

**ERIC
MATTHEW
RICHARDSON'S
YEARBOOK**

An Annual Zine

↑
(FOR NOW)

2023

TO MY FRIEND AND/OR ASSOCIATE,

AT SOME POINT IN THE LAST DECADE, EVERYBODY STARTED TO EMAIL ME THEIR PERSONAL NEWSLETTERS. I'M NOT SURE WHEN YOU ALL DECIDED TO DO THAT — I SIMPLY WAS NOT INFORMED ABOUT THIS NEW CUSTOM. AND DO I READ THEM? NO! IT SIMPLY GOES INTO THE DIGITAL TRASH WITH ALL MY OTHER DIGITAL ALERTS TO DIE A QUICK DIGITAL DEATH. SANDWICHED BETWEEN A 30% OFF CVS COUPON AND SEVENTEEN URGENT FUNDRAISING PLEAS FROM JOE BIDEN.

BUT WHAT IF THERE WAS ANOTHER WAY?

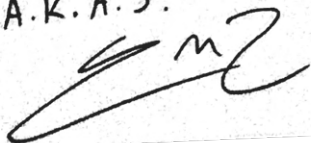
THAT'S RIGHT, YOU'RE HOLDING THE FIRST EDITION OF ERIC MATTHEW RICHARDSON'S YEARBOOK:
AN ANNUAL ZINE

(IT'S THE ONLY NEWSLETTER SENT TO YOU IN THE SAME MANNER AS COURT SUMMONS: VIA THE USPS)

ZINES HAVE SOME KIND OF RICH CULTURAL HISTORY THAT I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT. BUT WHAT I DO KNOW IS THAT THEY'RE COOL. THEY'RE ALSO LOW TECH AND DIY WHICH IS THE KIND OF LIFESTYLE WE SHOULD ALL START LOOKING INTO MORE (RIP TED 1942-2023)*

I'VE PACKED THIS PUPPY WITH A TON OF STUFF FOR YOU. WAY MORE THAN WHAT'S NECESSARY FOR A PERSONAL NEWSLETTER, PERHAPS EVEN TILTING TOWARDS DELUSIONAL. DO WHATEVER YOU WANT WITH IT! HANG IT ON YOUR FRIDGE! USE IT AS A NAPKIN! IT'S ALL YOURS, BABY.

H.A.K.A.S.



*REST IN PEACE,
HE WAS A BAD GUY

A COMMENCEMENT SPEECH

FROM

CLASS PRESIDENT

*MORE LIKE...
ASS RESIDENT*

???

*WHAT A
DORK!*



DWEEB

**ERIC
MATTHEW
RICHARDSON**

BLAH
BLAH
BLAH

Webster's Dictionary defines "emerging" as "newly formed or prominent." Well, I've been an emerging writer for 7 years now, and boy, do I feel newly formed! After the rebuilding seasons of 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, and now 2023, it's safe to say that 2024 is going to be My Year. I've put in some solid hours at the musical gym, focusing on the fundamentals. My free throws. I should be a lock-in for the playoffs! Or at least a Jeff Award, which I only recently discovered that you have to PAY to attend. \$100! I'll just buy my own trophy at that point.

I think the hardest part about writing musical theatre is getting the theatre part to happen. I've got the musical part down, just not much to show for it. I don't post online much. I don't really talk about projects until they're ready. And getting things produced is harder than ever.

SHUT UP!

But I've been a busy little bee. I rise early to sow my musical seeds in the fertile soil of the empty page, wiping the metaphorical sweat from my literal brow. But I do this to feed you, dear classmates, on the fruits of my labor. Delicious farm-to-table musical theatre, hand-crafted just as the pioneer artisans before us. Pure, organic, grass-fed storytelling.

So let us reflect upon this year's bountiful harvest. Take a look at what our graduating class will be serving in the future...

SNORE...



↑
ME AS A
STUDENT

STUDENT BIOGRAPHIES

HERE'S SOME OF THE MUSICALS
THAT I'M SUPPOSEDLY
WORKING ON (WHEN I'M
REALLY JUST PLAYING
VIDEO GAMES)

Old Winds Blow

ei hytte

THIS IS NORSK
FOR "the Cabin"

My latest full-length musical, and one that I approached with a limited palette. One act. Two characters. All a cappella. It's a real experiment in doing a lot with a little and I think it's turning out great so far. It's a show designed with Chicago in mind. Intimate, intense, and most importantly, cheap. An artistic risk, but not a financial one. (Tell that to your producer friends. Seriously! I need one!)

It's an emotionally complex show with a simple premise: two strangers get snowed in at a remote Norwegian cabin. There's a true crime element. There's a chorus of Valkyries. There's absolutely NO kissing. It's going to be cool as hell! Or at least as cool as musical theatre can be. For more on that thought, check out the Anti-Blog.

This summer, I had the rare experience of coming out of a reading without feeling totally deflated. Usually, I get pretty self-conscious and self-critical after a test-run, but this one only gave me a mild case of embarrassment. And a huge thank you to Arik Vega, Sarah Lo, and Ashlyn Lozano for helping me with the workshop. They are all incredible actors who are far too incredible to be working with me! Hire them!

I'm going to do something with ei hytte in the next year. Who knows what form that takes, but it's a malleable show. Could be a full-scale production, could be a reading in my apartment.

Let's find out!

THIS IS
THE TITLE

↓
ei hytte

THIS IS
THE CABIN



CUE
ED: I
Um...
on alri

OOPS,
LONG
TITLE

Down and Out in Rocky Heights

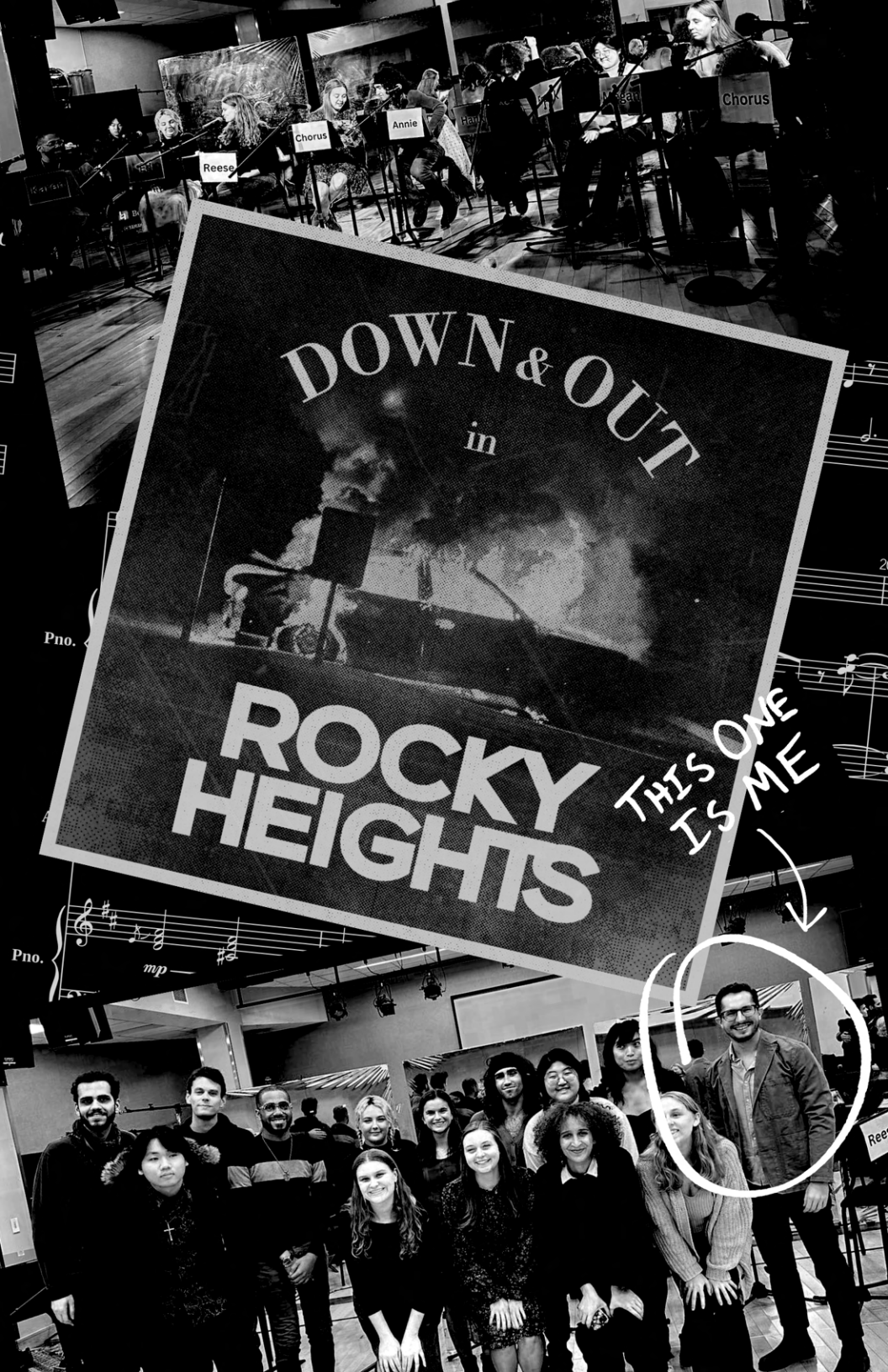
This December, I flew to Boston to see the first reading of *Down and Out in Rocky Heights* at Berklee College of Music. It's a bastardization of *Antigone* set in Ohio during the Great Recession --- a time when the Gen Z cast performing it was just about to enter kindergarten. That doesn't sound right, but it's true. And they did incredible work! It's a weird out-of-body feeling to hear your words interpreted through the lens of another generation's life experience. A good experience. A helpful and encouraging experience.

I finished the first draft sometime in the spring of 2020, and guess what else happened around then? Whoops! Look, we all have a story like that. And it was a gift, in a way. I was able to spend more time refining the show. Cutting here, reshaping there.

It's in a real solid spot now. It was a semi-finalist for the O'Neill, it got me into many second rounds for development opportunities, and now, Berklee. I even played a song from it for an open mic at KGB Bar in NYC (I was drunk, and people there seemed to dig it (they were also drunk and relieved it wasn't another 15-minute poetry reading)). I know there's something there, you know? Something that's worth keeping off the shelf for a bit longer.

HUMBLE BRAG!

Musical theatre development is a long and slow process, but at least I got this one pointing in the right direction. Glad to see it getting a little love in the waning days of 2023 and i'm looking forward to what's next.



DOWN & OUT
in

ROCKY
HEIGHTS

THIS ONE
IS ME



Pno.

Pno.

mp

Chorus

Annie

Reese

Ree

The Future*

I have a few ideas percolating for my next musical project and am hoping to find some space (and time) to pursue them. One involves professional wrestling and is intended for adults. Another involves two horrible orphans and is intended for da yoots, but is secretly for adults. Both will kick ass. Though it's possible that I'll just take the year to revisit and refine some previous work. Stare deep into the abyss of who I thought I was back then and reshape it into who I think I am now. A horrifying prospect.

I'd also like to create some sort of follow-up to The LEA Project (still available for free at leaproject.dev now and forever or until I die and my credit card payments can't maintain the website any longer). Not so much related in subject, but related in spirit. Scrappy. DIY. I enjoyed the process of breaking down the project into manageable chunks and learning how to build it. I don't know what exactly this project will be, but I'm thinking it will be small scale, weird, and of course, free.

Someday, we'll return to the weirdness of the old internet. The days when you'd stumble upon someone's strange little curated corner of the web. Maybe it was a site dedicated to a single bathroom at Disneyland, maybe it was a collection of absurdist Flash cartoons about an athlete that talks like Elmer Fudd, or maybe it was a fully interactive, award-winning, choose-your-own-adventure musical that you can play for free in your browser right now (available only at leaproject.dev)

IT'S FREE!
SO YOU KNOW
YOU'LL GET YOUR
MONEY'S WORTH

*SUBJECT TO CHANGE

IMAGINE THIS
BUT THEY
ALSO
SING?

LALALA!

DAMN, I WOULD PAY
AT LEAST \$
TO SEE THIS!

AAWRESTLING.COM



CAT CORNER

Donald "Ducky" Duck

SHE'S A
GIRL, FYI



CAT WITH
A PEARL
EARRING

WORKING MOTHER

AND

GIFTED VOCALIST

IS THIS "YEARBOOK"
PREMISE WEARING
A LITTLE THIN???

CLUB REPORTS

A COLLECTION OF MY
~~NON-MUSICAL~~
UPDATES!

Anti-Blog

NEXT YEAR,
I WILL LEARN
HOW TO DRAW!



From Editor in Chief,
ERIC MATTHEW RICHARDSON

What a year it's been for our beloved school paper, The Anti-Blog, which launched back in January. I started this publication as a sort of grab-bag essay collection and podcast appearance repository. We've covered a lot of hot-button issues. Musical theatre. Clothing consumption. Karl Marx. Fugazi. Everything that our student body needs to remain informed and educated.

Check it out if you want at
AntiBlog.EricMatthewRichardson.com

Here's a few snippets from our most widely circulated issues, which reached nearly a dozen readers, probably.

Play It Cool

Can Musical Theatre Be Anything But Square?

My honest opinion is that musical theatre simply cannot be cool. It's an impossible goal for such a rigid medium. So what are we to do? Resign ourselves to a lifetime of making more corny work to reflect our equally corny times? Give in to the relentless waves of ennui with each new IP-tinged Broadway announcement? Of course not.

But maybe all this is happening because of our society's obsession with coolness. That our constant chase of rabid teenage fanbases and surface-level cultural relevancy is hindering our ability to think long term. To build something with a longer shelf life. To carefully consider something beyond our current moment.

Punk Theatre

Or, Doing it Ourselves

The idea is this: every artist, creator, tech, or other collaborator gets an equal vote in the ensemble's decisions and, more importantly, an equal cut of the profits. It's that simple. Ideally, administrative positions would be voted on regularly. These are not lifetime positions and should not be seen as a governing body. Perhaps they only last a season. Perhaps only one production. They do not exist to dictate choices for the group, but rather to act a representative of its collective interest. This means that artistic and financial direction would belong to the ensemble as a whole. It's direct democracy in action. It's workers owning the means of their production. In other words, we're all artistic directors. our current moment.

Das Kapitaljahr

Slow Reading 2022

This opened up a new line of questioning: how do we judge the moral failings of the past? Even the lowliest peasant -- fully adhering to the moral codes, laws, and norms of a medieval society -- could be seen as wholly immoral today. Society synthesized into a new form, which synthesized into a new form, etc, etc. And how should we judge ourselves? How can we live under the moral codes of the future if we don't have the information to understand what that might be?

We are only given the information of the time we're in. We can only live as morally as our times allow. I cannot expect the societies of the past to live up to my standards, and I cannot expect myself to live up to the standards of the future.

Art Club



From Art Club Senior Officer,
ERIC MATTHEW RICHARDSON

In the late spring of this year, a brilliant illustrator totaled his car. This was terrible news for him, but incredible news for me. In order to help pay for his new car, he announced that he was open for commissions. The speed at which I was up in his DMs was rivaled only by the horniest of Reply Guys --- a statement that will surely not sound ridiculously dated in about 5 years.

Nathan J Anderson's work is very comforting to me. His style is somewhere between old-school Moebius, Mike Mignola, and maybe even a little Don Bluth. I discovered him through his literary concept art, designing characters from classic science fiction like *Neuromancer*, *Dune*, and one of my new favorites, *The Book of the New Sun*. He also does some incredible author portraits in a looser style, and that's what gave me a neat little idea.

For some reason, writers keep getting headshots. I keep getting headshots. Not once have I been asked for my headshot. Most of what I do happens offstage, often many months or years prior to what the audience experiences. They don't really care what I look like. So why should I keep paying for headshots I'll never use? Why stress about what color shirt I should wear to offset my pasty complexion? why should I subject some poor photographer to painting out my adult acne?

No more, my friends. Illustrations are cooler.

Check out Nathan's work at NathanAndersonArt.com



CAT CORNER

Coco the Cat



SHE MOVED
TOO FAST



THE MAGIC
TOOTH

HBIC

AND

DENTAL WONDER

CAN YOU BELIEVE
THAT THEY STILL
DO SUPERLATIVES?

TIN FOIL HAT THEORY
THEY WERE CREATED
BY THERAPISTS TO
INFLECT AMERICA'S
TEENAGERS WITH
SEVERE PSYCHOLOGICAL
DAMAGE!!!

SUPERLATIVES

THIS IS JUST THE
STUFF THAT I
ENJOYED THIS
(BUT ALSO DIDN'T
NECESSARILY
COME OUT
THIS
YEAR)

THIS DUDE
WAS HORNY
←

MOST TALKATIVE
JAMES JOYCE, Ulysses

Never before have I felt so defeated by a book. Bafflingly intricate, wildly crass, incredibly beautiful, and totally incomprehensible. The most comforting uncomfortable work I've ever encountered. I'm thankful for The Cambridge Centenary Ulysses edition which compiles the original 1922 text with additional essays on each chapter as well as countless footnotes which provide historical, cultural, and linguistic context.

In fact, I would say this is the best edition for newcomers, as each chapter lives within its own literary world. One is a parody of period romance novels, another is a parody of the written word itself. One is an avant-garde play with impossible staging, another is an endless stream of consciousness with pages-long paragraphs and unbroken sentences.

I cannot recommend this book to anyone, but also everyone should read it. It defies any sense of being good or bad. It will defeat you. You cannot win. But I survived it, and you can too.

IT ALSO INCLUDES
A VERY POETIC
DESCRIPTION OF
A PENIS IN A
BATHTUB

MOST LIKELY TO BE FAMOUS
MARISSA MARCEL, Immortality

Now Available
@
LEAPROJECT.DEV

This is a video game from last year. Though maybe that isn't the most accurate description. It's almost a medium of its own: an interactive, film-based narrative. For those of you who enjoyed the LEA Project, this game took a flying leap over and beyond that, posterizing me so hard that it shattered the backboard. It tells the story of Marissa Marcel, a model-cum-actress who starred in three unreleased films in 1968, 1970, and 1999. Your objective is to sift through countless reels of unreleased and non-chronological footage in order to piece together the mystery surrounding Marcel's disappearance.

The level of craftsmanship within this footage is remarkable and difficult to fully describe without showing you. Each of the three films has such a distinct visual tone. The rich colors and matte paintings of the Hitchcock-inspired 60s historical drama *Ambrosio*. The handheld shakiness and raw, Cassavetes-like energy of the 70s thriller *Minsky*. And of course the hollow made-for-TV digital sheen of the late 90s *Two of Everything*. This attention to detail not only acts as a historical marker, but also tracks the emotional and artistic journey of Marcel through the decades.

But there's far more to this story than I'm letting on. As you scrub back and forth through footage like an old pro at their editing bay, you'll discover something greater beneath the surface. Something both terrifying and tender, that has a lot to say about the creative process and commodification of art. And it also includes the most poignant Velvet Underground needle drop in video game history (a short list).

OOE!

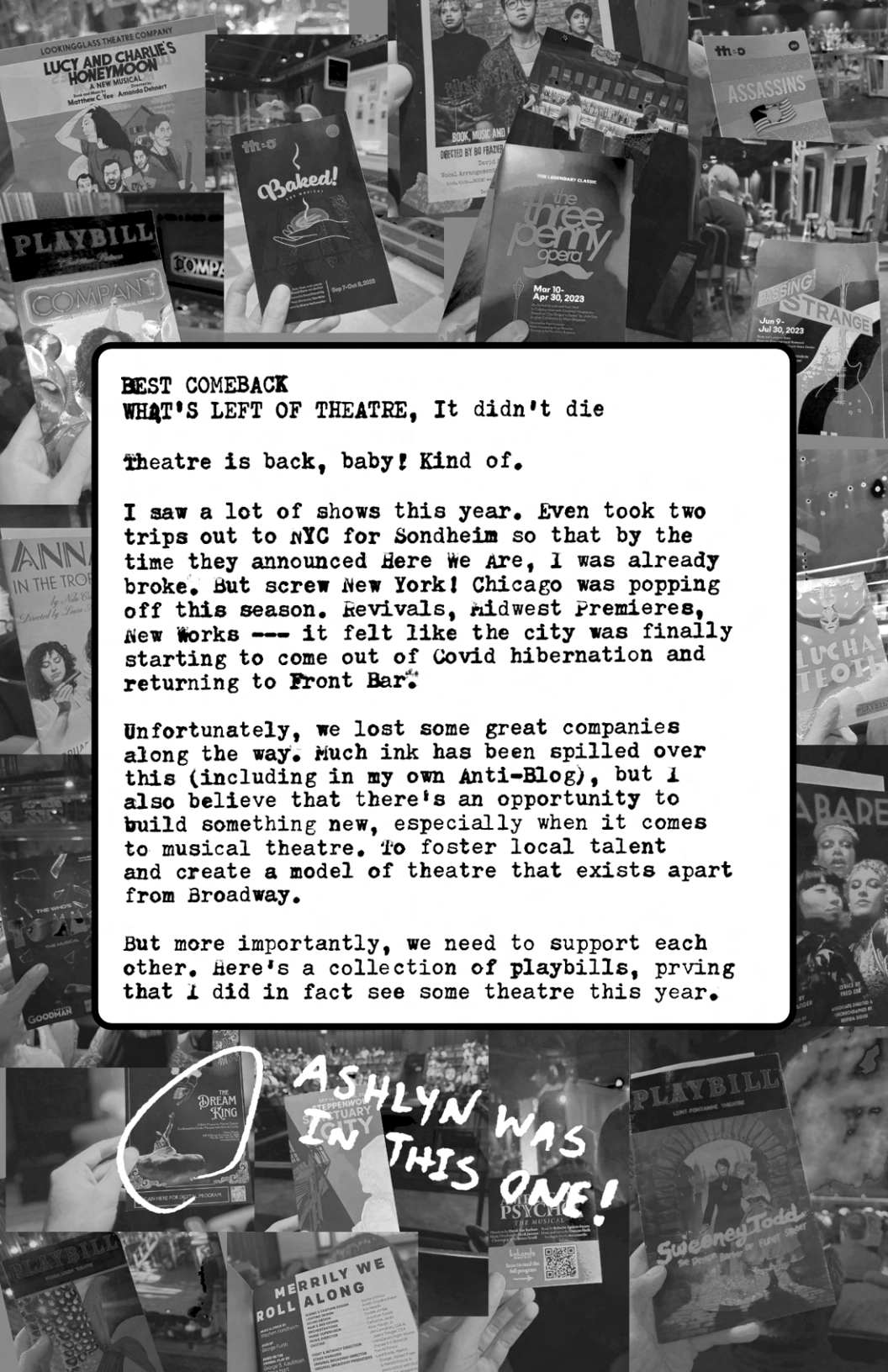
LEAST LIKELY
MARK BORCHARDT, American Movie

I had this movie on my backlog for quite some time and finally got around to it this year. It's a cult classic documentary about Mark Borchardt, an independent filmmaker from Wisconsin with total dedication to completing his dream project, and his total lack of awareness as to its quality. It's a modern-day Don Quixote. And boy, I connected with this on too many levels.

At times, it feels like witnessing a hilarious train wreck. Others, it's like looking into a mirror. It's a difficult watch for creatives, and maybe that's why it endures. We desperately want Mark to succeed. Because if he cannot, then how could we?

I think that deep down, we're all Mark Borchardt, pretending to be some ideal version of a mythical artist we saw in some movie. Like Sartre's observations of the waiter, we are merely acting out the roles that we wish to be or think we are, hoping that our performance is convincing enough to skate by unnoticed. Or maybe everyone can tell that we're tilting at windmills and laughing behind our backs.

ALSO, IF ANYBODY KNOWS
MARK, ASK HIM IF
I COULD MAKE
THIS INTO A
MUSICAL!



BEST COMEBACK

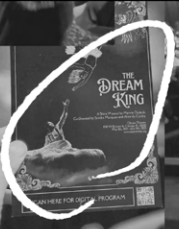
WHAT'S LEFT OF THEATRE, It didn't die

Theatre is back, baby! Kind of.

I saw a lot of shows this year. Even took two trips out to NYC for Sondheim so that by the time they announced Here We Are, I was already broke. But screw New York! Chicago was popping off this season. Revivals, Midwest Premieres, New Works --- it felt like the city was finally starting to come out of Covid hibernation and returning to Front Bar.

Unfortunately, we lost some great companies along the way. Much ink has been spilled over this (including in my own Anti-Blog), but I also believe that there's an opportunity to build something new, especially when it comes to musical theatre. To foster local talent and create a model of theatre that exists apart from Broadway.

But more importantly, we need to support each other. Here's a collection of playbills, proving that I did in fact see some theatre this year.



ASHLYN WAS IN THIS ONE!



CAT CORNER

Arthur the Bad Boy



MADONNA
+
CHILD

WHINY BABY
AND
RESIDENT GOURMAND

ONE DAY
OLD! ↗

