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Defying Gravity
By Jane Andersen

February 5 & 6, 2016  7:30 PM
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Defying Gravity
By Jane Andersen

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I'm a child of Apollo. I was 10 days old when Frank Borman, Jim Lovell, and William Anders became the first men to fly around the Moon on Apollo 8. When I was small, I fondly remember sitting in our living room, caught up in the adventure of watching the countdown for a Saturn V rocket. I doubt that memory was about the Apollo missions to the Moon, but more likely Skylab being boosted into orbit, or the detente' of the Apollo/Soyuz test mission. When I was a child, “Do you want to be an Astronaut when you grow up?” was a pretty common question. In the mid 70s, the sky wasn't the limit anymore. We had gone to the Moon, we had a space station, and we were working with the Russians. The future shown in “2001: A Space Odyssey” didn’t seem that outlandish. The six years between Apollo and Shuttle seemed to stretch on forever.

Being a teen in the 80s, I really grew up with the Space Shuttle. I watched Enterprise run test landing missions, live on TV. Again, I was glued to the set as John Young and Robert Crippen piloted Columbia into space. The shuttle fleet grew, and by 1986 we had been lulled into complacency as Challenger, Discovery and Atlantis seemingly made the impossible mundane. Our fleet of space shuttles proved over and over again that the United States was the leader in spaceflight. My own 5th grade teacher made the 1st cut in the Teacher In Space program, NASA’s initiative to spur flagging interest in the space program and focusing on math, science and space exploration. Mr. Adler didn’t make the final cut, but Christa McAuliffe did.

I missed the fateful launch of Challenger due to an orthodontist appointment. But I do remember those sad days in February of 1986, when the doubt crept in. “Why are we doing this? Should we be doing this? Why manned spaceflight?” In my mind, few things describe the pure American Spirit as manned spaceflight. The innovation. The drive into new frontiers. The pushing back of limitless horizons. Towards the end of the 20th Century, few things we did as a nation had such pure aspirations. The shuttle would fly again, and new wonders would be revealed. The limitless gaze of the Hubble Space Telescope and the International Space Station would give us hints at what the future still holds in store for us. I was lucky enough to watch a Shuttle night launch in person at Cape Canaveral in 1995. The feeling of the entire crowd willing the Orbiter higher and higher in the cool Florida morning is one I’ll never forget. Nor would I forget the sad Sunday morning in 2003 when Columbia failed to return from orbit. Since 2011 we've relied on the Russians to get us into low Earth orbit. We now endure the long wait for Orion to take Americans back into space. 2023 seems very far in the future.

“Defying Gravity” is a piece of theatre I’ve wanted to do for some time, as it celebrates all of these things. It celebrates innovation, wonder, and the desire to explore. I could not be luckier to share those moments and feelings with a wonderful cast and crew who have all worked very hard to bring this story to life. At one point Monet shares “The horizontal is the line of reason, the vertical is the line of prayer. Don't worry about your horizons. Someday, you won't even know it, they will disappear.” Well said.

Chris Chapman
Director
TISP was announced by President Ronald Reagan on August 27, 1984. Not members of NASA’s Astronaut Corps, the teachers would fly as Payload Specialists and return to their classrooms after flight. More than 40,000 applications were mailed to interested teachers while 11,000 teachers sent completed applications to NASA. Each application included a potential lesson that would be taught from space while on the Space Shuttle. The applications were sorted and then sent to the various State Departments of Education, who were then responsible for narrowing down their state applicants to a final set of two each. These applicants were notified of their selections and were gathered together for further selection processes down to ten finalists. These were then trained for a time, and in 1985 NASA selected Christa McAuliffe to be the first teacher in space, with Barbara Morgan as her backup. McAuliffe was a high school social studies teacher from Concord, New Hampshire. She planned to teach two 15-minute lessons from the Space Shuttle.

McAuliffe died in the Space Shuttle Challenger disaster (STS-51-L) on January 28, 1986. After the accident, Reagan spoke on national television and assured the nation that the Teacher in Space program would continue. “We’ll continue our quest in space”, he said. “There will be more shuttle flights and more shuttle crews and, yes, more volunteers, more civilians, more teachers in space. Nothing ends here; our hopes and our journeys continue.” However, NASA decided in 1990 that spaceflight was still too dangerous to risk the lives of civilian teachers, and eliminated the Teacher in Space project. Morgan returned to teaching in Idaho.

In January 1998, NASA replaced the Teacher In Space project with the Educator Astronaut Project. Instead of training teachers for five months as Payload Specialists who would return to the classroom, the Educator Astronaut program required selectees to give up their teaching careers, move to Houston, and become Mission Specialists (full-time NASA astronauts).

Twelve years after McAuliffe’s death, Barbara Morgan was selected as the first Educator Astronaut. She was assigned to the crew of STS-118, aboard the orbiter Endeavour (the orbiter that replaced Challenger six years after the 1986 accident) which launched on August 8, 2007. Although it was once reported that Morgan would teach some of the same lessons that McAuliffe planned to teach more than 20 years before, Associated Press reported that “Morgan has no plans to give a lesson from space”.
CAST
(in order of appearance)

Monet ........................................................................... Aaron Hogan
Elizabeth ........................................................................ Eli Drake
The Teacher ...................................................................... Skyler Verbeck
Betty ................................................................................ Mary McDonough
Ed ..................................................................................... Kyle King
Donna ................................................................................ Cielo Beltran
C.B. ................................................................................... Jeremy Stowitts
Patricia / Ensemble / Female Understudy ...................... Chloe Spencer
Jason / Ensemble / Male Understudy ............................... Nicholas Stowitts
CREW

Production Stage Managers ...................... Megan Higgins, Sara Mulder

Sound ......................................................... Jeremy Carey

Scenic Artist ..................................................... Emma Christensen

Scenic & Light Crews ....................................... Robert Ashley
                              Gerrit Harding, Kiersten Rebhun, Austin Young

Projection .................................................... Brieanna Fonger, Hannah Nelson

Props ............................................................ Emma Christensen, Sam Russel

Costume and Makeup ....................................... Breona Clifford
                              Alex Rush, Brianna Shanahan

ADULT STAFF

Director .................................................... Chris Chapman

Technical Director/ Set Design .......................... Jacquelyn Soule

Costumer ...................................................... Sandy Fonger

Makeup Directors .......................................... Linda Custer

Production Coordinator ................................. Cheryl Willard

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Senior Bio’s

Robert Ashley (Light Board Operator) Robert has been a member of the backstage crews for the GHS productions of 110 Stories, Legally Blonde, The Invisible Man, Brothers Grimm Spectaculaathon!, Wipeout, High School Musical, Dracula, and Little Shop of Horrors. He would like to thank his Mom and Dad for being Rad, Mr. Chapman for being Super Chill and Mrs. Soule and Mrs. Willard for lunchtime chats, and finally to Kelsey Fonger for turning his life around.

Jeremy Carey (Sound Crew Lead) has been a member of the technical crew for Cinderella\Enchanted, Urban Legends, Flash Gordon, High School Musical, Brothers Grimm Spectaculaathon!, Wipeout, Invisible Man, Legally Blonde, 110 Stories, Tales of the Macabre, Dracula and Little Shop of Horrors. He would like to thank Mr. Chapman, Mrs. Soule and Mrs. Willard for his interest in tech theatre.

Emma Christensen (Scenic/Props Crews) Emma has been a member of the scenic crew for Legally Blonde and the scenic and lighting crews for 110 Stories. Emma is responsible for the free style painting of the galaxies on the set for Defying Gravity. She would like to thank Sam for being a killer props partner and great friend.

Breona Clifford (Costume Crew) Breona has been a member of the costume and makeup crews for the GHS productions of Urban Legends, High School Musical, Brothers Grimm Spectaculaathon!, Legally Blonde, 110 Stories, and Little Shop of Horrors. She would like to thank her loving family.

Eli Drake (Elizabeth) Eli has been a constant on the GPAC stage, performing in Cinderella\Enchanted, Urban Legends, Flash Gordon, High School Musical, Brothers Grimm Spectaculaathon, The Invisible Man, Legally Blonde, 110 Stories, Tales of the Macabre and Dracula. She would like to thank her family for their unending love and support.

Gerrit Harding (Scenic Crew/Floor) Gerrit has been a company member of the GHS productions High School Musical, Cinderella\Enchanted, Flash Gordon, Brothers Grimm Spectaculaathon!, Invisible Man, Legally Blonde, Tales of the Macabre and possibly more. He would like to thank Mr. Chapman, Mrs. Willard and Mrs. Soule for providing this fantastic experience for him and his family for dealing with all the time he's spent away from home.

Aaron Hogan (Monet) Aaron has been a cast member of High School Musical, Brothers Grimm Spectaculaathon!, The Invisible Man, Legally Blonde, 110 Stories and Little Shop of Horrors. He would like to thank his parents for always supporting him, and his friends for encouraging him to join theatre.

Mary McDonough (Betty) Mary has played a part in the GHS productions of Urban Legends, Flash Gordon, High School Musical, Brothers Grimm Spectaculaathon!, The Invisible Man, Legally Blonde, Tales of the Macabre and Dracula. She would like to thank her Mom, Dad, Mr. Chapman, Mr. Willard and all her fellow actors who have truly made the GHS stage a memorable home.

Hannah Nelson (Projection/Video Crews) Hannah has been a company member of the GHS productions High School Musical, Legally Blonde, 110 Stories, Wipeout and Little Shop of Horrors, as well as several GAC/HCAT productions. She would like to thank her family for supporting her and Mr. Chapman and Mrs. Soule for helping and encouraging her to go for what she wants.

Brianna Shanahan (Costume Crew) Brianna has been a member of the Costume and Makeup crews for the past four years. She has worked on Cinderella\Enchanted, Urban Legends, Brothers Grimm Spectaculaathon!, Legally Blonde, High School Musical, 110 Stories & Little Shop of Horrors. Brianna would like to thank Sandy Fonger for teaching her about costuming and making her laugh. She would also like to thank her wonderful and understanding family.
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2/ 18  Village Green 11th Annual Variety Show
2/ 20  Winterfest
2/ 23  Lincoln Heights Talent Show
2/ 24  25  MSBOA Orchestra Festival
3/  3  MSBOA Band Festival
3/ 8  GHS/ GMS Choir Showcase Concert
3/ 22  23  GHS College Concert
3/ 30  Gemini in Concert
4/ 17  GHS & MCC “Carmina Burana”
4/ 28  29  GHS Play “Almost, Maine”
5/  2  Lincoln Heights Spring Concert
5/  3  Cedar Crest Spring Concert
5/  4  Walnut Hill Spring Concert
5/  5  Baldwin Heights Spring Concert
5/  6  Jazz Band Spring Concert
5/ 17  GHS Band/ Orchestra Spring Concert
5/ 19  GHS Choir Spring Concert
5/ 24  GMS Band Spring Concert
5/ 25  GMS Orchestra Spring Concert
5/ 26  GMS Choir Spring Concert
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