian-like fashion, Nodelman remarks on the pull of children to repetitive fiction: “the belief that our own perceptions of the way things ought to be is in fact the way they actually are...comfortable but dangerous delusions” (Nodelman, 1988, pgs. 239-240). This statement can relate the series fiction and, more applicably to this thesis, adaptations – ones that solely retell the story, rather than transform the story in a way that brings out new insights and experiences to its audience and readers of the original text.

2.4 Theater, Young Audiences, and Literacy

A question continues to be present throughout this analysis and discussion of adaptation: Why choose the stage and musical theater as the medium for transforming children’s literature? With many successful shows created from children’s texts, their adaptors clearly had their young audiences in mind, which is reflected in the ways they adapted their chosen children’s novel to the stage. Novels for young readers are really taking off in the theatrical world and bringing in young audiences to experience the novel in a live performance format has been shown to improve their literacy and overall education. Hutcheon states that teachers and their students are one of the largest audiences of adaptations (2012, pg. 117). In their article “Bringing Literature to Life for Urban Adolescents: Artistic, Dramatic Instruction and Live Performance”, Certo and Brinda (2011) analyze how students respond to portrayals of assigned books on the stage and in live performances of the text. Presenting a novel to students with a live performance enhances their engagement in the text, while also assisting with their comprehension and providing them with a deeper understanding of the emotions of the characters, thus blending efferent and aesthetic reading to the reader (2011, pg. 24). Theater seems to want to be aligned with learning

and literary connections “because literacy is fundamentally about learning to use language to mean, drama and good books go together” (as cited in Harste, 2001) (2008, pg. 489).

With the tendency for children’s literature to be primarily received by young audiences, it feels necessary to explore how theatrical and musical adaptations of these texts benefits these young viewers, in addition to the audience as a whole. Film is the primary performance-based storytelling available and the most accessible to young audiences, but why does theater create stronger benefits for young people? Matthew Reason (2016) has looked closely at how young audiences perceive and react to live performances of literary texts. One of the first reactions received during his study was that the students felt “more a part” of the performance and that it was more “direct” than cinema and film (2016, pg. 230). He posits that “liveness,” or live performance, is “deeply integrated into the social experience of theatre” (2016, pg. 240). Brinda (2008) wrote: “Providing experiences for young students to become immersed in theatrical presentations of literary work can spark insight, reflection, self-knowledge, and imagination” (2008, pg. 489).

On an even deeper level, the addition of music can enhance the learning experience and bring readers even closer to the text and characters in a novel adaptation. Lucy Okikawa (2006) explored how musical theater can benefit the literary needs of children with visual impairments, as well as some ways to integrate music and theater into the classroom curriculum. The essence of musical theater, as suggested by Okikawa, “showcases storytelling through dialogue, as well as depicting emotion, in music, dance, and human interaction” (2006, pg. 370). Incorporating these components into literacy lessons can provide students with “imaginative ways of interpreting stories through...different channels to convey meaning” (2006, pg. 370). Though Okikawa focuses on the benefits of this type of interpretation for visually impaired students, this

can also benefit reluctant and struggling readers. The music and songs immediately “set the tone of a character’s feelings and the mood of a scene in a way that lighting and words alone cannot do” (2006, pg. 372). The emotional connection that music within a performance can create strengthens the overall story and heightens the audience’s awareness of important themes and moments within the original text.

2.5 Conclusion

Hutcheon, when looking at the importance of understanding the process of this transformation from text to performance, stresses that adaptation theory must involve more than the adaptation itself: “if we cannot talk about the creative process, we cannot fully understand the urge to adapt and therefore perhaps the very process of adaptation” (2012, pg. 107). I explore this important aspect of adaptation in later chapters, with the production and performance of Roald Dahl’s *Matilda* in the Royal Theater Company’s adaptation, *Matilda the Musical*, and in my musical adaptation of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Hutcheon's exploration of adaptation theory, along with Murphy's thorough knowledge of literature-to-stage adaptation, provide a well-rounded understanding of all that must be realized when beginning the process of adaptation. Hutcheon finds the strengths of looking at not only production, but also process, and how a variety of mediums are being used to transform literature. Murphy's emphasis on the close relationship between a stage adaptation and its literary source motivated me as I dove into my own adaptation one. Having defined adaptation, articulating the structure and content needed to transform a text, and establishing additional considerations when adapting to the stage, I will now describe how it applies to my close reading and musical adaptation.

3.2 Criteria and Rationale for Choosing Primary Texts

Adaptation theory, in exploring how work is translated across media, looks closely at the motivations and importance behind not only the production, but also the process, which arguably holds a higher value than the adapted work itself. The process holds information about the adaptor's desires to transform a specific piece of literature, as well as their interest or motivation in choosing a certain medium for the transformation to take place. This emphasis on process is not only present in Hutcheon's work, but plays a large role in my exploration of musical adaptations of children's texts. I have employed adaptation theory, along with considerations of literary adaptations to the stage, to my close reading of an example of a musical adaptation of a children's literature novel. As Hutcheon's theoretical discussion revolves around adaptation as a whole, many of the examples referenced in the text focus on visual adaptations, such as film and

theater. The visual nature of theatrical adaptation requires special considerations, especially since literature is a purely text based medium. An even stronger emphasis must be placed on the process when children's literature is concerned, as the production's audience might consist largely of children and youth, for which the performance must be engaging, exciting, and reflect their own visualization of the novel being adapted.

The decision to create a musical theater adaptation of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (Rowling, 1997) stems from my lifelong passion and interest in the *Harry Potter* series and the world that J.K. Rowling created for her readers. As I shared in the introduction, the popularity of the series and the many adaptations and extensions that have been developed from Rowling's original story encourage adaptors to explore additional media in which to engage audiences and the fans of the books. As a result, my passion for the series and for musical theater drives me to transform the books to the stage. To pursue writing a musical adaptation of *Philosopher's Stone*, I needed to gain a stronger and deeper understanding of how musicals are created, from the initial idea, through the composition of music, lyrics, and script, and to its completion and performance. For this, I referenced two guides: *Writing Musical Theater* (Cohen & Rosenhaus, 2006) and *Music Theory for Dummies* (Pilhofer & Day, 2015). These texts, though not necessarily theoretical or academic in nature, served as a structural support as I compose and write the music and script for the adaptation. Additionally, for a first-hand perspective of the process I look closely at a current, successful musical adaptation of a novel similar to *Harry Potter*.

When selecting a musical adaptation, I had several criteria that led me to my final choice. The first of these was that the adaptation be of a contemporary children's book, preferably a chapter book, as *Harry Potter* is for older readers. Second was that the adaptation should be

successful, if not notable, within the musical theater world. Lastly, I was strongly inclined to find a musical with similar elements to *Harry Potter*, which could help in my endeavor to successfully portray this novel in the theater format. *Matilda the Musical* (Minchin & Kelly, 2010) met all of my criteria, not only with its success on both Broadway and the West End, but also with the kind of magical elements, which are present in *Harry Potter*. As well, the character similarities between Harry and Matilda, each with their unkind families and their new-found abilities fit perfectly. I was also fortunate enough to see *Matilda the Musical* when I visited London earlier this year, which allowed me to more closely analyze the production, especially the visual and theatrical elements of the show. David Wood, producer of many Dahl adaptations, shares his choice for choosing Dahl:

“There’s something rather magical about Dahl...the situations in his tales are larger than life and you often have a child as the protagonist – and that child is often the underdog who triumphs through adversity. That is a very good, very theatrical way of telling a story.” (*American Theater*, 2014, pg. 26)

Wood’s comment again suggests the similarity of *Matilda*’s plot to that of *Harry Potter*’s; this connection is actually relayed by Wood later in the article, with the suggestion that elements of *Harry Potter* may have originated from Matilda’s story. Harry and Matilda, along with their underdog triumphs are dramatic stories that beg to be transformed to the stage, with the magic of these tales inspiring for the addition of music. Murphy supports choosing literature that you are passionate about, suggesting that, “as you create your new work, you will have the privilege of partnering with the work of a fiction writer you love” (2013, pg. 15).

3.3 Description of Analysis and Production

Analyzing the process *Matilda*'s producers used for their production served as a guide for the adaptation process I employ in transforming *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*. Hutcheon, when discussing adaptation as a process, states that, "adaptors are first interpreters and then creators" (2012, pg. 18). Following this suggestion, I first interpreted *Matilda*'s transformation to the stage before creating my own adaptation. I deconstructed *Matilda the Musical*, starting with the transformation of certain events and character motivations from Roald Dahl's book into songs, and conclude with the success of this adaptation and its audiences' response. I looked closely at Dahl's original work alongside the musical production's adaptation in order to determine their relationship to one another and how the original text influenced the staged production. I referenced various articles and interviews with *Matilda*'s production team to gain insight into the adaptation process and its transformation to the musical stage, as well as referencing Dahl's *Matilda* (1980) as the source material for the musical. This perspective, paired with content from my theoretical analysis of the adaptation process, resulted in the production of a guide for creating a musical and stage adaptation of a children's text, specifically the first book in the *Harry Potter* series.

The creative aspect of my thesis consists of adapting three scenes from *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* into a musical performance, which included composing songs and writing the script. My initial goal was to create a full and complete musical theater adaptation of the book, which would have provided me with a holistic adaptation and production experience. However, on advice from a member of my thesis committee, I chose to narrow the scope of this project and select 3-5 scenes to adapt and transform into a musical format, rather than produce an entire show, which takes an experienced production team years to complete. I chose the scenes

based on their importance and contribution to the book's plot, while also using insight from J.K. Rowling on her favorite moments from *Philosopher's Stone*. These chosen scenes include a script with stage directions and a song that plays a part in the scene. My background in music and singing enabled me to compose the music and write the lyrics successfully, though I used the knowledge and assistance of music and composition students when needed. Near the completion of writing and composing these scenes, I enlisted qualified singers and actors to rehearse and perform the scenes, allowing me the opportunity to make any changes to the script or music and giving me the chance to see my work performed, rounding out the production process. I provide a reflection on my experience throughout the adaptation process, while acknowledging the insight and knowledge I gained from the process. I also conveyed how Hutcheon and Murphy's texts, as well as my own analysis of *Matilda the Musical*, contributed to the transformation of *Philosopher's Stone* to the musical stage.

Chapter 4: Analysis of *Matilda the Musical*

4.1 Introduction

The following chapter shares insights and the analysis of *Matilda the Musical*, along with a synthesis of the theoretical frameworks with the analysis of the show. The chapter begins with a summary of Dahl's novel, *Matilda*, followed by an exploration of the characters, story, and music created for the stage production. The analysis includes thoughts on the successes and limitations of *Matilda the Musical*, as well as the translation of Dahl's novel to the musical stage. The chapter concludes with insights from the analysis and how that analysis with my leading theories will inform and guide my own adaptation process.

4.2 Dahl's *Matilda*

One of Roald Dahl's most beloved characters, Matilda, gives young readers the courage to stand up for themselves and to root for the underdog. A wonderful synopsis found in the inside cover of the novel provides a clear representation of the theme of this story:

“Matilda Wormwood's father thinks she's a little scab. Matilda's mother spends all afternoon playing bingo. And Matilda's headmistress, Miss Trunchbull? Well, she's the worst of all. She is a big bully, who thinks all of her pupils are rotten and locks them in the dreaded chokey. As for Matilda, she's an extraordinary little girl with a magical mind – and now she's had enough. So all these grown-ups better watch out, because Matilda is going to teach them a lesson they'll never forget.” (Dahl, 1988)

In further detail, Matilda is an unusually brilliant little girl who discovers her intelligence with her love of reading and books. The local librarian fosters her passion, as she receives no love or nurturing at home. In retaliation for her father's harsh treatment of her, she plays a few tricks on

him, including supergluing his hat to his head, dying his hair green and convincing her family that their sitting room is haunted, which gives Matilda a place to read in peace. When she is old enough, Matilda starts school at Crunchem Hall Primary School and is placed in Miss Honey's classroom. Miss Honey is astounded by Matilda's reading level and her mathematical skills. She tries to convince the school's headmistress, Miss Trunchbull that Matilda should be moved to a higher grade level or at least given special attention. Miss Trunchbull not only denies Miss Honey's request, but also marks Matilda as a troublemaker. Miss Honey's determination moves her to meet with Matilda's parents in order to gain support on Matilda's behalf. Unfortunately, the Wormwoods don't see Matilda's brilliance and don't really care about her at all. Miss Honey chooses to help support Matilda's education and growth anyway.

At school, Matilda is warned about Miss Trunchbull's cruel nature, which immediately place Matilda at odds with the headmistress. The students see some of this terror when Miss Trunchbull swings one of the students by the pigtails around, just like a hammer throw, and propels her across the school's grounds. The Trunchbull also forces Bruce, a student who ate a slice of her cake, to eat the entire cake as the rest of the students look on. Miss Trunchbull also decides to test Miss Honey's class to see if they can spell. As she terrorizes her classmates, Matilda is able to tip a water glass over with her mind. She shares this power with Miss Honey when Matilda is invited to her house which is when she discovers that Miss Trunchbull is actually Miss Honey's aunt and that her father might have been forced to kill himself by Miss Trunchbull. After learning this, Matilda decides to take revenge on Miss Trunchbull for all of the horrible things she's done to Miss Honey.

When the Trunchbull comes to Miss Honey's classroom again, Matilda uses her powers to make the chalk write on the board, pretending to be Miss Honey's father's ghost, coming back

to haunt Miss Trunchbull. Completely horrified, Miss Trunchbull faints, after which, she is never to be seen again. After that day, Matilda's powers disappear as well. Miss Honey's father's will is discovered, leaving Miss Honey his money and the house that Miss Trunchbull had been living in ever since his death. The Wormwoods flee as well, as Mr. Wormwood has gotten mixed up with crooks and must escape them. Matilda begs for them to leave her in the care of Miss Honey who agrees. Miss Honey and Matilda live happily ever after.

Dahl's magical story is paired with Quentin Blake's lively illustrations that bring the characters and actions to life. Many of these illustrations, in addition to the narrative text, inform the successful translation and transformation of *Matilda* onto the stage in Tim Minchin and David Kelly's 2010 production, and give readers a strong connection to the beloved novel.

4.3 *Matilda the Musical*

The Royal Shakespeare Company's original production of *Matilda the Musical* opened on December 9, 2010 to an enthusiastic audience at the Courtyard Theatre in Stratford-Upon-Avon (Minchin, 2018). Little did they know that their musical adaptation of Dahl's novel would soon receive over 47 awards and many more nominations, including eight Laurence Olivier Awards (the most wins ever), four Tony Awards, and several critic and audience choice awards, to name a few. The show has moved from London's West End to Broadway, and toured all over the world, including the U.S., Canada, and Australia (Minchin, 2018).

An exploration of this novel's transformation into the vastly successful musical production includes looking at the similarities between the novel's main story elements and characters to those portrayed in the stage adaptation, which will provide some insight into the adaptation process, from novel to stage. The analysis examines what moments were chosen to

become songs and changes that were made in order to create a successful recreation of Dahl's novel on the stage. Additionally, I use Gilles Deleuze's repetition and difference theories (Williams, 2013) in order to substantiate the motivations behind certain musical and storytelling decisions made by *Matilda the Musical's* producers.

Minchin and Kelly were able to capture Dahl's story with clever dialogue, successful transformation of characters to the stage, and powerful music that brings their voices to life. It seems very clear that from the beginning of this adaptation process, these producers wanted to retell Dahl's story in their own way, but in a way that brought the fantastical story Dahl created to life. They wanted to "do the work justice" (Royal Shakespeare Company, 2010) and hoped to create a moving, uplifting, and beautiful production of the novel while also following a "creative mandate...to stay true to the nature of the original text" while still being original in the transformation (Murphy, 2013, pg. 38). With a stage adaptation, "the move to a performance or interactive mode entails a shift from a solo model of creation to a collaborative one" (Hutcheon, 2012, pg. 80). Tim Minchin, a musician and composer, was able to create the songs and lyrics for the show, but needed the help of writer David Kelly in order to tie all of the songs and music together into a cohesive and fluid narrative and production. During the production process, the producers hosted workshops for members of the cast and the writers, where they had them run a few songs and scenes, while "finding feedback for their literary adaptation in progress" (Murphy, 2013, pg. 160) from the performers and some children they had sit in to view the practice performance. The workshop process assisted the producers in adjusting aspects of the adaptation that would do Dahl's novel justice and be engaging for its audience. The addition of music to this story enhanced the interiority of the show and its characters, while still relaying the overarching story. Hutcheon suggests that, "in operas and musicals, the unrealistic conventions of singing act

to distance us, but the music counters that by provoking identification and a strong affective response” (Hutcheon, 2012, pg. 134).

The musical did make a few changes to the story and added songs during moments that provided insight into many characters’ inner motivations. In analyzing this adaptation, specific differences from the novel cannot be the sole focus of an observation or critique, because in doing so, it risks “destroying the sense of continuity in the repetition” (Williams, 2013, pg. 12). As is true of many adaptations, the similarities to the original text and the sameness of characters and plot provide a stable platform for which producers of theatrical adaptations are able to diverge from in order to create originality in the new form, while not depriving its audience of the comfort of familiarity to the original story. It was valuable for the producers to consider that “an audience’s knowledge about the creative process has a real impact upon interpretation” (Nattiez, 1990, ix). The advantage of theater is that the audience gets to see multiple characters’ points of view. In the case of *Matilda the Musical*, the audience is able to gain insight into the thoughts of Matilda, Mrs. Trunchbull, Mr. and Mrs. Wormwood, and Miss Honey, most of whose perspectives readers of the novel have had a limited view. These additions resulted in creating stronger understandings of minor characters, which places prominence on Matilda as the guiding hero of the story.

This award-winning musical serves as the model for how musical adaptations are created from children’s novels. My analysis explores Minchin and Kelly’s production process, including their transformation of the characters and the story to the stage, from *Matilda the Musical*’s relationship to its source material: Roald Dahl’s *Matilda*.

4.3.1 Characters

Murphy defines character as “a lens that focuses on selected aspects of personality and allows us to comprehend a person’s actions” (Murphy, 2013, pg. 60), “you want to be as specific and evocative as possible about their traits, language, actions, and interactions with others and their world” (2013, pg. 72). One of the most important considerations was to portray the central and title character, Matilda, on stage, while remaining as close to Dahl’s creation as possible. This required the producers to consider Dahl’s writing and Quentin Blake’s illustrations in order to ‘get her right’. In the novel, Matilda is a quiet and passive character “a tiny dark-haired person” (1988, pg. 10), although her smarts and activism give the reader a sense of strength and perseverance, conveying a fluid and engaging protagonist. However, the internal nature of Matilda’s many resilient thoughts and motivations becomes one of the main obstacles to overcome when translating her to the musical stage. Minchin describes Matilda as “a hero with great odds stacked against her, who, through nothing but books and reading and the power of her own incredible brain, sort of vanquishes everyone” (*American Theater*, 2014, pg. 26). Matilda’s portrayal on stage needed to reflect her smart and “naughty” behavior, while presenting her as a quiet and initially reserved little girl. The natural thing to do was to give Matilda musical numbers that would allow the rebellious and clever girl to come out on stage, while allowing her to remain the quiet little girl while speaking and interacting with the other characters. Minchin describes this challenge:

“Deciding on who sings what where is the great challenge of writing musical theater...some people don’t seem to want to sing, so getting Matilda to sing at all was tough, because we didn’t want her to be Annie. She’s a quiet reader, but she’s got guts.”
(*American Theater*, 2014, pg. 27)

For example, while Matilda is preparing to play tricks on her father, she sings a song that shares when it is ok to be “naughty” and gives an overall message of fighting back when life isn’t fair. The lyrics reference different stories that involve unfair situations and consequences for its characters, such as Jack and Jill and Romeo and Juliet:

Jack and Jill, went up the hill
To fetch a pail of water, so they say
Their subsequent fall was inevitable
They never stood a chance, they were written that way
Innocent victims of their story
Like Romeo and Juliet
T'was written in the stars before they even met
That love and fate, and a touch of stupidity
Would rob them of their hope of living happily
The endings are often a little bit gory
I wonder why they didn't just change their story?
We're told we have to do what we're told but surely
Sometimes you have to be a little bit naughty.

(Minchin & Kelly, 2010)

These lyrics give the audience a true sense of Matilda’s intelligence, even referencing Matilda’s love for books, as she uses them to strengthen her resolve to get back at her dad for being rude to her. In response to her father’s mean words, Matilda plots revenge on him with some “naughty” tricks, which are spelled out in her song “Naughty”, and which she sings as she carries out her retaliation. She explains that “we’re told we have to do what we’re told, but surely sometimes

you have to be a little bit naughty” (2011, pgs. 33-34). Her rationale is explained in the book, “she decided that every time her father or her mother was beastly to her, she would get her own back in some way or another” (1988, pg. 23), but the additional explanation in the lyrics of her song pull in her learned lessons from the books she reads and seem to give her the motivation and confidence to carry out the tricks on her father. This song is repeated several times throughout the show, reiterating Matilda’s need to “put it right” (2011, pg. 37). The songs created for Matilda allow the audience to get an idea of what she’s thinking and how she feels about the world around her. A song that does this extremely well is “Quiet”, in which Matilda shares what kinds of thoughts are going around in her head and reveals to the audience her feelings and that she wishes for...quiet. It provides for the eventual development of her magical abilities and gives insight that Dahl doesn’t reveal in the novel.

In order to keep the authenticity of one of the novel’s key conflicts, it was essential to successfully translate the antagonist of the novel, Miss Trunchbull, to the stage, along with her influence on the children at Matilda’s school and especially on Matilda. To do this, *Matilda’s* producers enhanced not only Ms. Trunchbull’s evil and uncaring nature, as well as her athleticism (hammer throwing), they significantly enhanced her masculine appearance and her persona as “a most formidable female” (1988, pg. 76) by using a male actor to portray her character on stage. This change allowed for a more brute-ish demeanor and the tenor voice of the male actor produced “an aura of menace” (pg. 61), thus creating the “fierce tyrannical monster who frightened the life out of the pupils and teachers alike” (pg. 61). Creating the musical theater counterpart of Dahl’s antagonist opened up interesting possibilities for *Matilda’s* producers. The audience’s first real introduction to Miss Trunchbull is in her song “The Hammer” where she explains her success as a shot-putter in response to Miss Honey’s plea for Matilda to receive

special consideration. Miss Trunchbull asks, ‘What do you think it took to become English Hammer-Throwing Champion...Do you think in that moment, when my big moment came, I treated the rule with casual disdain?’ (2011, pgs. 56-57). This musical response to Miss Honey’s request differs from the novel, in which Miss Trunchbull uses the visit to accuse Matilda of pulling some stunts against her and insulting Matilda, calling her “a nasty worm” (1988, pg. 79). The musical producers extended Miss Trunchbull’s background to give the audience her lack of qualifications to be a headmistress. The audience also has a chance to experience the dreaded “phys-ed” with Trunchbull’s song “The Smell of Rebellion” in which she terrorizes the children as they participate in strenuous physical education. This song allows the audience to see Trunchbull’s thoughts about the students and that her solution to stifle the rebellion that the children might be planning is to subject them to phys-ed. As she says, “the smell of rebellion comes out in the sweat and Phys-Ed will get you sweating. And it won’t be long before I smell the pong of aiding and abetting. A bit of Phys-Ed will tell us who has a head full of rebellious thoughts” (2011, pgs. 108-109). This song also allows Trunchbull to reminisce on her time as a hammer thrower, while being able to act out certain athletic moves and abilities, which the students sometimes are forced to engage in as well.

The stage transformation of Miss Honey was probably the closest to the novel’s description, both in appearance and personality. Miss Honey is a sweet woman who teaches the children in her care with compassion and in the hope that they will feel safe in her classroom. However, when Matilda becomes a part of her classroom, she encounters this unexpected and exceptional little girl that motivates Miss Honey to put an even stronger effort in teaching Matilda and nurturing both her intelligence and her spirit, in light of Matilda’s family and Mrs. Trunchbull’s lack of interest. Minchin was able to transform Miss Honey’s quiet and tentative

demeanor into her songs in a style suitable to her personality. After Miss Honey's first interaction with Matilda, she is determined to see that Matilda is at least given special consideration, as she is a very gifted student. Miss Honey had "learnt enough to realize that something had to be done about it (Matilda) as soon as possible. It'd be ridiculous to leave a child like that stuck in the bottom form" (1988, pg. 76). This decision means Miss Honey must meet with Mrs. Trunchbull, the nefarious headmistress of the school. To prepare herself, the song "Pathetic" is used to boost her self-confidence and prevent her from wimping out: "Look at you hesitating, hands shaking. You should be embarrassed. You're not a little girl. It's just pathetic. Knock on the door, Jenny" (2011, pgs. 53-54). Miss Honey has a distinct moment of hesitation, where she comes up with reasons not to disturb Mrs. Trunchbull, "she's probably having a meeting or something," but she remembers why she is there in the first place, "but this little girl, this miracle," and faces her fears, finally knocking on the door of Trunchbull's office (2011, pgs. 54-55). The novel mentions both Miss Honey's hesitation and boost of confidence, but does so briefly: "Normally, Miss Honey was terrified of the Headmistress and kept well away from her, but at this moment she felt ready to take on anybody" (1988, pg. 76). Miss Honey's song, on the other hand, allows the audience to experience her indecision and inner conflict in a deeper way.

Matilda's family, the Wormwoods, feel almost like caricatures of their book counterparts, which strengthens the audience's grasp of how horribly Matilda is treated compared to her brother, Michael. When looking at each member, Mr. Wormwood stands out within the novel, since Matilda does most of her revenge on his behavior towards her. His appearance lines up well with Blake's illustrations and the producers' inventive transformations throughout the production portray Dahl's story successfully. The actor is able to translate Mr. Wormwood's slimy and conniving personality on stage, while bringing Blake's drawing to life. His song

“Telly” helps express his mentality and attitude about books and cleverness, especially the words, “All I know I learned from telly, this beautiful box of facts...the bigger the telly, the smarter the man” (Minchin & Kelly, 2010). This song is the only number that the audience sees Michael, Matilda’s brother, participate in the show and, like his character in the novel, he is a couch potato who contributes little to the plot, other than exemplifying the contrasting treatment shown by Matilda’s parents. He plays much a similar role in this novel as Dudley does in *Harry Potter*, although Michael doesn’t vie much for his parents’ affection. A change is made to how Mrs. Wormwood spends her days and what she is up to while Matilda is at the library. In the novel, Mrs. Wormwood plays bingo all day long, whereas in the musical, she is involved in competitive dancing. This dancing element of the musical Mrs. Wormwood weaves its way into her song “Loud”, where she dances around the stage with her dance partner, Rudolpho, while telling Miss Honey that being loud and looking good is better than knowing and teaching: “What you know matters less than volume with which what you don’t know is expressed. Content has never been less important, so you have got to be LOUD!” (Minchin & Kelly, 2010, pgs. 64-65).

4.3.2 Story

“A visual and aural world is physically shown on stage – created from verbal and notational signs on the page” (Hutcheon, 2012, pg. 39), and indeed, Minchin and Kelly truly transform Dahl’s words into a visual representation of this empowering story. A key way the producers translated *Matilda* to the stage was in exploring character motivations and how these motivations impacted the events of the story. According to Murphy, “some of the most compelling conflicts to follow over the course of a (show’s) action are characters’ inner conflicts – the struggles within themselves that they seek to resolve” (Murphy, 2013, pg. 63). Matilda’s

song “Quiet” reflects this inner conflict, her desire for the world and her mind to be still and quiet, rather than constantly in motion. This inner conflict manifests with Matilda’s sudden ability to be able to move objects with her mind, which plays a key role in the climax of the story.

One of the most successful songs in this musical is one that doesn’t follow any specific moment from the novel, but reminisces about childhood and the desire to grow up. The simple melody in the song “When I Grow Up” incorporates the wishes that children have for when they become adults, and even Miss Honey wishes similar things, as she is placed under similar restrictions as the children by Truchbull’s regime. When they grow up, they hope to “be smart enough to answer all the questions that you need to know the answers to before you’re grown up” and to “be brave enough to fight the creatures that you have to fight beneath the bed each night to be a grown up” (2011, pgs. 93-96). Miss Honey comments on Matilda’s maturity in the novel, that “although you (Matilda) look like a child, you are not really a child at all because your mind and your powers of reasoning seem to be fully grown-up. So, I suppose we might call you a grown-up child, if you see what I mean” (1988, pg. 189). This paradox can be applied to Miss Honey, as her lack of freedom and independence, as well as her fear of Miss Trunchbull, places her in a similar position to the children. Miss Honey is able to grow over the course of the story because of her drive to help Matilda, whose maturity seems to empower Miss Honey and strengthen her resolve by the end of the novel and show.

The idea of “maximizing connections defined in terms of reasons and of forgetting those things, including connections, that hinder this maximization” (Williams, 2013, pg. 19) can be seen in the way Minchin and Kelly explored Miss Honey’s family history through Matilda’s storytelling. Some of the Honey’s background is revealed in the novel, but in the musical, this

background is revealed over the course of the production – one of the more significant changes made by Minchin and Kelly – resulting in a stronger understanding of Miss Honey’s story and a bigger reveal of her relationship with Miss Trunchbull. This slow reveal is done through Matilda’s ongoing story about an escapologist and his wife, which she tells to the librarian, Mrs. Phelps. Throughout the musical, Matilda tells a story seemingly of her own invention about a man and woman who are both circus performers and who fall in love, which eventually ends in tragedy, but also results in the couple having a daughter. This story, told by Matilda and acted out by both puppeteers and actors, feels a bit disjointed from the rest of the performance, and for avid fans and readers of Dahl’s novel, feels out of place and not a part of the original story. However, near the end of the musical, the audience finds out, through Matilda telling the story to Miss Honey, that it is a true story, one of Miss Honey’s parents, and that Miss Honey is their daughter. The producers of the musical used Matilda to tell the story of Miss Honey’s past, which leads her to tell Matilda about her relationship to Mrs. Trunchbull, who is her aunt. Murphy posits that in literary adaptations, “the inherent complication of making a stage-worthy play is in heightening the conflict to sustain the tension” (Murphy, 2013, pg. 92). This addition to the story provides the audience more time with Matilda and heightens the suspense and enhances the twist when we find out Mrs. Trunchbull is Miss Honey’s aunt.

The producers shift some of the early plot points around to little effect on the storyline, but the choice to remove one of Matilda’s revenge tactics was wise, as that particular event involved Matilda tricking her family into thinking their den was haunted so Matilda could have the room to herself to read. When moving to the stage, each room of the Wormwood’s house required different set pieces and having to incorporate another room and the capability to act out

that particular scene was both unnecessary and “disturbs the active engagement of the audience’s experience in real time” (Murphy, 2013, pg. 138).

4.3.3 Music and Lyrics

Tim Minchin, who has written music for theater for years, was excited to have the opportunity to bring *Matilda* to the stage and, as the composer and lyricist, transformed key moments and character revelations into wonderful, catchy and “angular” (interview, 2010) songs. His goal for bringing each character to life through the music was simple: “the text tells you what they (the characters) should sing about, and lyrics tells you how they should sound” (interview, 2011). Murphy identifies the struggle to “selectively find the words that evoke the conflicts driving the characters” (Murphy, 2013, pg. 41), but that when done well, can bring new sides to a character and provide a richer story for the audience. This was especially important as the songs needed to reflect the personalities of Dahl’s characters, who are all vastly different and need their own sound and voice. Miss Honey, for example, is quiet, reserved, and kind and thus, Minchin represented her character with light and calm songs, such as her songs “This Little Girl” and “My House”. A contrasting sound, as used with Mrs. Trunchbull, brings out her evil and maniacal persona and has the low accompaniment to enhance her characteristics. The music in this show “connects us to the spectacle by invoking a dimension of depth of interiority, borrowed from the responses of our own bodies as we listen to the insistent production of rhythms, tone, colors, and changes in dynamics” (Hutcheon, 2012, pg. 60). All of these aspects further engage the audience in Matilda’s story and bring its viewers closer to the characters’ experiences.

One of the more revolutionary songs was inspired by a previous song concept from singer Casey Bennetto, who gave Minchin permission to incorporate it into the musical (2011,

“Forward”). The “School Song” incorporates the alphabet into the lyrics that the chorus sings; the words move in alphabetical order in a hidden and sneaky way:

So you think you're able (A-ble)
To survive this mess by being a Prince or a Princess (B-ing)
You will soon see (C)
There's no escaping tragedy (trage-D)
And even (E-ven)
If you put in heaps of effort (F-ort)
You're just wasting energy (ener-G)
'Cause your life as you know it is ancient history (H-ent)
I, have suffered in this jail (I and J-l)
I've been trapped inside this cage for ages (K-ge)
This living 'ell (L)
But if I try I can remember (rem-M-ber)
Back before my life had ended (N-ded)
Before my happy days were over (O-ver)
Before I first heard the pealing of the bell (P-ling)
Like you I was curious (Q-rious)
So innocent I asked a thousand questions (R-sked)
But unless you want to suffer listen up (unl-S)
And I will teach you, a thing or two (T-ch)
You listen here, my dear (U)
You'll be punished so severely (se-Vre-ly)

If you step out of line, and if you cry, it will be double, you should stay out of trouble (W)

And remember to be extremely careful (X-tremely)

(YOUNG STUDENT)

Why? (Y)

(OLDER STUDENT)

Why? Did you hear what he said?

(OLDER STUDENTS)

Just you wait for Phys-ed (Phy-Z)

In playing with the alphabet, Matilda's love for reading and books is musically reinforced as it is in several other scenes where the members of Miss Honey's class learn to spell and eventually demonstrate their spelling for the Trunchbull. This letter and words theme can even be seen on the physical stage and set of the show. In the Cambridge Theatre in London's West End, where I was fortunate to view the musical, the frame of the stage was covered in letters, some random and some forming a variety of different words. Matilda's name is even spelled out at the end of the opening number, "Miracle", and remains visible throughout the show. Murphy recommends that, "finding literal details in the novel that can become a stageable image...allows you to build around it as you use other specific locations in your adaptation" (2013, pg. 77).

Minchin and Kelly incorporate a repetition of themes throughout the musical, which provides continuity and re-emphasizes driving motifs and values. Repetition, according to Deleuze, can reinforce the "continuity afforded by the variation of an intensity in an idea or sensation" (Williams, 2013, pg. 13). Essentially, when repetition underlies a change or difference within a theme, it can enhance the emotions or motivations of the whole: "The marking of the

same territory takes place against the background of a variation in intensities between one parade and another” (Williams, 2013, pg. 13). In *Matilda the Musical*, two of the songs and their lyrics are repeated in different moments throughout the performance in order to show the lingering feelings of the children (“Miracle”) and Matilda’s own struggle with the lack of fairness, both at home and at school (“Naughty”). These two songs are able to add continuity to both the musical’s storyline and themes, while also supporting the repeated narrative found in the novel. “The repetition of theme and character, coupled with a coherent storyline...is what readers...find pleasurable and indeed is what appears to attract them” (Newland, 2013, pg. 192).

Minchin’s choice to repeat certain motifs and songs, with slight variations, is successful because, “through its repetitions, through the way it creates the new by selecting what to repeat, any individual is not only the expression of virtual intensities and ideas, but also an event that alters them” (Williams, 2013, pg. 21). *Matilda* becomes a motivator and source of strength for many other characters within the novel and musical, thus her theme “Naughty” is repeated to accentuate these traits, with slight variations that reflect the mood of a particular scene. Similarly, “Miracle” is repeated with variations as the kids begin to define who they are and grow throughout the story.

4.3.4 Musical Story and Songs

The show begins with kids lined up at what seems to be a birthday party, all are dressed up in various outfits and costumes as the song “Miracle” opens the musical. The song uses ideas and content from Dahl’s opening chapter, explaining how mothers and fathers tend to think highly about their children, that “even when their own child is the most disgusting little blister you could ever imagine, they (parents) still think that he or she is wonderful” (1988, pg. 1). Dahl

writes that “they become so blinded by adoration they manage to convince themselves their child has qualities of genius” (1988, pg. 1). Minchin incorporates this message in the opening number, having the children sing “My mommy says I’m a miracle! My daddy says I’m his special little guy...Ever since the day doc chopped the umbilical cord, it’s been clear there’s no peer for a miracle like me” (2011, pgs. 15-16). The personalities of the children are reflected in their actions on the stage, elaborating the terrors they are, while their parents continue to look at them lovingly. Minchin translates the novel’s opening pages with bravado and hilarious wit.

The opening number extends these pages with a scene involving a clearly pregnant Mrs. Wormwood arguing with the doctor about needing to be on a plane to her dance competition. The doctor, clearly at odds with her flippancy, explains that she is in labor and about to have a baby, to Mrs. Wormwood’s obvious denial and indifference. Mr. and Mrs. Wormwood express their own annoyance at having another child, “Why do bad things always happen to good people? Fine, upstanding citizens like you and me. Why, when we’ve done nothing wrong, should this disaster come along? This horrible, weird-looking hairy little stinky thing” (2011, pg. 26). The song finishes with Matilda singing a similar melody to the other children, but reflecting her parents’ true thoughts about her: “My mummy says I’m a lousy little worm. My daddy says I’m a bore. My mummy says I’m a jumped-up little germ, that kids like me should be against the law. My daddy says I should learn to shut my pie hole. No one likes a smart-mouthed girl like me. Mum says I’m a good case for populations control. Dad says I should watch more T.V.” (2011, pgs. 30-31). Minchin and Kelly likely expanded this introduction in order to portray parents as oblivious and idealistic people, with kids as the controlling entity in the show. This also allows the audience to see the contrast in how most parents see their children compared to how the Wormwoods treat Matilda.

After the failed attempt to get permission from Miss Trunchbull to help Matilda, Miss Honey goes to visit the Wormwoods, hoping they will want to help Matilda get the education support she needs. Unfortunately, Miss Honey realizes just how little the Wormwoods care about their daughter and their lack of interest in the fact that she is brilliant. In the novel, Mr. Wormwood assumes Miss Honey has come because Matilda is in trouble, saying “well, she’s your responsibility from now on. You’ll have to deal with her” (1988, pg. 86). Mrs. Wormwood’s reaction is not to be proud of Matilda’s mind, but that, “a girl should think about making herself look attractive so she can get a good husband later on...looks are more important than books” (1988, pg. 91). The musical provides Mrs. Wormwood the song “Loud” to tell Miss Honey that there are better things in life than being smart and clever, that “what you know matters less than the volume with which what you don’t know is expressed” (2011, pgs. 64-65). The whole song is done in the style of her ballroom dancing style, while she dances with her dance partner, Rudolpho, and tells Miss Honey things like “a little less dressing like your mum, a little more bumba, bom bom bada bom!” (2011, pg. 68). The change of Mrs. Wormwood’s daytime activities, from bingo to ballroom dancing, is a smart choice and gives this moment in the story and this song a stronger impact on the story as a whole, while also accentuating the beauty-before-brains idea held by Mrs. Wormwood. After Miss Honey leaves the Wormwoods, the musical allows her to reflect on the meeting with the song “This Little Girl” and gives the audience a look at Miss Honey’s resolve to make sure that Matilda gets the education and mentoring that she needs and deserves.

Once Miss Trunchbull finds out that Bruce ate a piece of her chocolate cake, his punishment is to eat the entire cake while everyone watches on. The musical’s producers transformed the chapter “Bruce Bogtrotter and the Cake” (1988, pgs. 111-127) into the song

“Bruce” which involves all of the students reacting to his punishment and their cheers and support as he eventually finishes the cake. The transformation on the stage was very successful and included the clever solution of having an inflatable cake that the actor playing Bruce stealthily deflates as he “ate” the chocolate cake. The students looking on initially sing these hesitant thoughts: “I can see that a slice or even two, Bruce, might’ve been nice. But even you, Bruce, have to admit between you and it there’s not a lot of difference in size. He can’t!” (2011, pg. 80). Matilda is even hesitant in the novel, asking her friend Lavender if she thinks he can do it, to which Lavender says, “It’s impossible...He’d be sick before he was halfway through” (1988, pg. 122). And, as the children realize Bruce was going to be able to finish the cake, they begin to root for him, rather than wait for him to fail, “He (Bruce) had now become very conscience of his audience and of how they were all silently rooting for him. This was nothing less than a battle between him and the mighty Trunchbull” (1988, pg. 124). The musical version of this change is done by increasing the tempo and key changes, as well as additional instruments and dynamics, ending in a triumphant cheer by the student looking on. Once Bruce reaches the last slice, the children sing their encouragement, “Bruce! You’ll never again be subject to abuse for your immense caboose. She’ll call a truce, Bruce. Just one more bit and you’ll’ve completely cooked her goose. We never thought it was possible, but here it is coming true” (2011, pgs. 86-87).

After the intermission in the show, the producers chose to have Mr. Wormwood share that “all I know I learnt from telly” (2011, pg. 88) in the song “Telly” featuring Michael, Matilda’s brother, who hasn’t really been involved in the show so far. This song argues that you can learn more from the television than books, which is implied by Mr. Wormwood at several moments in the novel. Ironically, there is a moment where Mr. Wormwood lists several popular

books and authors, “Who the dickens is Charles Dickens? Mary Shelley? For, she sounds smelly. Harry Potter? What a rotter!” (2011, pg. 91), which he most likely wouldn’t know unless he’d read them or had at least some interest in reading and books. Nevertheless, the song provides a humorous transition into the second half of the musical.

In the song “I’m Here”, Matilda is continuing to tell her story about the escapologist and the dreadful things that are done to his daughter. Within the song, Minchin has Matilda and the escapologist sing and speak at the same time, both for emphasis on what’s being said and for Matilda’s words to come alive and be spoken by the escapologist himself. The producers use this song to convey Matilda’s wish for a better father, one that, in the midst of mourning for his wife, forgot about her and is now back to show how much he cares for her. This reflects Matilda’s hope that her father will one day realize the error of his ways and will tell her that he loves her. The music that surrounds Matilda’s storytelling really matches the heightened tension and emotions that are revealed in the story, with loud sections and notes that give a sense of foreboding and anger, while also having moments that are solemn and quiet, which show the escapologist’s love and sadness as he tries to reconnect with his daughter.

When Miss Honey invites Matilda to her home, she shares what having her own home means to her. In the song “My House”, Miss Honey explains how her home makes her feel safe, grown up, and independent. In both the song and the novel, she explains how her small house is a refuge that, “when it’s cold and bleak, I feel no fear...even in the fiercest storms, I am warmed by this small but stubborn fire” (2011, pg. 128) and a place she can call her own - “it’s not much, but it’s enough” (2011, pg. 128).

The story and show all leads to the moment when Matilda terrifies Miss Trunchbull by using her brain to write a message on the chalkboard supposedly from Trunchbull’s brother.

After she flees, the children sing the song “Revolting Children”, lead proudly by Bruce Bogtrotter. He begins by stating that “never again will she get the best of me. Never again will she take away my freedom” (2011, pg. 130). The other children join in with thoughts that show they don’t plan to be the perfect children their parents think they are, they will “become a screaming horde...take out your hockey stick and use it as a sword” (2011, pg. 133). This song provides the momentum for the children to stand up for themselves, not to be perfect or ‘a miracle’, but true to themselves.

The whole cast concludes the show with a repetition of the songs “When I Grow Up” and “Naughty”, the lyrics of which sum up the show’s themes of childhood, independence, courage, and intelligence. Having both adult and child characters singing the final song gives the audience a feeling of unification, solidarity, and a sense that the messages of the show can relate to young and old alike.

4.4 Synthesis

There are several key production components of *Matilda the Musical* that will have a bearing on my own adaptation of *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* (Rowling, 1997). One of the strongest components of *Matilda the Musical* involved setting up the treatment of children by their parents, which allowed the audience to see how mistreated Matilda was by her own parents from the start. “Setting the stage” is a valuable and necessary part of any adaptation, especially one being transformed for the stage, and even more so for a young audience. Another component is the strength of the characterization done with Miss Trunchbull, whose song “Smell of Rebellion” creates a vocal duality that provides the audience with a deeper understanding of who Trunchbull is and some of her motivations. I hope that I’ve mirror this duality in Snape’s

voice during his song, “Potions”, which involves his own beginning-of-term monologue and some of his internal thoughts and concerns.

A smaller, but still compelling component is the way the producers made particular changes to make the show more dynamic for its younger viewers. For example, Mrs. Wormwood spends her days playing bingo in the novel, but in the musical, she is devoted to her dance competitions. This change in Mrs. Wormwood’s character transforms a static pastime, bingo, into something much more engaging, dancing. This change also gives Mrs. Wormwood a more believable reason for ignoring her daughter, not because she wastes her day away at the bingo hall, but because she’s occupying every spare moment with dance lessons and training. *Matilda the Musical*’s adaptors excelled in their expansion of Dahl’s one-lined descriptions or motivations into an entire song, strengthening both the characters involved in the scene and giving the audience a better understanding of their internal motivation and thoughts. “The adaptation and the adapted work merge in the audience’s understanding of their complex interrelations” (Hutcheon, 2012, pg. 117). For example, many of the inner thoughts of Miss Honey in the novel are one or two sentences long, and in the musical, these moments are transformed into full length songs that explore Miss Honey’s motivations and feelings.

The last component that strengthened the show’s overall success was the repetition of the main themes, found in the songs “When I Grow Up” and “Naughty”. The songs’ repetition, varying slightly as the show progressed, reflected the changes in the characters over the course of the musical. Adaptation as a product, described by Hutcheon, has “a kind of ‘theme and variation’ formal structure or repetition with difference” (Hutcheon, 2012, pg. 142). This structure is followed by the show’s producers, with profound significance to the growth of characters and the forward momentum of the musical’s plot. Hutcheon’s examination of adaption

theory through the adaptation process, as well as the application of Deleuze's theories of repetition, difference, and rhizome as they relate to children's literature, provided additional and significant insight into the transformation of *Matilda* to the musical stage.

Within any children's story, especially "in traditional fiction, children as well as adult readers are expected to identify with and empathize with at least one character, to adopt a subject position coinciding with a character" (Newland, 2009, pg. 16). The "rhizome" (Newland, 2009, pg. 10), or the connection between the voices in a narrative, in *Matilda the Musical* resonates on the stage even more powerfully than in Dahl's text. "Considering Children's Literature from the Deleuzian perspective of becoming involves the search for the intensities that flow when the encounter that is reading occurs" (Newland, 2009, pg. 13); those intensities are the moments that resonate with us as readers both emotionally and mentally. Deleuze and Guattari posit that the purpose of a book is for the reader to make connections within and around the text; not only should readers connect to the characters and story but explore the text outside of the book itself (Newland, 2009, pg. 15). *Matilda the Musical* does truly allow readers and audiences alike to not only connect to the characters and story, but to its themes and motivations.

Hutcheon states that the "limitations of the physical stage also add restrictions on the possible action and characterization" (Hutcheon, 2012, pg. 42) which may be true of stage plays, but this statement does not take into account the successes that musical theater has with exploring characterization in possibly even deeper ways. In the case of *Matilda the Musical*, the audience actually gains access into the thoughts and feelings of Miss Trunchbull, a viewpoint which is limited within the novel. The advantage of adapting a children's novel to the musical stage is that the "condensation" (Hutcheon, 2012, pg. 44) of the work is not as strong a concern when shifting from a telling to showing mode. Actually, *Matilda the Musical*'s producers had to

extend elements of the book in order to engage its audience and meet the expectations of the length of the performance. The room that the translation to the stage gave the producers allowed them to explore characters and themes more extensively than done in the novel.

Hutcheon acknowledges that adaptations have to take changes in time into account when shifting to the stage (Hutcheon, 2012, pg. 65) and that because live performance happens in real time, the past and/or passing of time is difficult to represent on stage. Though this is a legitimate concern for stage adaptors, *Matilda the Musical* was able to share past events along with the present setting of the story. They succeeded by having Matilda tell a story of an escapologist and his wife periodically throughout the performance, resulting in the reveal that the story was part of Miss Honey and Miss Trunchbull's true history and past. This adaptation choice enabled this reveal to be more dramatic and meaningful to the audience and even to the characters on stage.

The change in how Miss Honey and Miss Trunchbull's story is told throughout the musical affects the flow of the plot as a whole. Deleuze describes the idea of "disjunctive synthesis" as one where a series, or in the case of *Matilda the Musical* the story Matilda tells, "is cut and assembled in new and heterogeneous ways" (Williams, 2013, pg. 16). This disjunctive synthesis of Miss Honey's parents' story results in the disjointed flow of the plot, as the snippets of the story do not move smoothly within the musical's overall storyline and thus causes confusion for its audience until the story comes to an end with the reveal of who the characters in the story really are. Though the transformation of Miss Honey's telling from the novel into Matilda's progressive telling in the show was ultimately successful, its intermittent nature was more harmful than helpful in its execution, particularly for those familiar with Dahl's story.

4.5 Limitations

This analysis is limited by the incomplete scope of adaptation theory. Hutcheon, though thorough in her look into a variety of adaptations, has very few insights into adaptation for children, and even less on musical theater adaptations. While much of her analysis of adaptation theory supports my own analysis of *Matilda the Musical*, many points were incomplete or could not contribute fully to my discussion of children's musical adaptations.

Another limitation was in the way my analysis takes place. I only experienced the show once it was completed and had no further insight into the adaptation process itself. This led to an analysis based on inferences made while exploring the adaptation as well as the few interviews with the primary adaptors I was able to access and view. Though their comments on the adaptation process are helpful in confirming some of my inferences and thoughts, it is a limited view into the process and not one that provides me with any significant insight other than what I infer in my analysis.

4.6 Conclusion

Matilda the Musical's success and intergenerational spirit can clearly be attributed to Minchin's ingenuity in exploring Dahl's themes and characters, while still remaining true to the story and soul of Dahl's celebrated novel. The addition of music and staging recreates Matilda's story with a renewed sense of courage and a magic Minchin was able to bring to each character and aspect of their journey and growth. Minchin's adaptation provides me with a firm grasp of how powerful music is in adapting a story, especially children's novels like *Matilda* and *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*.

Chapter 5 - *The Boy Who Lived* Process Reflection

5.1 Introduction

On a late April evening, I stood with the rest of the audience, applauding the cast of *Matilda the Musical*, tears in my eyes. Though my jetlag was ever present, having just arrived in London that morning, I had just experienced one of the most magical and inspirational musicals I'd ever seen, as well as one of the greatest musical adaptations I've known to date. It was amazing to see how well the show's producers had recreated Dahl's work to the stage; many of my own personal interpretations found their way to that stage, characters coming to life before my eyes. I don't think a show has ever left me as motivated and inspired as that one had. Though *Matilda* had never been a particular favorite of mine, the story transformed in my mind after seeing the show in London's West End. As I thought through all of the books I fell in love with as a kid, one series clearly stuck out. As a favorite of many people, both children and adults, J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series is one that includes strong morals, powerful characters, and magical moments, just as *Matilda* had done years earlier. The *Harry Potter* phenomenon, as mentioned previously in this thesis, has grown exponentially since the books were published, expanding into theme parks, movies, and now a stage play, the latter being a source of inspiration to continue the story with a theatrical medium. After seeing *Matilda the Musical's* success and knowing the constant passion of *Harry Potter* fans for more content, I knew that creating a musical adaptation of the beginning of this series would not only add to the ever-growing world of *Harry Potter* cross-media, but could have the potential to explore the story and characters in greater depth and with new insight.

As I describe in my introduction and methodology, I chose to adapt *Harry Potter* primarily due to my life-long love of the books and the magical world. Along with my passion

for music and musical theater, adapting the first of J.K. Rowling's series into a musical production appeals strongly to me. I have been empowered by music for as long as I can remember, avidly singing even now, purely for the fun of singing in a choir. This skill, along with my love for musical theater, provides me with a firm foundation on which to create a musical interpretation of Harry's story.

As I began the process of adapting *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* (Rowling, 1997), I had to acknowledge my lack of experience in composing and limited knowledge of music theory. Additionally, the musical writing process, in almost every case, is a collaborative one, involving a team of producers rather than the primarily solo effort of my own production experience. I initially intended to do this production independently, but, as I will describe later in this chapter, I eventually needed the help and guidance of those with a stronger and wider knowledge of musical notation and theory than my own.

5.2 Process

Having chosen the source material for my musical adaptation, the next step was to re-read *Philosopher's Stone* to find the moments to transform musically. The tricky part of adapting a novel is that so many events take place, making it impossible to create songs for every scene, which in itself would probably turn out to be a five-hour production. In all the musical adaptations I have seen, none of them transform the entire book into music; the producers find meaningful moments to explore musically and allow the story to unfold with both music and script. I narrowed down these moments within *Philosopher's Stone* to three particular scenes that I adapted into song.

5.2.1 Scene Selection

The first meaningful moment is the opening of the book (show), when the reader is introduced to the Dursleys, Vernon Dursley in particular. This scene involves Vernon heading to work and noticing the unusual activity and the peculiar people walking around. According to Lin Manuel Miranda, “at the top of every musical, it’s essential to establish the world” (2016), and this musical is no different. The curious people in this number are witches and wizards, who are celebrating the downfall of You-Know-Who (Lord Voldemort) with others in the magical world and even sharing the news with Muggles (non-magic people). The feeling of terror and unease felt by witches and wizards during Lord Voldemort’s tyranny isn’t shared with Rowling’s readers until much later in the series. However, to give the audience an understanding of why the wizarding world is celebrating, I chose to provide insight into life before Voldemort’s demise. I set up the rationale for the wizards and witches are celebration in the beginning of the first book and the show, since this is a significant part of Harry’s past and all the events that happen from that moment on. This celebration features strongly in my opening number – highly influenced by the opening number in the musical *Wicked* (Schwartz, 2003), in which the people of Oz celebrate the death of the Wicked Witch of the West. I was also inspired by the opening numbers of two other musicals, including “Belle” from *Beauty and the Beast* (Menken, 1991), and “Rumor in St. Petersburg” from *Anastasia* (Newman, 1997). The first chapter of *Philosopher’s Stone* also includes Hogwarts’ headmaster, Albus Dumbledore, leaving Harry on the doorstep of the Dursley’s, accompanied by Professor McGonagall and Hagrid, who brings Harry to Dumbledore. I chose to briefly show this scene within the first number, allowing the audience to meet Dumbledore, McGonagall, and Hagrid, while also revealing Petunia Dursley’s reaction upon finding her nephew on her doorstep.

The second scene in *Philosopher's Stone* that I adapted was Harry's first Potions class and the introduction of Professor Snape, who becomes Harry's least favorite teacher. Snape, as readers of the series know, is a pivotal character later in the series and I found it important to establish this the first time the audience meets him. As I examined *Matilda the Musical* (Minchin & Kelly, 2010), I was inspired by Miss Trunchbull's numbers and felt that I could follow a similar style and tone with Snape's song as Minchin did with Trunchbull. I was also inspired by Scar's number in *The Lion King* (Rice & John, 1994) and Ruber's song in *Quest for Camelot* (Sager & Foster, 1998). Snape's solo includes his monologue from the book, which involves giving the class an idea of what they will learn in his class and warning them about the difficulties of potion making.

The third moment I adapted was when Harry and Ron finish knocking out the Mountain Troll that entered the school on Halloween in order to save Hermione. This moment, in addition to being an important moment for Harry, Ron, and Hermione's friendship, was almost cut from the manuscript altogether, but was ultimately saved by Rowling, who fought for the significance of this moment for both the story and the "Golden Trio" (Anelli, 2008). The importance of this scene for J.K. Rowling made it almost imperative that I explore this moment for the audience through music. I added a bit of humor and wit to this song, which, I feel, reflects the trio's dynamics and relationship with one another. This moment is only described in a few sentences in the novel, but with musical theater as my platform, it is explored in an entire song, looking at the emotions and internally thoughts of the characters that the novel readers must deduce between the lines.

After the selection of these three moments, I next wrote the libretto, or script, detailing the stage movements, characters, and lyrics that would best display the chosen scenes. Using a

standard libretto format, I transformed each scene into text (see Appendices). This script allowed me to sketch out the mental picture I had each song would playing out on stage. As described in my moment selection, the opening number involves a chorus of witches and wizards, as well as characters with only spoken lines (Mr. and Mrs. Dursley, Professor Dumbledore and McGonagall). Identifying the text to be sung assisted me in transforming the words from the novel into lyrics sung by the chorus in this scene. After completing the libretto for each scene, I began the composition stage of the adaptation.

5.2.2 Composition

For the song composition, I needed a simple score writing program to translate my ideas into a notational format. I found MuseScore 2, which was free and easy to work with, especially in working out the melodies in each number. Then, along with an electronic keyboard, I began to create the chorus melody for my song “The Boy Who Lived” (see Appendix A for libretto). The main theme of my song, and potentially the overall musical, came together quickly and determined the key and mood of my opening number (see Fig. 1).

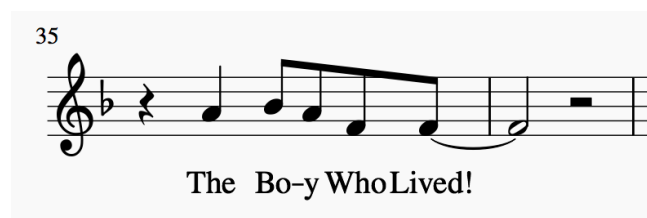


Fig. 1 – Melodic theme of *The Boy Who Lived*

I moved on from this melody to create the chorus, using this line as my inspiration. Once completed, I moved towards creating the instrumental introduction to the song. With the remarkable score created by John Williams for the films, it was hard for me not to be influenced by his magical theme. To avoid copyright issues, I made sure to alter the notes and rhythms

enough to create my own interpretation of Williams' *Harry Potter* theme (see Fig. 2). This theme precedes the opening number, firmly places its listeners into a magical state of mind as the show begins and finds its way into later sections of this particular number, likely recurring in other song selections within the entire work.



Fig. 2 – Instrumental Theme for *The Boy Who Lived*

Composing these two themes led me to piece together the rest of the first song's melody and lyrical line. Using the lyrics from the script, I wove them into my composition, until every line of text was set to music. This process took close to a week to complete. Next, I began the tedious task of writing the accompaniment played under the lyrical line I'd already composed. My limited knowledge of proper musical notation and theory made this composition process challenging, as my lyrical lines were created mostly from listening to musical phrases plucked out on a keyboard and from playing around with rhythms and melody that fit the tone and voice of the singer and the scene. In order to create a correctly-written musical score, I turned to several composers and musicians with years of music theory knowledge and training, who aided me in transforming my simple melodies into full compositions. With their assistance, my songs finally began to take shape and come closer to being complete pieces of music. For example, my composition of the opening number's chorus initially consisted of only the sung melody (see Fig. 3). But, after working with my experts, the line became truly musical (see Fig. 4).

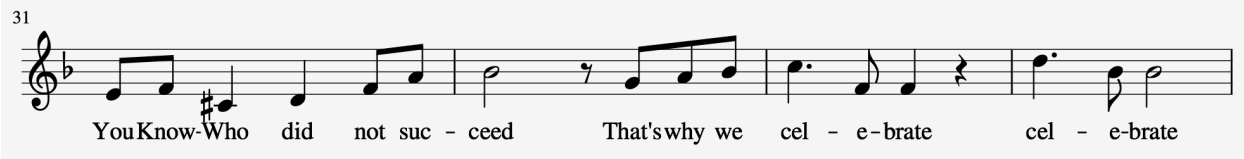


Fig. 3 – Section of lyrical chorus from *The Boy Who Lived*

Fig. 4 – Lyrical chorus with accompaniment from *The Boy Who Lived*

Using my melodies, the composers and I collaborated to create the full accompaniment and structure of my opening song. All that was left was to include the spoken dialogue, which occurs several times in the first number, and then to add musical directions, such as when to ritard (slow down), repeat, or how fast or slow to play the piece as whole. With a few appearance adjustments, the song and its score were complete.

Snape’s song, “Potions” (see Appendix B for libretto), presented an interesting challenge, as his character is not only memorable, but vital and meaningful to the series. I wanted to play on the duality of his character, as both the ruthless ex-Death Eater and the solemn mourner of the love of his life. Reflecting back on Alan Rickman’s performance in the movie adaptation, he begins his monologue to the class with a chant like line: “There will be no foolish wand waving, or silly incantations in this class” (Warner Bros, 2001). I translated this chant into musical notes, which Snape sings in my composition (see Fig. 5).

interweaved their lines throughout the song and had many of their phrases play off of each other (see Fig. 6).

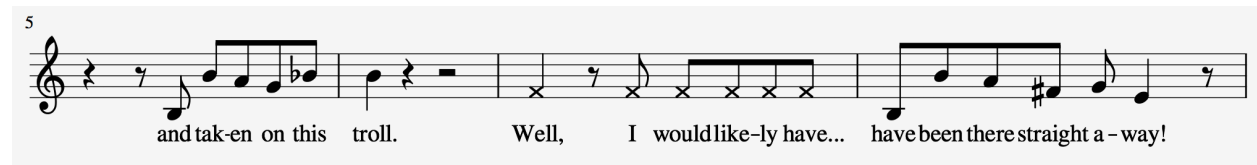


Fig. 6 – Example of Hermione, Ron, and Harry’s lines, respectively, in *Something About Mountain Trolls*

Similarly to *Matilda the Musical*, I wanted to reveal my characters not only through their words, but through the style and tone of their songs and voice. I worked to show Snape as a mysterious and slightly creepy person but wanted to reveal some of his hidden good nature briefly in his song. In the questions he asks Harry, there are some disguised references to Harry’s mom, Lily. During that moment in the song, I’ve included a small reference to Harry’s melody, which is sung in the opening number, in the accompaniment line. For avid fans of the book, they might be able to understand this moment, just as primarily scholars and musicians notice Bach’s hidden lines of foreshadowing. In the trio’s song, I aimed to represent their personalities through their vocal lines as well. Hermione has melodies with many notes, indicative of her knowledge and “know-it-all” persona. Harry as many leading lines and connects Hermione and Ron’s lines together, showing his role in their friendship. Ron’s boisterous, yet lazy demeanor plays out in the shift between short lines and longer melodies.

One of the most challenging aspects of this adaptation was staying true to the book while also creating a new experience for the audience, especially for readers of the series. I wanted most of my inspiration to come from the novels, rather than the movie adaptations, because a true adaptation is one created from an original source, and in the case of *Harry Potter*, the books come first. The purpose of an adaptation is to retell a story as accurately as possible, while

creating a new and unique experience for the audience and exploring aspects of the story and characters not shared in the original text. When adapting from a novel, it is imperative that the adaptor creates a new interpretation of the story; “difference must not be thought of as that which departs from an original” (Williams, 2013, pg. 60), but that which enhances elements that exist in the original novel or strengthen the novel’s underlying message and story arc. It can become a tedious task, choosing what to include and what to leave out – Deleuze identifies this dilemma in his text, “I’m pulled towards all of these, yet I cannot have them all, yet if I choose one it must be at the expense of the others” (Williams, 2013, pg. 62).

5.2.3 Production

The ultimate goal for this adaptation of this novel was to produce at least one scene and song in order to experience the production process and see my work performed on stage with a full cast and accompaniment. My involvement in several choirs provided me with willing and talented participants, as well as an accompanist and access to a stage. This required not only discussing logistics with my choir director, but also making sure those participating in the production had time to learn the music and practice a few times with the full chorus. I was able to give the cast their music prior to our academic break, which gave them the opportunity to practice and learn their parts before our first choral rehearsal.

I put together two rehearsals: the first was purely a choral rehearsal and the second was a full run through with staging. In the first rehearsal, I had the singers run through the vocal lines of the piece to become familiar with the transitions throughout the song. I began with the chorus, or “A section”, introducing the melody first, then adding in harmony, and finally, the accompaniment. I next went through the “B section” of the piece, where the rhythms and notes

are a bit more difficult and, as stated by myself when describing it to the singers, “funky”. After rehearsing both choral sections of the song, I had my accompanist start at the beginning of the piece and play all the way through to give the singers a better grasp of the flow of the piece as a whole. While running through the piece, selected members of the choir performed the speaking parts along with the accompaniment, incorporating the introductory scene into the opening number. The run-through concluded this first rehearsal and prepared the singers for the staged run-through the following rehearsal.

The second and final rehearsal for the opening number began with placing the singers in their beginning positions on stage, with the character parts staged where appropriate to the rest of the chorus. As the chorus had already learned the song, I began with a run through of the staging. I moved through the piece and described the emotions and movement that should be conveyed during certain moments in the piece, and also showed the speakers where their characters would need to be when it came time for their lines. Once staging was set, I had the chorus run through the whole song with acting and movements. Before I had them run it again, I needed to clarify a few moments as well as some musical lines. The song was run a few more times for accuracy, flow, and to allow me to have slight variations of the song, as would be the case of full blown performance. Having video recorded the staging of my opening number, I was able to complete and experience firsthand a significant part of the adaptation process.

5.3 Reflection and Conclusion

The process benefits primarily from my analysis of *Matilda the Musical*'s adaptation. The order of production and the considerations made during the compositional work provided

me with not only some structure, but an understanding of the length of time it truly takes to complete a successful, high-quality piece of music.

In looking forward, if I have the opportunity to create the full show, I have already chosen and visualized a few additional numbers, which I hope to bring to life one day. Harry's first song in the show will be the number when "the hero steps downstage and tells the audience about the fierce desire that will propel the plot" (Miranda & McCarter, 2016), which is to get away from the Dursley's and find out why he is different. Hagrid's retelling of Voldemort's attack on Harry would also be a meaningful moment in which music might enhance the emotions for both Hagrid and Harry. I would also be keen to provide Draco Malfoy with a song, as he is Harry's archrival at Hogwarts for the entirety of the series.

The songs I have composed and produced are works in progress towards their completed or best form. The process taught me a lot about creating a musical, creating songs that evoke emotion and motivation, crafting production numbers that propel the narrative. Any successful and Broadway-level musical goes through years and years of trial and error, additions and changes, and with a large collaborative effort. Creating and completing three songs, one of which made it all the way to the workshop stage, in a total of roughly four months is an enormous achievement, especially since I took on most of the production work (composition, lyricist, script writer, director). All in all, taking part in the adaptation process resulted in a deeper understanding of the many aspects and techniques to consider when transforming a text into song and dance.

Chapter 6 - Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

After this extensive journey through the process of the adaptation of a piece of literature for musical theatre, I return to the initial questions of my inquiry. This final chapter provides a summary of my research and discoveries in my both my analysis and process reflection. The summary explores how my line of inquiry met the goals of my thesis and the questions leading my research:

- 1) In what ways does an analysis of *Matilda the Musical* provide insight into the adaptation process?
- 2) How can these insights be applied to the adaptation of other children's novels, specifically *Harry Potter*?

My analysis of *Matilda the Musical* assists in answering the first of my research questions, while my reflection on the process involved in creating *The Boy Who Lived* guides my discussion of the second question. Along with my analysis and reflection, the work of Hutcheon, Murphy, and some theories by Deleuze provide a baseline for understanding and establishing the importance of considering how to adapt children's novels to the musical stage.

This chapter also contains the limitations of this research and concludes with considerations for studying adaptation as it relates to both children's literature and the platform of musical theatre.

6.2 Summary

I began my investigation into adaptations with an exploration of Linda Hutcheon's description of the adaptation process through her own thoughts about adaptation theory. This is

followed by a more process-oriented guide from stage adaptor Vincent Murphy. Both theoretical and experiential guides to adaptation assisted me when analyzing the process taken to transform Roald Dahl's *Matilda*, onto the stage in *Matilda the Musical*. I then use my findings from my analysis to guide my own process in transforming moments from *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* to the stage and into a musical format.

6.2.1 *Matilda* Analysis

My analysis consists of first looking at the original text and exploring it alongside the musical to see which moments were transformed by the adaptors and which were not. This close reading of both text and adaptation also involves comparing the plot and characters, as well as looking at how those elements contribute to or diminish the success of the musical adaptation and its performance. In addition to adaptation theory, I used Deleuze's theories of repetition, difference, and rhizome to explore the reasoning behind certain adaptation choices made by *Matilda's* producers.

In determining how best to transform the characters in Dahl's novel from "page to stage" (Murphy, 2013), understanding character motivations and thoughts were crucial to Minchin and Kelly as they brought the characters to life on stage. According to Murphy, "in the best literary adaptations, such a difference (in voice) creates a dramatic tension between what the character is experiencing in the present and what reflective voice would remember in looking back on climatic moments in the past" (2013, pg. 51).

One of the most important discoveries in analyzing *Matilda the Musical* is the potentially added value of transforming written text into a performable piece of theater. According to director Jonathan Miller, "most novels are irreversibly damaged by being dramatized as they

were written without any sort of performance in mind at all” (2012, pg. 36), which is a major challenge for text to stage adaptors. Minchin and Kelly aimed to bring the magic of Dahl’s words and story to the stage, giving the static text motion and action. Adaptation, in some ways, is “an argument with the book – an argument which involves emphasizing what I think is extraordinary, telling the story in the most pungent and powerful way and being prepared to make some quite dramatic alterations to the source material” (Murphy, 2013, pg. 38). Minchin and Kelly, in making changes to Dahl’s novel, were able to interpret the text in a way that suited both the musical theater structure and their intended audience.

6.2.2 The Boy Who Lived Process

Though my analysis provides me with a deeper understanding of the musical adaptation process, experiencing the process myself vastly increases my knowledge of adaptations and the considerations when translating texts to the stage.

Once I explored significant moments in *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone*, I began creating a libretto for the three scenes and songs in order to establish the lyrics and musical layout that I needed for each song. When I moved to the composition phase of the adaptation, I had several sources of inspiration in mind for each piece, such as wanting my opening number, “The Boy Who Lived” to have a similar feel to *Beauty and the Beast’s* opening song, “Belle”. These song inspirations provided me with a basis for the tempo, accompaniment, and rhythmical nuance my composition needed.

As I quickly found out, taking on all of the roles in creating a musical theater adaptation is a massive undertaking, which confirmed that most successful adaptations are collaborative. This realization forced me to reach out to experts within the musical field to assist with my

composition once I had done as much of the writing as I could manage. With their guidance, I was able to meld my melodies with a related and more elaborate accompaniment. With some additional text and musical directions, the songs and notated scores were complete.

My next task was to bring one of my compositions to life. I gathered singers and an accompanist, and with several run-throughs, we were able to sing and play my piece from start to finish. I was next able to truly bring my song to the musical stage by having the singers mark movements on the stage, while also incorporating mini-scenes along the way. We were able to successfully stage and sing “The Boy Who Lived” from start to finish, allowing me the opportunity to see my adaptation progress from idea to performance.

6.3 Implications and Further Inquiry

Adapting children’s stories to the stage is by no means a new phenomenon, but more and more children’s literature is being considered for the stage, with many of these stage adaptations evolving into musicals. With the popularity that these adaptations are creating, it seems valuable to explore the process that leads to these productions and how they transform literature so successfully.

Throughout my analysis and process experience, I found many parallels between the considerations and tasks made while adapting our respective novels. The similarities led me to create a guide for adapting children’s literature to the musical stage, which answers the second of my research questions. In a similar format to those found in Hutcheon and Murphy’s outlines, I will identify five important concepts to consider, along with support from my analysis and process.

Find a way to stream line or consolidate events and character moments into a song or montage of sorts. Especially with novels, this almost seems self-explanatory. However, songs have the benefit of allowing moments to be expanded or explored, while also giving viewers a deeper connection to the characters. *Matilda the Musical's* adaptors were able to incorporate several scenes in the novel into one song – each of Matilda's pranks on her father take place in her number "Naughty". In my own adaptation, I was able to condense the novel's first chapter into one musical number, while also setting the stage for Harry's story and world. This technique can help adaptors of novels tell a large part of the story without sacrificing critical amounts of stage time.

Consider ways to elaborate on character motivations and thoughts through song. Many novels are primarily written in only one point of view; thus, the reader only has one lens with which to understand different characters and the plot as a whole. Musicals allow adaptors to dive deeper into other perspectives and to elaborate a decision or moment for characters, other than the protagonist or narrator. Miss Trunchbull in *Matilda* is only viewed and explored through the narrator and from Matilda's perspective. However, in *Matilda the Musical*, Trunchbull shares her thoughts, emotions, and past in several different moments.

Collaboration is key. This is vital to any production, no matter one's skill level or expertise. I learned this the hard way, as my skills in composition are amateur and my piano playing skills even more limited. Even if you are knowledgeable about music theory and other aspects of theater, having a team with specialized skills eases the process and strengthens the adaptation and the production. Though the music and lyrics were done by Tim Minchin, he collaborated

with David Kelly in order to create a full script and story. In addition to working together, they also had many other people helping with many other aspects of the production, such as the choreography, direction, lighting, and other technical work.

Consider the adaptation's young audience, possibly making minor changes to certain elements to make them more engaging. Simple changes in a character's traits or a shift in a particular scene can transform the text into something more interesting and captivating for young audiences. An excellent example of this is in *Matilda the Musical*, in which Mrs. Wormwood's daytime activities change from book to stage, from playing bingo all day to spending every spare moment ballroom dancing. Not only did this change create a bit more interest in Mrs. Wormwood's character, but also allowed the adaptors to incorporate a dance number to accompany her song.

Choose a book or story that you yourself are passionate about. Murphy made this clear when describing the early stages of transforming a book into a stage performance. The more meaningful a piece of work is to you, the stronger your interpretations of the original text will be as you shift them to the visual medium. In the introduction of the audiobook for *A Wrinkle in Time*, the director of the movie adaptation, Ava DuVernay, describes the importance and impact Madeline L'Engle's book had on her as a child, including her sense of connection to its main character, Meg. Without her personal passion for the story, the movie may have not evolved into an adaptation that explored what she loved about the novel.

An aspect of theater directed at children is the educational benefits that the visual form of literature can provide for students in and out of the classroom. Though my thesis is focused on the process, the way theater can improve literacy and comprehension should not go unnoticed or without recognition. With *Hamilton* (2015) as a model, the opportunity to adapt educational content to the musical stage has the potential to be rewarding for students who struggle with comprehension or learn best using multimodal approaches. I am encouraged to explore the educational benefits of musical adaptations and multimodal responses to learning that involve theater as a further line of inquiry.

6.4 Limitations

I acknowledged some limitations in my analysis, noting that the lack of deeper insight into the adaptation process, as well as my choice of a particular adaptation theorist's views restrict my analysis' exploration of the process and its merits. Within my own adaptation process, the main limitation was and is my limited knowledge of music theory and novice piano skills. This is in addition to my own attempt to complete all aspects of the adaptation explicitly on my own, without significant collaboration. I also had a limited time frame in which to complete my songs, leading to compositions that are works in progress needing further refinement.

As to the study as a whole, there are three clear limits in the research and scope of this thesis. The first is the lack of resources and research available on adaptations of children's literature, and even fewer on adaptations to the stage. Though Hutcheon and Murphy's texts assisted in understanding adaptation and its relationship to the stage or other media, these primary texts focus on adult literature for a primarily adult audience.

Another limitation is the general nature of adaptation, that is, the fact that the process of adaptation varies by person, format, and type of adaptation, which makes it difficult to lock down a specific guide for the process. My own guide to the process as it relates to children's literature adaptations is limited as well, though I've attempted to narrow the process down to a few requirements.

Lastly, since I only look at one musical adaptation in my analysis, my perspective on adaptations for children is limited to only what I discovered when looking at *Matilda the Musical* and not how other musical adaptations have handled and approached the process.

6.5 Concluding Thoughts

In examining adaptations of children's novels, I wonder what form adaptations of this type of literature should take to resonate best with both its readers and audience. It seems that the original text, as well as movie adaptations, are the most accessible, especially to young readers and audiences. But, as I indicate in my literature review, live performances seem to bring their viewers closer to both the action and the characters being portrayed. Can theater bring a text to life more effectively than other visual forms? Additionally, can music transform all texts for children in a way other formats can't? How important is it for children and youth to be involved in the adaptation process? Can their involvement in the process benefit them more than viewing an adaptation? Many aspects of adaptation and young readers should be explored, especially in a world where production and creativity are being valued even more. But, even with a lack of investigation into musical adaptations of children's novels, it is clear that the musical transformation of a story can be a magical one for young and old audiences alike.

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Appendices

Appendix A – “The Boy Who Lived” Libretto

Song – The Boy Who Lived

Music Begins.

EXT. The Dursley’s House

In the heart of Little Winging, Mr. Dursley is leaving the house, about to close the door.

WIZARD

Mr. and Mrs. Dursley, of Number 4
Privet Drive, were happy to say that
they were perfectly normal...

MR. DURSLEY

Thank you very much!

Mr. Dursley closes door, cueing spotlight to shut off.

WIZARD

They were the last people you’d expect
to be involved in anything strange or
mysterious.

EXT. London Street

At same time, lights appear on rest of stage and reveal a Muggle London Street. Enter Mr. Dursley, among muggles and wizards alike, walking along the street.

CHORUS

(quietly spoken, growing louder)
Did you hear? The boy lived! He-who-
must-not-be-named is dead and gone!
Harry, Harry Potter! He lives!

Mr. Dursley looks around, swatting at owls as they fly by.

MR. DURSLEY

What’s with all these blasted owls?

Wizard blocks Mr. Dursley’s path

WIZARD

G'day sir!

MR. DURSLEY

Get out of my way!

WIZARD

Even a muggle like yourself should be celebrating!

Mr. Dursley grunts and moves quickly off stage.

CHORUS

(Dancing through the Muggles)

Though only a Baby, He somehow
survived!
His mother's love endured.
You-Know-Who did not succeed,
That's why we celebrate, celebrate!
The Boy Who Lived!

It was the darkest of times.
The Dark Lord and his Death Eaters
Were terrorizing and murdering,
With nowhere to turn or hide.

WITCH

Nobody to trust,
And my family at risk.

WIZARD

We were all at You-Know-Who's mercy,
Unable to even save the Muggles.

WITCH & WIZARD

But, luck was on our side that fateful
day!

CHORUS

After years of terror, panic,
And confusion,
Little Harry saved the day,
And You-Know-Who is no more!

The figures of Dumbledore and McGonagall appear. Hagrid on a motorbike rides onto the stage, handing a bundle to Dumbledore. Dumbledore and McGonagall walk to the house and place the bundle and letter on the porch.

MCGONAGALL

These are the worst sort of people imaginable, Dumbledore. They aren't like us, they won't understand. He'll be famous; every child in our world will know his name.

DUMBLEDORE

It's best that he grow up away from all of that. (beat) Good luck, Harry.

All three figures exit.

CHORUS

(Resumes dancing on the streets,
Muggles are gone)

Though only a Baby, He somehow
survived!
His mother's love endured.
You-Know-Who did not succeed,
That's why we celebrate, celebrate!
The Boy Who Lived!

Lights come up on the Dursley's house and show Mrs. Dursley opening the door to put out milk bottles, when she notices Harry.

MRS. DURSLEY
(shouts/screams)
Vernon!

Appendix B – “Potions” Libretto

Song – Potions

INT. Dungeon classroom.

Hogwarts students are sitting at a variety of tables, talking amongst themselves.

Music Begins.

Snape enters the room in a stealthy way, closing the door, which cues pause of music.

Snape

Settle down, boys and girls,
Settle down now.
No foolish wand waving
Or silly incantations in my class.
You first years have a lot to learn.

I don't expect you'll really understand
The beauty of the softly simmering cauldron
With its shimmering fumes.

I can teach you how to bewitch the mind
And ensnare the senses,
I can teach you how to bottle fame and
Brew glory,
And even put a stopper in death.

If you aren't as big a bunch of dunderheads
As I usually have to teach,
You might just learn a thing or two.
If you settle down,
And appreciate the exact art that is potion making.

Now, let's see here.
Ah, Harry Potter,
The famous Harry Potter.
Our new celebrity.
(Slytherins: HA HA)

Tell me, Potter
What would I get if I added powdered root of asphodel to an
infusion of wormwood?

(Harry: Uhh)
No, let's try again,
Where would you look to find a bezoar?
(Harry: A bez-what?)
(Hermione: A bezoar)
Tut, tut, tut.
Clearly, fame isn't everything.

One more try,
What's the difference, Potter,
Between monkshood and wolfsbane?
(Harry: I don't know, sir, but Hermione sure does)

Well, for your information, Potter,
(Spoken)
Asphodel and wormwood makes the Draught of Living Death.
A bezoar is a stone found in the stomach of a goat that will
save you from most potions.
Monkshood and wolfsbane are the same plant, aconite.

(Couple bars of silence/quiet riff)

Well? Why aren't you all copying that down?

You seem to be as big a bunch of dunderheads
As I usually have to teach,
Let's hope you learn a thing or two.
Now, settle down, boys and girls
And appreciate the art of potion making.

Appendix C – “Something About Mountain Trolls” Libretto

Song – Something About Fighting Mountain Trolls

INT. Dungeon Girl’s Bathroom

Harry, Ron, and Hermione have just knocked out the troll.

RON

Bloody hell! Can’t believe that worked!

HERMIONE

Is it dead, Harry?

HARRY

I don’t think so, just knocked out.

Music begins.

The trio looked at each other, relieved and flabbergasted.

HERMIONE

I am quite sure I’d be dead right now...

HARRY & RON

Most sure.

HERMIONE

If you two hadn’t come and taken on this troll.

RON

Well, I would likely have...

HARRY

Have been there straight away.

RON

Right! We are glad you are safe,
Glad the troll didn't...

HARRY

Glad we got here in time!

HERMIONE

Glad you didn't lose your wits!

RON

Well...

HARRY & HERMIONE

Of course, you didn't!

RON

You're right!
Who knew that Wingardium Leviosa
Would save the day!
Swish and flick!

HERMIONE

Swish and flick!

HERMIONE & RON

Swish and flick!

ALL

Who knew that defeating a mountain troll,
Would be what brought us together.

HERMIONE

With a little bit of knowledge

HARRY

A little bit of nerve

RON

And sheer dumb luck

ALL

We made the school safe once more!

HERMIONE

If only I hadn't come here

HARRY

This is not your fault

RON

Well...

HARRY

You didn't bring the troll here

HERMIONE

That's very true, but still

RON

Lucky we were here to save you,

HARRY

To help you conquer the troll.

HARRY & RON

Cause that's what friends are for!

HERMIONE

Friends are for!

ALL

Who knew that defeating a mountain troll,
Would be what brought us together.

HERMIONE

With a little bit of knowledge

HARRY

A little bit of nerve

RON

And sheer dumb luck

ALL

We made the school safe once more!

Safe once...

(Troll grumbles/snores)

(quietly) more!