SHOW GUIDE

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Congratulations! You are about to embark on journey into the theatrical unknown: a World Premiere! What does that mean? It means this production is the first time *Hudson* has ever been fully produced. Before we get into the true history of the real guy, let's take a moment to get to know the creative process that led to this untrue story about a very real person.

**WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO WRITE ABOUT HENRY HUDSON?**

I read somewhere that he, his son, and a few sailors were put on a boat and sent off into Hudson’s Bay and that no one knows what happened to them. It just seemed so ironic to me that the guy who we named so many places after just disappeared off the face of the earth; just vanished into history. Then I started to wonder if the fact that we don’t know what happened is the reason we named so much for him. Perhaps it was our need to finish the story, our impulse for history that compelled us give his name to the water that took his life and so much else. That was the starting point for the story I wanted to tell and the question I wanted to ask.

**CAN YOU TALK TO US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT THE DECISION TO MAKE THIS A MUSICAL AND HOW THE WRITING PROCESS WORKED?**

I was on tour with *Matilda! The Musical* when my writing partner Danny Tieger and I discovered our mutual fascination with the story of Hudson, so we were living in a musical storytelling universe when we started the writing process. Danny and I both collaborated on the story and then we wrote the dialog and the music independently. It was a highly collaborative process and we have always worked very closely with one another throughout the 5 year journey to this point.

Our first foray into research was a Canadian Broadcasting Company educational video dramatizing the mutiny of 1611 and it was so goofy in its attempt to be authentic that we kind of latched on to that as a part of the story. For example, every time a character brings up an "old sailors song" or any nautical protocol, it’s entirely made-up and a transparent attempt by the character to manipulate the other people stuck on the boat with them.

So much of the story is centered around the distance between what is true and what is lasting. So Danny and I felt very free to be creative with how the characters and the story assert truth.

**THIS IS A WORLD PREMIERE! HOW LONG DID THE SHOW TAKE TO GET TO THIS POINT? HAS THE FINAL SCRIPT CHANGED MUCH FROM THAT TIME?**

We started writing it in 2014. It has had 5 staged readings including at Steppenwolf in Chicago and the Utah Shakespeare Festival. It is currently in its 7th draft and has had a lot of changes in music and dialogue throughout that time. The basic story has never changed, how we tell the story however, has changed quite a lot.

**ANYTHING ELSE YOU’D LIKE US TO KNOW?**

This is not a true story. It is a story based on a story based on history. The subtitle of the play is "A Comedy About the Tragedy of History." People casually invoke the name "Hudson" everyday, having no idea who he was or what ultimately ended up happening to him. The play is a question about how we tell stories and about the lengths to which humans will go to preserve their own version of the truth no matter what the sacrifice.
**HENRY HUDSON**
Renowned navigator who has recently lost command of his ship Discovery in a mutiny. His biggest fan is himself. He never is at a loss for words. He's kind of a big deal.

**JOHN HUDSON**
Henry's son and the ship's boy or lowest ranking officer. He wants to please his father, but he's really not sure of anything.

**YON**
An intimidating Dutch sailor. He was the catalyst for the mutiny on the Discovery. Though an excellent sailor, he is a known liar.

**WOODHOUSE**
Yon's younger sibling. Mostly ignored, Woodhouse wants to stand up to Yon but can't quite find the courage; the smartest person on the boat.

**A BODY**
A member of the small crew thrown onto the boat from the mutiny. Though dead, the Body is not gone

**MENTIONED BUT NOT SEEN:**
*We never see or hear from these guys, but they're important to the story*

**THOMAS GREENE**
The guy who took over as captain of the Discovery after the mutiny.

**FERDINAND MAGELLAN**
Portuguese navigator who led the first successful attempt to circumnavigate the world.

**SIR FRANCIS DRAKE**
Second person to ever sail all the way around the world; Queen Elizabeth I knighted him for it.

**CHRISTOPHER COLOMBUS**
Italian navigator who accidentally stumbled upon America while looking for a route from Europe to Asia in the West.
The full title of the play is *Hudson: A Comedy about the Tragedy of History*. Yes this is a comedy, a musical and is completely untrue. The fact is there are no records of what happened to Henry and the small crew after the mutiny aboard his ship, Discovery, in 1611. This story takes off into the unknown much like the fated navigator himself. Based on a very true story, this play explores one possible path this story could have gone. What really happened? Your guess is as good as ours!

**NOTES ON THE SUMMARY**

Of COURSE I'm not about to give away any of the good stuff, just the broad strokes of the story. Musical numbers are noted in **(bold)**.

**ACT 1**

The one thing we DO know about the fate of this crew: nobody makes it out alive. Our story begins with a body being buried at sea (**Bury Me In the Open Water**). We then meet Henry Hudson and his son John who is beginning to have sincere doubts in his father's abilities. Hudson reassures his son (**What Does a Hudson Know?**) Next we are introduced to the large Dutch sailor, Yon, and his younger, smaller brother, Woodhouse. A dispute erupts over who is better equipped to captain the boat: Yon or Hudson. Yon wins by majority vote. As Hudson protests, Yon shares information he gathered from the Discovery before the mutiny and then mixes up the ranks upsetting Woodhouse and Hudson even more. Yon teaches his new first mate, John, the ropes (**God Gave Us the Song**). Hudson grows jealous as Yon and John begin to connect. Hudson tries to get some intel on the new "captain" from John, who is not helpful at first, but then has a change of heart and agrees to report Yon's actions to his dad. He tries and it does not go as planned. John finds himself at a crossroad and is unsure what path to take. With no one else to talk to, John connects with Woodhouse. He tells John details about the mutiny and the two decide to share secrets. Woodhouse's secret is a doozy. The two look to the future (**We Are All That We Need Now**). The next morning, Yon reveals to Woodhouse some stark truths. At breakfast Yon and Hudson come to an understanding and Yon reveals his plan of action: set sail to seek revenge on the Discovery (**I Sing to the Wind**).

**ACT 2**

We are reminded again the fate of the crew as the body from Act 1 briefly visits (**Dragging Me Away**). Woodhouse awakens to devastating news that spreads to the rest of the crew as they wake up. Naturally, everyone begins to freak out and as tensions rise, confusion ends up revealing a secret. A fight ensues and Yon ends up overboard (**I've Seen Stormier Seas**). Hudson reveals some difficult news to John, and John remains loyal to his father. John then goes to check on Woodhouse. He discovers that Woodhouse has made some big decisions (**When We Build New Amsterdam**). John confronts Hudson again and he learns that the two of them have very different ideas as to the best course of action, yet the story ultimately ends with hope (**The Son Will Rise In the West**).

**HOLD ON!**

Notice any nods to Shakespeare in the text? They're in there! Of course they are...Shakespeare is in our name.
THE LEGENDARY LIFE OF HENRY HUDSON

HAPPY BIRTHDAY HUDSON!

Records didn't used to be as detailed as they are now. No one is exactly sure when or where Hudson was born. Scholars are pretty sure he was born in the 1560s somewhere in England, possibly a town just outside of London called Hodderson.

THE HUDSON FAMILY

Though not much is known about Hudson before he began his voyages in 1607, historians know he married a woman named Katherine and they had three sons: Richard, Oliver, and John. Katherine petitioned for rescue missions after John and Henry did not return home on Discovery. Richard was one of the first Europeans allowed to live in Imperial Japan.


Both located in Canada, the Hudson Bay is the second largest bay in the world; the Strait connects the Bay to the Atlantic Ocean. Hudson travelled both of these waters during his final voyage.

315 miles long, the Hudson River flows from Henderson Lake in upstate New York and ends in the Upper New York Bay in New York City.

The Henry Hudson Bridge connects Manhattan and the Bronx. It opened in 1936. Hudson dropped anchor in this area in 1609.

Discovered in Ottawa in 1959, this stone is engraved "HH Captive 1611" leading some to believe this was evidence Hudson landed and was taken captive after the mutiny. "oh, and he's also the namesake of Hudson's Bay Company- the oldest retailer in North America!"

"EVEN OLD NEW YORK WAS ONCE NEW AMSTERDAM!"

And we can partly thank Henry Hudson for these song lyrics. His third voyage was under the Dutch flag and this was the voyage that took him through the Hudson River area. This gave the Netherlands claim to the land. As the Dutch people began populating the area in the 1620s, they established the capital as New Amsterdam after their native capital. During the 1660s war broke out between the Dutch and the English and by the 1670s, the English successfully took claim of the area and renamed it New York.

A FRIGID FIRST

During his final voyage, Hudson and his crew were forced to spend the winter in Canada due to icy water. Though this was ultimately the breaking point that led to mutiny, this also marked the first time Europeans spent a winter in Canada.

HE SAW A MERMAID!

Don't believe me? Below is the account he wrote in his logbook in 1608 during his second attempt to cross the Northwest Passage. The sighting happened somewhere around Norway. You can read his entire logbook thanks to archive.org:

"This morning, one of our company looking overboard saw a mermaid, and calling up some of the company to see her, one more came up and by that time she was close to the ship's side looking earnestly upon the men. A little after, a sea came up and overturned her. From the navel upward, her back and breasts were like a woman's, her body as big as one of us; her skin very white, with long black hair hanging down her back. When the mermaid finally went down under the waves, her tail was observed, which was like that of a porpoise and speckled like a mackerel."

WANT TO READ MORE? GO TO: archive.org/stream/henryhudsonnavig27ashe/henryhudsonnavig27ashe_djvu.txt
How is it possible to fail yet succeed? Hudson was a navigator in search of a faster trading route to Asia (a.k.a. The Northwest Passage). He made four attempts and failed to complete his mission every time. BUT he also braved treacherously icy waters, never lost his way, made beneficial discoveries of which were noted in great detail for future navigators to follow, and always returned home with a full crew in tact...well except for that one time when he was never seen again; some might call those great successes! Even though his voyages were technically unsuccessful, Hudson is considered as one of the greatest explorers to have ever lived.

Here is a brief breakdown of his four voyages and what he discovered along the way:

**ONE**

**DATE:**
May–Sept. 1607

**FINANCER:**
Muscovy Company

**COUNTRY:**
England

**MISSION:**
Find a northern passage to Asia

The crew hit treacherous waters off the coast of Greenland and had to turn back. These waters are still very difficult to navigate today, but he managed to map new parts of Greenland, discovered a few islands and a new hunting site for whales...which was terrible for the whale population.

**DATE:**
April–August 1608

**FINANCER:**
Muscovy Company

**COUNTRY:**
England

**MISSION:**
Find a northeastern passage to Asia

This time heading east, the crew discovered the waters to be even more icy than the path to the west. Hudson tries to head West again, but his crew stops him. They see a mermaid on this voyage!

**DATE:**
April–November 1609

**FINANCER:**
Dutch East Indian Company

**COUNTRY:**
Netherlands

**MISSION:**
Find a northeastern passage to Asia

After two failed attempts, no one in England would sponsor him, so Hudson was picked up by the Dutch and tasked again with finding passage from the northeast. Hudson set off only to discover even worse conditions, so he turned his crew west. They navigate the Hudson River area before sailing back to England where he was forbidden to continue working for the Dutch.

**DATE:**
April–? 1610–1611

**FINANCER:**
Virginia Company

**COUNTRY:**
England

**MISSION:**
Find the Northwest Passage

His final voyage, determined to find the Northwest Passage, Hudson eventually pushes his crew to their breaking point causing mutiny. Before that happens, he navigates the Hudson Strait and Bay.

### The Age of Discovery

Lasting from roughly the 14th century through the mid 17th century (1300s-1600s), The Age of Discovery is the point in history considered to be the beginning of globalization. Overseas explorations became all the rage and this led to nations racing to discover the best land and trade routes. Though the people of The Old World (Europe, Asia, Africa) saw this point in time as both exciting and a battle to stake claim to the best lands, The New World people of the Americas and Australia saw this time as an inundation of invasions from the outside world.
Why does this musical matter? It gives audiences the opportunity to discuss human nature and reflect upon the world around us. Though this story is an untrue story based on very true events this musical allows us the opportunity to grow and share. Below are thoughts from *Hudson* director Betsy Mugavero paired with some questions to help facilitate a conversation with your group.

1. "The initial themes that come to mind are legacy, fame and how individuals become obsessed with fame, and that ultimately translates into our fear of dying. Hudson would rather die out on the ocean, go down in infamy and be remembered, then go back to England as a failure. This relates to our time. YouTube stars putting fame before their children’s right to dignity (countless news stories about this if you Google!), the price of fame on our family and friends (again, stories of influencer feuds, etc.)..."
   
   Have you ever made a questionable choice in the quest to gain popularity?

2. "After the last read I had, I thought of how many bodies of water, buildings, companies, coffee shops, etc. are named after Hudson...he wasn’t even particularly good at his job as an explorer, nor did he discover anything prominent. His greatest achievement is helping establish water ways in North America that lead to Dutch settlement which lead to fur trade, etc. THAT ALSO lead to (...) all of the tragedy that unfolds in those personal tales of colonization. A domino effect of globalization..."
   
   Globalization has caused great tragedy and beautiful blending of cultures throughout history. What are things in your life you can attribute to a well known person (like apparel) or another culture (like Anime)?

3. "...after his four rather unsuccessful voyages, he goes down in infamy. I compare it to Elizabeth Holmes, the founder of Theranos [a blood testing start-up that made false claims about its product]...if she were to suddenly disappear, would we name buildings after her? Name coffee shops after her? Putting it in modern context with an infamous person helps to place it emotionally for me."
   
   Can you think of anyone today who is better known for his or her misdeeds than achievements yet still loved and respected? What about those who lose their fame? How do you choose which is correct? Is either?

4. "The play is also about family/legacy in regards to what our children carry on for us after we leave this life. John Hudson has mythology surrounding him and his survival that I find fascinating. The character in the play is one of the only characters who develops his morals as the story carries on and his character is the only one not to give up on living. It’s my hope as a parent to provide a world for my child where he feels he can prosper in LIFE, where there’s always a current to catch to bring you to a new destination. The word "destiny" is in "destination."
   
   What is your hope for the future? Who inspires you to reach that destination?"