THE CREATION OF A GIFT SHOP AT THE GREAT LAKES THEATER FESTIVAL

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THE CREATION OF A GIFT SHOP AT THE GREAT LAKES THEATER FESTIVAL

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Thesis

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CHAPTER I

BRIEF HISTORY OF GREAT LAKES THEATER FESTIVAL

The mission of Great Lakes Theater Festival (GLTF) is to bring the pleasure, power, and relevance of classic theater to the widest possible audience in Northern Ohio. For over forty-seven years Great Lakes Theater Festival has brought an impressive collection of the world’s greatest classical plays to the stage in Cleveland (Great Lakes Theater Festival: History & Mission).

In 1961, the Lakewood Board of Education president Dorothy Teare convinced a Shakespeare troupe, led by Arthur Lithgow, to make Lakewood Civic Auditorium its home. The hall was adjacent to the public high school in Lakewood, Ohio, and the Board of Education wanted to find a cultural offering to fill the auditorium during summer months. The theater was incorporated on July 11, 1962 as Great Lakes Shakespeare Festival. At the time, six Shakespeare plays were presented in rotating repertory. In 1965, as a result of an exchange of productions with Princeton’s McCarter Theater, the repertory was expanded to include non-Shakespearean classics. Lithgow, who was by then the education coordinator, saw partnering to mount productions as the future for regional theaters and he wanted greater financial resources for productions GLTF would originate (Great Lakes Theater Festival).

To consolidate GLTF’s growth, Lawrence Carra, a drama professor at Carnegie-Mellon University was chosen. Carra, a perceptive theatre business person made financial stability the top priority. The Women’s Committee, formed in 1961 and made
up of friends of GLTF, was involved actively in providing hospitality for the actors/production staff, organizing benefits and fundraisers, assisting the Administrative office and promoting GLTF throughout the community. The Women’s Committee continued to be an active force in theatre operations and supported the work of Carra. Another one of Carra’s top priorities was that of reaching young people. He continued to support special programs for students and produced politically charged productions of classics (Great Lakes Theater Festival: History & Mission).

By 1976, the Festival was touring productions across the state of Ohio, and a search was begun to hire a year-round artistic director. The candidate chosen was Vincent Dowling. A veteran actor and director, and at that time on the faculty at Carnegie Mellon University, Dowling was committed to cultivating a company of actors who would be tested by a repertory of Shakespearean plays and modern classics. By 1982, the Festival had outgrown its original home at Lakewood Civic Auditorium. The company moved to the Ohio Theatre in PlayhouseSquare, launching the revitalization of downtown Cleveland’s Theatre District. In 1985, Gerald Freeman faced the challenge of recreating the Festival in its new downtown location. Freedman came to the Festival with an impressive background in American theater on and Off-Broadway. His credits also included work with New York Shakespeare Festival, the American Shakespeare Theatre, and The Acting Company. A native of Lorain, Ohio, he was attracted by the Festival’s mission.

In 1997, the Board redrafted the Festival’s mission statement and decided to hire a resident artistic director. In July of 1998, James Bundy was named to that position. Bundy brought experience as an actor, director, and producer in a non-profit theater
environment, and the board charged him to re-engineer the theatre in an increasingly competitive environment. The Festival under Bundy’s leadership committed itself to its mission by bringing the pleasure, power and relevance of classic theater to the widest possible audience in Northern Ohio. Bundy’s commitment to community, education, and cultural diversity affected all aspects of the theatre’s productions and operations (Great Lakes Theater Festival History & Mission).

In 2001, the Festival was under brutal financial pressures. The Festival then began the search for a new Producing Artistic Director. The Board sought to find a candidate with well-established business skills with an emphasis on artistic leadership. Charles Fee was selected for his commitment to Shakespeare, classic works, and for his reputation for building Idaho Shakespeare into a thriving regional theater. Fee led a reexamination of the organization at every level, resulting in a new model for management and a new business plan. Under Fee’s leadership, the Festival has adopted a sustainable new model for the company (Great Lakes Theater Festival).

The Festival recommitted itself to its original core values: Shakespeare, rotating repertory, and an acting company of the highest talent. The Festival has been recognized for its artistic excellence. GLTF has won the Northern Ohio Live Magazine Award for Excellence in Theater in 2005 and The Free Times Readers Choice Award in 2006 for Best Performing Arts Group. The Festival has also eliminated the inherited accumulated net deficit of over one million dollars (Great Lakes Theater Festival).

GLTF was created because a community wanted additional arts education for its youth. With education as the catalyst for GLTF’s creation, it is no wonder that educational initiatives have remained an important part of GLTF’s mission and
programming. Each year the Festival’s education department reaches over 40,000 students throughout Northeast Ohio. The Student Matinee Series alone brings in 16,000 students and teachers. This experience allows for students to view full-length professional productions. For over twenty-six years, GLTF’s School Residency Program has sent actor-teachers into over seventy schools. This program allows actor-teachers to spend a week in classrooms helping students to understand classic literature. The Surround Program, a series of free community programs that explores themes relatable to GLTF’s season, is another part of GLTF’s educational programming (Great Lakes Theater Festival).

The Festival is now a $3 million-a-year operation that produces five full length productions appearing in repertory in Cleveland’s PlayhouseSquare Theatre district from September through May.

**GLTF’s New Home at the Hanna Theatre**

From 1982-2008 the home of Great Lakes Theater Festival was in the Ohio Theatre in PlayhouseSquare. After much planning, research, strategic analysis, and fundraising, GLTF embarked on a capital campaign titled *Re-Imagine a Classic*. The goals of this campaign were the following: to raise sufficient funds to renovate the Hanna Theatre, which was also a space owned by PlayhouseSquare, to meet the needs of GLTF, and to raise an endowment fund two times the size of the current annual budget.

The relationship between GLTF and PlayhouseSquare is a supportive one that allowed for this type of renovation to take place. As part of the *Re-Imagine a Classic* Campaign, GLTF and PlayhouseSquare ratified an agreement that allows the Festival to
control the Hanna Theatre’s performance calendar and to include the theatre in the GLTF brand, though PlayhouseSquare continues to own, manage and maintain the facility.

CHAPTER II
RESEARCHING, SELECTING, INTERVIEWING THEATRE COMPANIES

As a Marketing Associate at Great Lakes Theater Festival (GLTF) during the summer of 2008, my main task was to research gift shops in a variety of non-profit theatre companies in order to create recommendations to give for the creation of a shop in the lobby of the Hanna Theatre. The Executive Director and Marketing and Public Relations Director at GLTF felt that intensive research was essential to avoid mistakes while creating an effective gift shop that would be: 1. related to the GLTF mission; 2. an attractive amenity for patrons; 3. and financially self-supporting.

Conducting market research was the first step because comprehensive information about gift shops within non-profit theatre companies did not exist. The Executive Director and Marketing and Public Relations Director at GLTF wanted to know specific details about the formation and operation of gift shops from organizations that could offer information and advice. With this information, it would be possible to decide whether creating this gift shop would be a worthwhile venture. The following were topics of interest:

- design and layout
- years of operation
- types of staffing
- hours of operation
- marketing initiatives to promote the gift shop
- the use of logo and branding in gift shop merchandise
- inventory and merchandise
- budgetary information including expenses as well as projected income
most importantly, if other non-profit theatre companies were able to make their gift shops financially self supporting

Research began with identifying ten non-profit theatre companies with similar theatre types and budgets. Financial information available on www.tcg.org, a site managed by Theatre Communications Group that provides profiles of member organizations; and www.guidestar.org, a site that makes non-profit tax forms (990s) available for public review. Both sites were helpful in finding the necessary financial information that helped to identify companies with budgets comparable to GLTF. Those theatres were the following:

- American Shakespeare Center-Staunton, VA
- Idaho Shakespeare Festival-Boise, ID
- Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey-Madison, NJ
- Portland Center Stage-Portland, OR
- Shakespeare & Company-Lenox, MA
- Pittsburgh Public Theater-Pittsburgh, PA
- Cleveland Play House-Cleveland, OH
- Seattle Repertory Theatre-Seattle, WA
- Berkeley Repertory Theatre-Berkeley, CA
- Chicago Shakespeare Theater-Chicago, IL

Working with the Executive Director and Marketing and Public Relations Director, the original list of topics was refined into a questionnaire that collected data in the following categories: basic overview, design and layout; operations; marketing, and budget. See Appendix A: Interview Questionnaire.

Names and contact information for individuals identified as “audience service manager,” “box office manager,” and “concessions manager,” were collected at each of the theatre companies selected. It was felt that individuals in these positions would be most likely to handle gift shop related decisions, or would be able to provide the appropriate person to contact.
Phone interviews were conducted from the end of May through the beginning of June. All representatives from the theatre companies provided information via the phone interview and with follow up emails. Responses from both the interviews and email correspondence were collected for evaluation and comparison.

**Theatre Profiles**

Each theatre had a different set of circumstances and situations that affected the way its gift shop operated. The following summaries include three theatre companies that provided detailed information about their gift shops that were most similar to the type of gift shop GLTF hoped to create.

American Shakespeare Center (ASC) is located in Staunton, Virginia and has a budget of about $2,530,000 (American Shakespeare Center). Formerly known as Shenandoah Shakespeare, this theatre has a continuous year-round season consisting of classic, ensemble, and touring productions. The contact with this organization was Jennifer Hall, the Box Office Manager. With a grant of $10,000 they will be renovating their lobby. Pre-show talks by the actors are used to “plug” and market the gift shop. Merchandise available includes the following: Shakespeare related items, mints, mugs, scarves, bobble head dolls, pens, scripts, and books. These items are purchased from Thompson Learning, Arden Scripts, Unemployed Philosophers Guild, Accoutrements, and Laughing Dog. The amount allocated for purchasing gift shop related items for one fiscal year is $20,000. Their projected sales goal for one year is $31,000 (Hall, Jennifer).

Idaho Shakespeare Festival (ISF) is located in Boise, Idaho and has a budget of approximately $2,740,000 (Idaho Shakespeare Festival). The theatre is an outdoor amphitheatre arena and the company presents classical and musical theatre. The contact
at ISF was Renai Bell, the Patron Services Manager. GLTF has a partnership with ISF, sharing an Artistic Director and four theatre productions each season. GLTF has a September-May repertory season, while the ISF season runs from June-October.

The gift shop at ISF has been in operation since 1997. The size of the gift shop is approximately 200 square feet, with shelved units within the store and a rolling rack outside of the store for displaying merchandise. The Patron Services Manager/Gift Shop Administrator is a full-time paid staff member. The gift shop staff is made up of part-time paid staff members. There are no specific marketing initiatives, and customers are aware of the shop due to its highly visible location. The ISF logo appears on all apparel and drinkware. Other merchandise available includes the following: blankets, sweatshirts, wine glasses, bookmarks, pencils, key chains, soundtracks, and Shakespeare-related novelty items. These items are purchased from The Promo Shop, Shakespeare’s Den, and Accoutrements. The amount allocated for purchasing gift shop related items was $9,000 and the projected sales goal is $20,000. The sales goal includes chair rental sales which are also managed through the gift shop (Bell, Renai).

Portland Center Stage (PCS) is located in Portland, Oregon and has a budget of approximately $4,780,000 (Portland Center Stage). The contact at PCS was Katie Ewing, the Assistant to Audience Services. The size of the gift shop at PCS is 10 feet long by 6 feet wide and is located directly behind the box office cashiers. This gift shop was not accessible to patrons; shelving units were used to display merchandise on the wall behind the box office. The Assistant to Audience Services/Gift Shop Administrator is a full-time paid staff member. The gift shop staff members are part-time and are compensated. Outside of the issue of patron accessibility, the general setup of this gift
shop is most comparable to the style of gift shop GLTF hoped to create. The Box Office staff is encouraged to wear PCS gift shop merchandise while working as another way to “market” the merchandise. In terms of branding, all apparel and drinkware features their PCS logo. Merchandise available includes posters, soundtracks, apparel, and scripts. The inventory software used at PCS is called Retail Sales. Because of the way the software process sales, each gift shop item is treated as a separate “performance.”

**GLTF Staff Involvement**

After collecting information from other theatres, the GLTF administrative staff was asked what they would like to see in a gift shop. Before the meeting, examples of different types of merchandise other theatre companies were selling were mounted on boards for staff to view. During the meeting, the responses and ideas provided by staff members were captured and their suggestions were used when developing our own merchandise inventory.

The following are the most popular of those suggestions:

- Shakespeare-novelty items
- magnets
- seasonal mugs
- tote bags
- assorted drink-ware
- apparel
- Arden scripts
- books related to Shakespeare scholarship

A few theatre companies had mentioned that they had used catch phrases on apparel that were related to their theatrical season. The following are some of the quotes and sayings that were GLTF specific: “Anything can happen in the woods;” “Kill all the lawyers;” “I saw it at the Hanna;” “I am the Seagull;” and “Out, damned spot! Out, I say.” Consideration was given to all ideas put forth.
CHAPTER III
EVALUATING RESULTS

In order to create a list of recommendations to present to the Executive Director and Marketing and Public Relations Director, an executive summary was produced. This document succinctly presented an overview of all the research collected. Each theatre company was reviewed individually and theatre profiles were created. Once those were complete, it was much easier to evaluate results. It is important to recognize that not all of the theater companies provided complete information about each topic. A few theatres chose not to release information about certain topics related to their gift shops. See Appendix B: Theatre Comparison Chart.

Design and Layout

The most popular style of display included shelving, tables, and slatted walls on which merchandise could be mounted. There were also a few theatres that used t-bars and mannequins to display apparel as well. The area devoted to gift shops varied from an eight feet long movable cart to over 225 square feet.

Operations

Ninety percent of all gift shop administrators were full-time paid staff. Those that fell under that category had the following titles:

- Patron Services Manager
- Assistant Audience Services Manager
- Assistant Box Office Manager
- Box Office Manager
- House Manager
• Audience Services Manager
• Volunteer Coordinator (non-paid volunteer)
• Guest Services Manager

When comparing operations staff, 70% had paid staff who served as customer service associates for the gift shops. Only 30% made use of volunteers. Eighty percent of the shops opened one hour before curtain and remained open through intermission. The remaining 20% were open from 9a.m. to 6p.m. Monday’s through Saturday’s and were also open during performances as well.

**Marketing**

Fifty percent of the companies interviewed indicated that they did not engage in additional marketing for their gift shop. Of those that did commit marketing efforts to the shops, the following tools were used:

- program inserts
- lobby signs
- PatronMail e-blasts
- pre-show talks by actors
- advertisements in playbills
- the capacity to purchase gift shop items through their websites
- encouraging their staff to wear gift shop apparel

Every respondent made use of a distinctive logo on selected merchandise. Of those theatres, 20% created custom designs and viewed their logo placement on their apparel as a secondary feature. For example, Berkeley Repertory Theatre and Shakespeare & Company found quotes and words that were unique to their theatre’s and made those items the main design feature of their apparel and drink-ware items.

**Inventory**

Merchandise considered “most popular” by the theatre companies tended to be of high quality, but reasonably priced. The following is a list of items the theatre companies
found most popular: books, scripts, soundtracks, posters, key chains, apparel (t-shirts, hooded sweatshirts, hats), mugs, water bottles, Shakespeare related items (mints, mugs, bobble head dolls, note pads), postcards of their theatre space, and tote bags.

The more closely related the items were to the theatres productions or mission, the better the sales. Respondents indicated that those items with an unsatisfactory sales performance may have been too highly priced, or made with poor quality. These items included: cheese boards, tumblers, picnic sets, thermoses, ties, and magnets.

Forty percent of the respondents use Excel spreadsheets for tracking inventory, while 30% used cash registers without tracking software. The remaining 30% use a variety of systems including Cash Register Express (CRE), Microsoft Retail Management, and Tessitura. Tessitura is a ticketing and donor tracking software which can also be used as a way to track inventory and merchandise.

**Vendors**

All of the Shakespeare theatre companies used the following national and international vendors for purchasing Shakespeare-related merchandise:

- Accoutrements
- Unemployed Philosophers Guild
- Shakespeare’s Chocolate
- Immortal Longings
- Prospero Art

The recommended sources for books and scripts include:

- Dramatist Play Service
- Theatre Communications Group
- Samuel French
- Amazon.com
- Joseph Beth Booksellers
- Borders
- Barnes and Noble
Every respondent mentioned the advantages of using local vendors for purchasing apparel because viewing samples in person is preferable to viewing them electronically. Also, it was suggested that ordering smaller quantities for initial purchases is advisable, enabling the gift shop supervisor to track the sales trends before re-ordering a larger quantity.

**Budget**

Theatres that are comparable in annual expense budget size to GLTF allocate between $9,000 and $20,000 per fiscal year to purchase new merchandise. Those same theatres project that they will earn between $21,000 and $30,000 in sales. Of those interviewed, 80% reported that their gift shops are financially self supporting. The remaining 20% are not self sustaining, but are supported financially by the theatre company.
CHAPTER IV

ESTABLISHING THE GIFT SHOP

After collecting the research and evaluating data, the next step was to submit a list of recommendations. The most fundamental decision was whether to create a gift shop or not. After reviewing the research, the decision was made to move forward with establishing the gift shop and the following steps were identified:

- submitting recommendations to the Executive Director and the Marketing and Public Relations Director,
- understanding the issue of unrelated income as a non-profit organization and the importance of selecting mission related merchandise,
- establishing a budget,
- selecting vendors and merchandise,
- creating designer contracts,
- confirming gift shop staffing,
- setting prices for merchandise and utilizing Paciolan,
- borrowing display items from OHvations,
- and designing the gift shop layout.

Recommendations

Once this decision was made, recommendations were presented to the Executive Director and the Marketing and Public Relations Director for considerations. The following types of merchandise were suggested: books and scripts, soundtracks (related to the theatrical season), tote bags, apparel, drink-ware, costume/scenery design postcards and a few novelty Shakespeare related items.

A recommendation was made that GLTF create a volunteer program to staff the gift shop. The theatre companies that had paid gift shop staff reported that overhead jeopardized cost effectiveness. Hours of operation were recommended to be open one
hour before curtain, and throughout each performance. A further recommendation was that GLTF find a way to use the ticketing system, Paciolan, as its “point of sale” system for the gift shop. Other theatres had used this method and found it worked well and avoided having to purchase an entirely new computer system and software to process gift shop sales.

**Unrelated Income & Mission-Related Branding**

As a non-profit organization, GLTF had to address the issue of unrelated income, which the IRS identifies as income unrelated to the primary tax-exempt mission of the organization, therefore taxable. The theatres interviewed explained that income generated from their gift shops was considered mission-related income because gift shop merchandise consisted of items that supported the brand mission of the theatre.

Non-profit organizations are required to submit financial information through the filing of Form 990 to the Internal Revenue Service. “These Internal Revenue Service forms are filed annually by public charities and private foundations…. Both forms list assets, receipts, expenditures and compensation of officers. The forms can be obtained through the IRS, the charity itself, and the GuideStar website” (Fritz). Tax forms on file for California Shakespeare Theater, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, The Shakespeare Theatre, Berkeley Repertory Theatre and Seattle Repertory Theatre revealed that “concessions and gift shop sales” from these theatres were listed with an “03” exclusion code under income-producing activities. According to the Tax Policy and Reporting Requirements for Form 990 Tax Returns, the following is the explanation for the 03 exclusion code. “Section 501 (c)(3) organization income from an activity carried on primarily for the convenience of the organization’s members, students, patients, visitors,
officers, or employees” (Exclusion Codes). The sale of shop merchandise and concessions were considered a convenience for patrons at these theatres. The Executive Director and the Marketing and Public Relations Director of GLTF wanted to make sure that not only were gift shop items convenient, but that they added to the experience of attending a production at Great Lakes Theater Festival as well as spread the institutional brand to the community.

When custom designing apparel, drink-ware, and other items, the Marketing and Public Relations Director at GLTF kept the theatre, mission, and season in mind. D.K. Holland explained how the brand of an organization expresses the standards and mission of the organization.

Just like an effective celebrity brand, your organization’s brand has to convey the key values of your organization—values rooted in its core activities—if you hope to develop a loyal following. And that’s why it’s important that you, your board, and your colleagues—they people who, day in and day out, work to make your non-profit a success—are involved in and committed to the branding process (Holland 20).

The items in GLTF’s gift shop would feature more than just a logo; they would reflect the brand and mission of organization. Patrons who purchase GLTF gift shop merchandise would leave with a memento reminding them of the organization and of the professional theatrical production they experienced.
Establishing a Budget

After reviewing the budgetary start-up amounts that were provided by some of the theatre companies, it was decided that $10,000 would be an appropriate amount to invest for the gift shop’s first repertory of operation. See Appendix C: 2008 Fall Repertory Gift Shop Budget.

Vendors and Merchandise

For books and scripts, Borders and Barnes and Noble bookstores were contacted to see if they had a “book buy back program” established with non-profit organizations. After contacting both vendors, it was decided Borders was the best fit for purchasing books, scripts, and soundtracks. Borders allowed GLTF to return any unsold merchandise at the end of a show or season without penalty. GLTF would also be able to provide an accessible, diverse, season-specific library of scholarly Shakespeare related books for their patrons. The following are just a few of the books, scripts, and soundtracks selected for the 2008 fall repertory at GLTF:

- Macbeth
- Into the Woods
- The Comedy of Errors
- The Seagull
- Essential Shakespeare Handbook by Leslie Dunton-Downer
- Shakespeare for Kids: His life and Times by Colleen Aagesen
- Shakespeare: The World is a Stage by Bill Bryson
- From Broadway to Cleveland: A History of the Hanna Theatre by John Vacha
- Into the Woods, Soundtrack
- Heartbeat Kodo 25th Anniversary CD

The Unemployed Philosophers Guild was one of the wholesalers suggested when interviewing other Shakespeare theater companies. After reviewing their products, the following items were selected for GLTF’s initial purchase:

- After Shakespeare Mints
Shakespeare’s Den was another wholesaler that was mentioned by other Shakespeare theatre companies because of its novelty merchandise. The following items were purchased as part of GLTF’s initial purchase from Shakespeare’s Den:

- Shakespeare-Marlowe Bumper Stickers
- Shakespeare Nodder (Bobble head doll)
- Shakespeare Insult Gum

JakPrints was selected to produce adult sized t-shirts for the 2008 fall repertory. They were selected because they are located in Cleveland, Ohio and they allowed for the Marketing and Public Relations Director to design the graphics for the t-shirts and send over those files electronically. Quotes and graphics were kept as the primary design element and the GLTF logo was secondary. The following were the quotes chosen for the initial t-shirt designs:

- “Out Damn’d Spot! Out, I say!” Quote from Macbeth, 2008 fall repertory Production.
- “This is ridiculous. What am I doing here? I’m in the wrong story.” Quote from Into the Woods, 2008 fall repertory production.

The following are Shakespearean quotes chosen for the initial t-shirts designs:

- “The first thing we do, let’s kill all the lawyers.” Quote from Henry VI, Part II IV, ii.
- “Seven Ages of Man.” Quote from As You Like it II, vii.
- “Shakespeare’s Longest Insult.” Quote from King Lear II, ii.

Midwest Advertising, located in Solon, Ohio, was our primary promotional vendor. The following items were selected as merchandise for the GLTF gift shop for the 2008 fall repertory:

- water bottle with GLTF logo
- travel coffee mug with GLTF logo
• ceramic mug with GLTF logo
• youth t-shirts
• men and women’s polo shirts with GLTF logo
• tote bag with GLTF logo
• key chain with GLTF commemorative image engraved

**Designer Contracts**

Another piece of merchandise involved the use of the costume and scenic designers’ renderings being transferred into postcard form. The initial thought was to use photos of GLTF actors, but after consulting The Actors’ Equity Association (AEA), the labor union that represents more than 48,000 actors and stage managers in the United States, it was found that using photos of Equity Actors required additional compensation, gaining permission from AEA, and re-negotiating contracts. The management and production team decided to select the designs of costume and scenic designers initially, and would explore expanding into using photos of actors for merchandise in the future.

The main issue faced when developing this project was that many designers are part of a union called United Scenic Artists (USA) Local 829, is a labor union that represents designers and artists in the entertainment business. According to The Standard Agreement for Theatre Productions, developed by United Scenic Artists Local 829, there are stringent restrictions placed on the producer when it comes to using artists designs. (Standard Designers Agreement Theatre 2007-2008) The following is information regarding the safeguards in place to protect artists and the steps GLTF must take in order to use the original renderings in gift shop merchandise:

The Producer or its licensee(s) shall not use the designs for the scenery, the scenery as a whole, the designs for the costumes, the complete set of costumes, the design for the lighting, the design for the sound, or the sound tapes, discs or
other sound media in any live stage production or electronic reproduction of the play without the permission of and additional compensation to the Designer/s. Compensation for additional use or license of the design by Producer shall be subject to additional agreement between the Producer and Designer/s (Standard Agreement for Theatre 2007-2008).

With the requirements set by USA Local 829, both costume designers from the 2008 fall repertory were contacted and were asked if they were interested in such a project and if they would like to sign an additional contract regarding the reproduction. The contract proposed that with written permission of the designer, GLTF would utilize five costume renderings from both Macbeth and Into the Woods on note card merchandise to be sold in the GLTF gift shop. GLTF agreed to consult with each costume designer when selecting the five prints that would be featured on the merchandise. A limited print run of one hundred five-note-card sets for each production would be created and made available for sale to the public. In exchange for permission, GLTF agreed to compensate the designer with a one-time payment of $125. GLTF also agreed to acknowledge the creation of the artwork to the artist on the note card sets to be sold.

**Gift Shop Staffing**

Original recommendations included forming a volunteer program to staff the gift shop. With that being decided, a “Youth Ambassador Program” manual was created. The plan was to contact area high schools that had previous relationships with GLTF. Those high schools included the following: Magnificat High School, St. Joseph’s Academy, Mayfield High School, Lake Ridge Academy, Bay Village High School, Holy
Name High School, Strongsville High School, Early College High School, and SuccessTech Academy. From those schools GLTF hoped to have twelve students with a passion for the arts and a desire to work with professional artists and administrators to volunteer as Youth Ambassadors for the 2008 fall repertory. As a Youth Ambassador, each would be required to commit to the following: attending a two hour training session during mid-September; volunteering for a minimum of three performances; and pledging to a total of 18 hours of commitment. For each performance, one GLTF Youth Ambassador would display gift shop merchandise, assist patrons, track inventory, and put away merchandise after the conclusion of the performance. They would also help to guide patrons to the box office for sales transactions. Gift shop sales would take place through the box office which was staffed by PlayhouseSquare employees. The benefits of this position for each Youth Ambassador were the following:

- A backstage tour of the Hanna Theatre.
- An opportunity to observe a GLTF technical rehearsal.
- A talkback with members of the GLTF artistic company.
- Recognition in the GLTF playbill and newsletter.
- Free parking at the Hanna Theatre parking garage.
- And two complimentary ticket vouchers for GLTF’s fall repertory Production.

After the manual was created and reviewed, the GLTF management team consulted the Education Department to see if creating the volunteer program before the start of the fall repertory was plausible. In theory, the volunteer program would have been a good fit for both GLTF and for young students with a passion for the arts. However, after reviewing the limited amount of time left before the start of the repertory, the program was removed as an option for operations.

After considering the plausibility of creating a youth volunteer program in such a short amount of time, it was decided that paid staffing was the best option for the 2008
fall repertory. A Customer Service Associate (CSA) job description was created and $2,145 was allocated in the gift shop budget to cover an hourly wage and taxes. See Appendix D: Customer Service Associate Job Description. After posting the job description at local colleges, universities, and job posting websites two individuals were selected. The following were the responsibilities for this position:

- work with GLTF’s Marketing and Public Relations Director to oversee daily gift shop operations
- display gift shop merchandise before each performance
- return gift shop merchandise to its secured location at the end of each performance
- track gift shop inventory before and after each performance
- assist patrons with gift shop purchases
- maintain a working knowledge of gift shop merchandise including pricing and availability

To track inventory and gift shop sales, the CSA had a form to be marked every time a patron made a gift shop merchandise purchase. See Appendix E: Gift Shop Inventory Form.

**Pricing Merchandise-Utilizing Paciolan**

The next step was to work with PlayhouseSquare to decide the most effective way to use Paciolan, the ticketing system used by GLTF and PlayhouseSquare. The box office, staffed by PlayhouseSquare employees, would work with the CSA’s to process sales.

After reviewing information provided by other theatre companies, it was decided to mark up merchandise 100% from our cost to set our gift shop retail price. The exception included merchandise initially purchased from Borders. Those scripts, books, and soundtracks purchased from Borders were initially purchased at a 20% discount; it was decided to mark those items back to the original Borders retail price. After prices
were set, each piece of merchandise had to be given an Item Code—which in turn became an event on the software program.

**OHvations**

As mentioned previously, GLTF has a close partnership with PlayhouseSquare and is a resident company of the district. During the summer of 2008, it was communicated to GLTF that PlayhouseSquare’s gift shop, OHvations, was going to transition into an online website. PlayhouseSquare contacted GLTF and offered to let them use OHvations display elements when creating their own gift shop at the Hanna Theatre. GLTF saw this exchange as a great opportunity and worked with the manager of OHvations in selecting display elements that could be used in the new store.

**Gift Shop Layout**

The GLTF gift shop is located within the lobby of the Hanna Theatre, directly next to the box office. The gift shop layout includes built-in wall shelving and cabinets for merchandise storage. Display elements such as mannequins and card holders borrowed from PlayhouseSquare are used to showcase apparel, books, scripts and notecards.
CHAPTER V
CONCLUSIONS DRAWN FROM 2008 FALL REPERTORY

In 2008, Bob Taylor, the Executive Director stated, “Audience members and patrons seemed to enjoy exploring the additional new facet of the re-imagined Hanna. It certainly was another opportunity to brand the Hanna experience as unique” (Taylor, Bob).

In regard to specific merchandise sales information from the fall 2008 repertory, novelty items and apparel sold better than books and scripts. As mentioned previously, $10,000 was the amount allocated for the initial gift shop budget. Gross sales came to a total of $6,091.

Although books and scripts did not sell as well as novelty items or apparel, it was not a loss for GLTF because they could return all of those items to Borders without penalty for a full refund because of their book buy-back program. Adding additional staff to manage the gift shop was what drove up operating costs. Todd Krispinsky, the Marketing and Public Relations Director explained that it had been anticipated that in its first season, gift shop sales would not outweigh expenses. The new home at the Hanna Theatre was all about expanding the experience for the GLTF patrons, which included in the presence of the gift shop (Krispinsky, Todd).

Patron recommendations collected by the Customer Service Associates (CSA) included specific merchandise requests such as: magnets, chocolate, and posters. It was also noted that box office transactions were too slow. Patrons were hesitant to consider
purchasing merchandise during the intermission because they did not have enough time to stand in line, purchase gift shop merchandise, and get back to their seats.

The following were aspects that the Marketing and Public Relations Director wanted to revisit: creating a volunteer system to staff the gift shop, finding new ways to lock up and store merchandise and display items, and training the PlayhouseSquare Box Office Staff so that they are more efficient with gift shop sales. In the future, they hoped to expand the novelty portion of their inventory, expand and diversify their apparel selections, and offer an online gift shop option on their website.

When asked about the formation and performance of the GLTF gift shop, Mr. Taylor stated: “We are learning as we go, but overall we unveiled a classy, focused effort that was appreciated by many of our patrons” (Taylor, Bob).
CHAPTER VI
GIFT SHOP UPDATE IN 2011

In the spring of 2011, the Executive Director and the Marketing and Public
Relations Director shared updated information about the status of the gift shop. They
provided information about the operations, merchandise and changes that took place with
the gift shop.

The Customer Service Associate (CSA) position was eliminated in the fall of
2009 to cut expenses. The cost of staffing the gift shop was approximately $1,800 per
repertory and contributed significantly to the overall expense of the gift shop. The
management and maintenance of the gift shop is now handled by the Marketing and Sales
Associate, who is a full-time employee at Great Lakes Theatre Festival. A pre-show
check of the shop is done by a GLTF staff member who is serving as a representative
present at each performance (Krispinsky, Todd, April 2011).

The merchandise available for purchase is still “mainly show-specific based on
the GLTF productions being presented as part of a given season” (Krispinsky, Todd,
April 2011). The gift shop also has begun to offer general Shakespeare branded
merchandise that is not show specific, and spoken word recordings of some of
Shakespeare’s most popular works. An additional line of merchandise is being offered
that features the image of a painting of Shakespeare created during the grand opening of
the Hanna Theatre. This image can be found on t-shirts, mugs, track jackets and
customized GLTF note cards and pads. The cards were designed and created for GLTF
by Olivia Marie Designs. Additional Olivia Marie products are for sale on consignment with GLTF receiving a percentage of the profit. The quantity of t-shirts stocked for each show has dropped from the original purchase of fifty per style of shirt, to twenty-four per style. A smaller run of shirts is slightly more expensive, but the majority of the shirts will sell, leaving fewer items to carry over into the next repertory. Some items that did not sell quickly or at a high frequency included the Inaugural Hanna Theatre Key Chains and Shakespeare’s Garden Gift Baskets. Those items remain in the inventory, but as they depreciate in value, they can be given away at events and promotions to donors and patrons.

The greatest challenge the gift shop faces is the sales transaction process. GLTF has continued to use ticketing software to process those gift shop sales. Streamlining the check-out process with a bar code based system that would also provide inventory records would be a preferred method. A future goal is to allow patrons to purchase gift shop items through the GLTF website in addition to the Hanna Theatre lobby location (Krispinsky, Todd, April 2011).

Gross sales for the 2008 fall repertory were approximately $6,000. Since the inaugural season, gross sales for other repertories have averaged around $3,400. This average has assisted GLTF in determining appropriate budgets for new inventory purchases each fall and spring. Based on historical sales over the past several seasons, it has been determined that new inventory purchases should range between $1,500 and $2,000 for each fall and each spring to maximize profit margins. Typically, the expenses for the fall repertory will be higher given that a large number of items are being
purchased for sale during the entire theatrical season running from September through May.

Gift shop sales have stabilized and have allowed GLTF to budget appropriately for gift shop expenses while maximizing their profit margin. Since the fall of 2009, the gift shop has shown a profit each repertory. As of April 12, 2011, the gift shop had earned an accumulated lifetime profit of $1,293 (Krispinsky, Todd, April 2011). The Marketing and Public Relations Director, along side the Marketing Associate appear to have done a good job selecting inventory based on the sales trends of previous seasons. The continued profit gained by this venture is due to the thoughtful planning of those at GLTF. The gift shop will continue to add opportunities for patrons to purchase season specific items, Shakespeare scholarly materials and GLTF branded merchandise.
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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Basic Overview, Design & Layout:

1. How long has your gift shop been in operation?

2. What is the size of your gift shop? (in square feet?)

3. Describe the general layout of your gift shop? How are items displayed in your gift shop?
   a. What suggestions would you give in regard to displaying items in a gift shop?
   b. Are there any suggestions you could give about what not to do?

Operations

4. Who staffs your gift shop? Is it run by paid staff members or is there a volunteer staffing program in place?
   a. Is there a paid staff member that coordinates your volunteers? Are they a full-time or part-time staff member?

5. Who/what department supervises/administrates/maintains your gift shop operation?

6. What are the hours of the gift shop? Do you keep it open during the day, or only during show times?

Marketing

7. How do you market your gift shop? Do you use program inserts, reminding patrons to stop by and see your new products?

8. What is the name of your gift shop?

9. Is there a certain feel or market “brand” for your gift shop?
Inventory

10. What types of products do you sell in your gift shop? (examples t-shirts, mugs, pictures of actors in post card form) (AEA regulations)?
   a. What quantity do you order when stocking your gift shop?
   b. Which items sell most regularly? Which items were harder sells?
   c. Were there any items that your gift shop completely stopped selling?
   d. Are there any items that you sell on a seasonal basis? Post cards of actors from specific shows?

11. What vendors do you use to purchase the items that you sell?
   a. Any suggestions of vendors to contact?

Budget

12. How much was spent on initial install and setup?

13. Were there any unanticipated costs?

14. How much was spent on the initial inventory purchase?

15. How much is spent yearly/quarterly to restock your inventory? How often do you re-order inventory?

16. How much earned income does your gift shop generate each season?

17. Fiscally, do you find that your gift shop is self-sustaining?

18. Are there any trends that you have seen overtime in sales since the opening of your gift shop?
   a. Do you have any data that would help to describe the performance of your gift shop over time?

19. How do you think your organization and patrons value your gift shop? Are there any benefits that you see that are not fiscally related? Do you think that it helps to support your mission and public image?

Wrap-Up Questions:

20. Are there any other suggestions that you would offer?
   a. What did you learn throughout the creation of the gift shop within your organization?
   b. What would you have done differently?
## APPENDIX B

### THEATRE COMPARISON CHART

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theatre Company</th>
<th>Budget</th>
<th>Initial Cost of Inventory</th>
<th>Amount Purchased Yearly</th>
<th>Gross Earned Income</th>
<th>Financially Self Supporting</th>
<th>Staff Title</th>
<th>Staff Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Shakespeare Center</td>
<td>$2.53M</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td>$31,000</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Box Office Manager</td>
<td>Paid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idaho Shakespeare Festival</td>
<td>$2.74M</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>$9,000</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Patron Services Manager</td>
<td>Paid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey</td>
<td>$3.85M</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Assistant Box Office Manager</td>
<td>Paid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portland Center Stage</td>
<td>$4.78M</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Assistant Audience Services Manager</td>
<td>Paid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakespeare &amp; Company</td>
<td>$5.07M</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Audience Services Manager</td>
<td>Non-Paid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pittsburgh Public Theatre</td>
<td>$5.76M</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>$3,600</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>House Manager</td>
<td>Paid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleveland Play House</td>
<td>$7.89M</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>$2,000</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Audience Services Manager</td>
<td>Paid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seattle Repertory Theatre</td>
<td>$9.32M</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>$24,000</td>
<td>$35,000</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Volunteer Coordinator</td>
<td>Non-Paid</td>
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<tr>
<td>Berkeley Repertory Theatre</td>
<td>$11.68M</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>$20,000</td>
<td>$25,000</td>
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<td>Audience Services Manager</td>
<td>Non-Paid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicago Shakespeare Theater</td>
<td>$12.41M</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>$13,200</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Guest Services Manager</td>
<td>Paid</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C

2008 FALL REPERTORY GIFT SHOP BUDGET

GIFT SHOP INVENTORY BUDGET

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NOVELTY ITEMS: PRE-MADE</td>
<td>$427.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOVELTY ITEMS: CUSTOM DESIGNED</td>
<td>$1,390.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPAREL</td>
<td>$2,952.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PACKAGING SUPPLIES</td>
<td>$81.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOTE CARDS</td>
<td>$970.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$5,820.72</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOOKS/SCRIPTS/SOUNDTRACKS</td>
<td>$2,376.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$2,376.28</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIFT SHOP STAFF</td>
<td>$2,145.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$2,145.50</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grand Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$10,342.50</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D

CUSTOMER SERVICE ASSOCIATE JOB DESCRIPTION

Great Lakes Theater Festival (GLTF) is seeking Customer Service Associate to manage and operate a gift shop in the Hanna Theatre at PlayhouseSquare during Great Lakes Theater Festival performances this fall. Candidates seeking this position should have an interest in the arts. Experience in customer service is encouraged but not required. Candidates should be available for evening and weekend hours. Reliable transportation is essential.

Key Job Responsibilities:
- Work with GLTF’s Director of Marketing to oversee daily gift shop operations
- Display gift shop merchandise before each performance
- Return gift shop merchandise to its secured location at the end of each performance
- Track gift shop inventory before and after each performance
- Assist patrons with gift shop purchases
- Maintain a working knowledge of gift shop merchandise including pricing and availability

Qualities Required:
- Personable
- Friendly
- Trustworthy
- Reliable
- Prompt
- Attentive to Detail
- Self-Motivated

Time Commitment and Hours:
- Maximum 30 hours per week. Arrangement is negotiable with job sharing option. Evening and weekend availability required Wednesday-Sunday. Hours may vary depending on availability.
- Date range of employment: September 24th-November 8th.
- An additional paid pre-employment training session is also required.

Compensation:
Minimum $8.00 per hour, negotiable based on experience.
### APPENDIX E

**GIFT SHOP INVENTORY FORM**

**Date:** __________  **Name of CSA:** _______________________________

**Performance Title and Time:** ____________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Code</th>
<th>Item Description</th>
<th>Displayed Pre-Show</th>
<th>Displayed Post-Show</th>
<th>Number of Items Sold</th>
<th>Amount per Item</th>
<th>Dollar Amount of Items Sold</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SLM</td>
<td>Shakespeare Love Mug</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>@$8.00</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIM</td>
<td>Shakespeare Insult Mug</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>@$8.00</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCM</td>
<td>GLTF Seasonal Mug</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>@$8.00</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TCM</td>
<td>Travel Coffee Mug-Purple</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>@$15.00</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PWB</td>
<td>Plastic Water Bottle-Orange</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>@$10.00</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Code</th>
<th>Item Description</th>
<th>Displayed Pre-Show</th>
<th>Displayed Post-Show</th>
<th>Number of Items Sold</th>
<th>Amount per Item</th>
<th>Dollar Amount of Items Sold</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASM</td>
<td>After Shakespeare Mints</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>@$3.00</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNB</td>
<td>Shakespeare Note Books</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>@$5.50</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SBS</td>
<td>Shakespeare Bumper Sticker</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>@$1.99</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHN</td>
<td>Shakespeare Nodder</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>@$10.00</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIG</td>
<td>Shakespeare Insult Gum</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>@$2.95</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBP</td>
<td>Tote Bag-Purple</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>@$20.00</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHI</td>
<td>Postcard Hanna (Interior)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>@$1.00</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHE</td>
<td>Postcard Hanna (Exterior)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>@$1.00</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHM</td>
<td>Postcard Hanna (Architectural)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>@$1.00</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCW</td>
<td>Note Card Pack (Woods)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>@$10.00</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCM</td>
<td>Note Card Pack (Macbeth)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>@$10.00</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPAREL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTW   Baby T-Shirt (Wicked)</td>
<td>@$15.00</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BTC   Baby T-Shirt (Chaos)</td>
<td>@$15.00</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WPS   Women’s Polo</td>
<td>@$20.00</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>MPS   Men’s Polo</td>
<td>@$20.00</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSM   T-Shirt (Out Damned Spot!)</td>
<td>@$15.00</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSW   T-Shirt (Wrong Story)</td>
<td>@$15.00</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSL   T-Shirt (Longest Insult)</td>
<td>@$15.00</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSS   T-Shirt (Seven Ages)</td>
<td>@$15.00</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>TSK   T-Shirt (Lawyers)</td>
<td>@$15.00</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>BOOKS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FBC   From Broadway to Cleveland</td>
<td>@$24.95</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WIT   Will in the World</td>
<td>@$14.95</td>
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