"INDIAN" SUMMERS: QUERYING REPRESENTATIONS OF NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURES IN OUTDOOR HISTORICAL DRAMA

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ABSTRACT

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Since their emergence in the 1950s and 1960s as popular summer tourist fare, outdoor historical dramas have featured Indian characters in dominant roles. While the non-native founders of these dramas have defended the use of these characters as a respectful tribute to Native American traditions and values, in many cases, the depictions have remained static over the years and continue to reflect problematic white constructions of the Indian “Other.” In some instances, such as in the cases of Unto These Hills and the Under the Cherokee Moon, Native Americans in the area surrounding the production site have instigated changes to the way their cultures are represented in these performances. This dissertation is a historical study that analyzes production and performance choices that engage representations of Native Americans in outdoor historical dramas—representations that have historically tended toward reinscriptions of unhelpful stereotypes. I analyze recent changes in these representations to explore how Native American cultures are currently portrayed. The dramas I examine include Trumpet in the Land, The White Savage, Tecumseh!, Blue Jacket, Unto These Hills, and Under the Cherokee Moon. My research calls upon interviews with production participants, close readings of the productions, archival materials, and secondary sources. Instead of treating each production as a separate case study, I read across the various plays in order to explore the issues that emerge from the representational practices of outdoor historical dramas. I consider such issues as the Native American stereotypes traditionally staged in these dramas; how the absence or presence of Native American
communities in the area surrounding a production affects the depictions of Native American cultures in the show; issues of accuracy and authenticity in the productions; and the changes that have been made to production choices, and thereby the representations, in some outdoor dramas. The depictions of Native American cultures in outdoor historical dramas are not innocuous. It is important to problematize how and by whom indigenous cultures are presented to audiences in these dramas, as well as the effects these presentations have on the cultures being represented.
Figure 1: Sign, Cherokee Heritage Center in Tahlequah, OK. Photo by Heidi L. Nees

“The average tourist doesn’t give a damn about history, but he will stop to see a rat-fight, and to see Indians. I am speaking of the hundreds of thousands on the highways who are white, and who know the romance of Indians, and who are just a little fed up with TV baseball, restless kids, and boredom.”

Kermit Hunter, Playwright

Letter to “Troy and Charles,” c. 1994
To my E.C.
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PREFACE & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is a tannish-brown color. The etched writing is rough, the lines are not exact, they are crude, primitive in style. It is not shaped like a block of wood—the natural shape is retained—part of a tree branch. The etched writing reads, “A Gift presented by the Indian Guides and Indian Princesses from the YMCA of Columbus.” My earliest recollection of it is from when I was three or four years old. It sat on my father’s desk at work, standing by with pens at ready for his use. It took awhile—several years, in fact—for me to realize that the gift was not from, nor made by, “real” Indians. The attempt at what the non-native manufacturers presumably thought looked “authentic” had worked on me as a child, at least for awhile. My father was a YMCA Executive Director in Piqua, Ohio, and had been active with the YMCA Indian Guides program. While I recall the penholder representing his service to the program clearly, I never remember taking part in the program as a child. My own experience with the program occurred when, as an adult, I became a Senior Program Director at a YMCA in Los Angeles, California. One of the programs I inherited was the Adventure Guides program, which was a revamped version of the Indian Guides program. I quickly learned however, that the Indian Guides program had not been phased out of YMCA memory as smoothly as some would have thought, or liked.

Local and regional YMCAs, and later the YMCA of the USA, formed and developed the Indian Guides program during the first half of the twentieth century and provided nature-based bonding activities to father and son pairs. Participants formed their own tribes, adopted their own Indian names, and learned campfire rituals to perform during camping excursions.¹ In the

¹ In many ways, the YMCA Indian Guides program shared characteristics with the Boy Scouts, Native Sons and Daughters, and other youth programs that involved donning “Indian” identity. For more critical engagement with these types of programs, consult Philip Deloria’s Playing Indian (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998). For more information specifically on the YMCA Indian Guides program, there are various websites, including the
early years of the twenty-first century, the YMCA of the USA decided to change the name of the program to Adventure Guides and remove all “Indian”-related activities and materials from the program in response to criticism regarding the potential cultural insensitivity of the practices. The spirit of Parent-Child bonding was still at the core of the program, but participants would no longer appropriate Indian imagery as part of the experience. This transition was met with much resistance from many of the fathers involved in the program at my YMCA. Several of them had participated in the Indian Guides program with their older children and did not want to make the switch to the revised version of the program. For many of them, the program encouraged ties with not only their sons, but also with their fathers. Many of the fathers I worked with had participated in the Indian Guides program, or similar programs such as the Boy Scouts, with their own fathers. Therefore, the Indian Guides program was not just about bonding with their sons, but also evoked nostalgia for their relationships with their fathers. They viewed the program, and specifically the practice of “playing Indian,” as a way to have a communal experience with their sons, other fathers, and their own fathers. To turn away from the Indian aspect of the program was to disrupt their communities.

In the following pages, this dissertation will treat outdoor historical dramas which can be considered the large-scale theatrical representations of Native American cultures and historical figures, staged in summer amphitheaters for mostly non-native audiences throughout the twentieth and now twenty-first centuries. It may seem peculiar that I am beginning my study on representations of Native Americans in outdoor historical dramas with an anecdote about the YMCA Indian Guides program. I find, however, striking similarities in the two topics. Just as

YMCA of Orange County site (www.ymcaoc.org/about-adventure-guides/program-history) that provide background information, as well as information about programs that are still in existence.
the YMCA Parent-Child program has gone through changes in an effort to be sensitive to and respectful of Native American cultures, so too have many outdoor historical dramas. Furthermore, these changes have in no way been easy and have in many cases caused many tensions and factionalism between participants. The fathers I encountered through the YMCA were upset because the traditions they had practiced in the Indian Guides program had become part of their own identities as fathers in relation to their sons, and in some cases as sons in relation to their own fathers. In addition, they viewed the program as being educational to their children about a group of people to whom they felt they were paying respect. These fathers, most of whom had no indigenous background, trusted that the ceremonies and information provided through program materials was accurate and that their participation helped secure a sense of legacy and remembrance for Native cultures. Likewise, many participants in outdoor dramas (again, most of whom are not Native Americans) approach their performances with an immense respect for the culture they are representing, in spite of practices within the dramas that many view as problematic. In both the Indian Guides program and outdoor dramas, do respect and homage solve or make-up for problematic practices?

A sense of legacy also infuses the Indian Guide program in that the fathers pass the “Indian”-based traditions of the program down to their sons. What does it mean for fathers to be teaching their children to “play Indian” over the course of a century? In a similar manner, there are “generations” within the outdoor historical drama realm that pass their traditions to up-and-coming leaders of the program. Marion Waggoner, past Executive Director of Tecumseh!, cites Rusty Mundell, Alan Eckert, and Sam Selden as some of the previous leaders who taught him.\[^2\] Alan Burke, who is the current Artistic Director of Tecumseh! regards Waggoner as someone who guided him when he began working on outdoor historical dramas. What does it mean to

\[^2\] Marion Waggoner, personal interview (telephone), 29 July 2011.
have this type of generational legacy? How does this type of generational education affect the ability to change the ways in which Indigenous cultures are portrayed?

   I view change as a healthy and productive necessity for organizations and programs, and I consider many of the practices in both the Indian Guides program and outdoor historical dramas as problematic. And yet, in spite of these things, I admit to still feeling a surprising sense of loss at the idea of throwing either away. A couple of years ago I returned to my YMCA in California and asked if any of the old Indian Guides materials were still around. There had been a section of our storage closet filled with books from the 1950s about Indian culture, program materials distributed by the YMCA of the USA, instructions on how to conduct a “council meeting,” guidelines for spending one’s “wampum,” and assorted leather-covered drums and headdresses. I thought that if they were still being stored I may be able to take them for research purposes. I was disappointed, however, to learn that all of the materials had been deposited into the dumpster because they were occupying too much space and aside from me, no one else had expressed any interest in or use for them.

   These are some of the quandaries that plague me as I approach the topic of representations of Native Americans in outdoor historical dramas; what changes have occurred or should occur to these dramas? What are the responses to these changes? What are some of the issues that emerge from these changes? What implications are involved if someone is trying to come from a place of respect and accuracy, and yet engages in a practice that offends another? What impact does legacy and the passing down of tradition through generations have on these dramas? What does it mean to throw it all away and start over…?

   A leitmotif that emerged from my research is the importance of community in producing outdoor historical dramas. As will be addressed in later chapters, the type of manifestation
community takes appears in various forms. Just as the necessity of community is significant to producing outdoor historical dramas, community has also been vital to me in producing this project. At this point I would like to acknowledge and thank my own community, in all its various forms, for helping me through this process and who assisted me in identifying and tackling the issues I address in this dissertation, and who continually open my eyes to new perspectives and experiences. First, I must thank my doctoral committee—Jonathan Chambers, Lynda Dixon, Lesa Lockford, and especially my advisor, Scott Magelssen—for their support, advice, and guidance through this process. Scott, I cannot thank you enough. Your patience and enthusiasm kept me going through the dark dissertation times. Thanks also to three professors who have continued to support me through my journey as a graduate student: Michael O’Hara, Ann Haugo, and Scott Irelan. Thanks as well to all of the people who took the time to sit and talk to me about their experiences with outdoor historical dramas: Susan Phillips of the Institute of Outdoor Drama (who put my anxieties at ease during my first research excursion and interview); the warm and friendly staff at the Cherokee Historical Association including John Tissue, Linda Squirrel, Mike Crowe, Jr., Daniel “Sonny” Ledford, and Fred Wilnoty, III; the helpful team at Tecumseh! including Beth E. Beatty (who had a battery just when I needed one), Bob Dehner, Herb Friedman, Adam Burke, Lee Crouse, Michael J. Frame, Scott Latham, Jenny Male, Raymond Speakman, and Maureen Yasko; Marion Waggoner; Danny Mangan; Margaret Bonamico and Don Lane from Trumpet in the Land; the welcoming staff at the Cherokee Heritage Center, especially Tom Mooney and Tonia Weavel; Larissa Fasthorse; Laurette Willis; and special gratitude to Greg Bergman for taking me on a research adventure. Without all of your willingness to express your thoughts about and experiences with outdoor historical dramas, this project would be incomplete. I appreciate each of your voices beyond measure. I would
also like to thank my Bowling Green community, including the faculty of the Department of Theatre and Film, my cohort (Chanelle, Kari Anne, Nicky, and Cyndi), and my fellow graduate students—you all have encouraged me and challenged me to be a better scholar, teacher, and artist. The people of this department are an example *par excellence* of what a community should be. Although I am grateful to the entire BGSU Department of Theatre and Film community, I want to especially thank Quincy, Miriam, JL, and Hope for always cheering me on. To Pat, Alyssa, Darin, Liz, and Angie—thank you for uplifting me even at my lowest moments. Thank you also to Grandpa and Susan for attiring me for my career as a scholar and teacher. I thank God for the community of family and friends that have seen me through my graduate school process, particularly my parents and my sister who have always encouraged me to pursue my goals (and continue to support me even when I get really grouchy in that pursuit), Melissa who is always just a phone call away, and my Grandfather who has always reminded and pushed me to keep going. Finally, thanks to Mike who, although he came in towards the end of the process, has provided me with the support to get through to the finish and keep going beyond.
INTRODUCTION

“It’s a precious cargo—the past. It’s not something to be treated roughly or thrown aside and forgotten.”

Laurette Willis

Introduction/Project Description

_I watched the older woman, her husband, and two young girls accept their tickets and walk through the gate of the Oconaluftee Indian Village. The two young girls, whom I assumed to be the couple’s granddaughters, looked to be about five and ten years old. The girls rushed over to each side of their grandmother when she pointed to a picture in the brochure and exclaimed, “Look girls! Do you want to see what a real-life Red Man looks like?”_

Images of “the Indian” continue to fascinate and attract audiences in American society. The incident I describe above occurred during my fieldwork in the summer of 2011. This anecdote, as well as the quote from Kermit Hunter included in the frontispiece, illustrates the allure these Indian images have for many people. The woman’s use of the phrase “Red Man,” and Hunter’s recognition of white audiences’ attraction to the “romance” of Indian imagery suggests contemporary society’s stereotyped conceptions of Native American cultures. The appropriation of a Native name in the mission to kill Osama bin Laden (“Operation Geronimo”), the use of the term “Indian Country” to identify Taliban-controlled territory in Afghanistan, the rap song released as I wrote this dissertation entitled, “Pocahontas,” by Shawty Lo and Twista, and audiences’ obsession with the chiseled native male bodies in the _Twilight_ series all suggest

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1 Laurette Willis, personal interview, 22 September 2012.
the pervasiveness of this infatuation with “the Indian” in various facets of contemporary American culture. Many of the images that persist can be considered negative stereotypes that can be traced back to Western films and even further back to nineteenth-century melodrama. Whether positive, negative, or a combination of both, depictions of Native American cultures continue to affect and interest audiences and scholars alike.

Since the emergence of outdoor historical dramas as popular summer tourist fare in the late 1950s and 1960s, Indian characters have played a dominant role in many of these entertainments. This genre of theatre is dependent on the outdoor element (which is considered vital to experiencing the performance by producers) and is usually produced in amphitheaters, often built exclusively for one drama. Furthermore, local commerce is tied up in the genre, as most producers of outdoor historical drama cite support from the surrounding community as vital to the success of the production. Historical outdoor dramas are professional theatrical enterprises which, in large part, employ undergraduate college students and local community members as their performers. Employing pageantry and spectacle (most notably the outdoor setting and large battle scenes), production companies stage these dramas annually for summer audiences.

Traditionally, producers have utilized a representational approach to staging these dramas. By nature of the genre’s title, they also feature some sort of historical event or figure and usually focus on specifically local history.

Despite continually attracting audiences each summer, this genre has attracted relatively little scholarship. Though audience numbers have dwindled over the years, the ideas about and images of Native American cultures are still being presented to predominantly non-native audience members, many of whom, like the visitors in the aforementioned anecdote, are young children accompanying their parents and grandparents. In 2010, over 350,000 people attended
outdoor historical dramas. Over 100,000 of these audience members attended the productions I visited during the summer of 2011. The continued dissemination of native imagery and “history” to such large masses of people makes this topic worthy of study. The ideas and images embedded in these outdoor dramas are complex and are not innocuous. For example, in *Trumpet in the Land*, whooping, war cries, and grunts are the primary vocalizations used by most of the Delaware warriors, and the Delaware women are in large part voiceless, exoticized, and referred to as “maidens.” It is important to look at these performances because they not only affect how non-natives view native populations, but also how non-native populations construct views of themselves in relation to the “Other.”

In many cases, the depictions of Native Americans and local history in these dramas have remained static over the years, and they continue to portray indigenous cultures in ways that reflect white constructions of the Indian “Other.” In some instances, however, representations of native cultures have undergone changes in an effort to redress these dilemmas. Oftentimes these changes have been instigated by Native Americans in the area of the production site, such as in the cases of *Unto These Hills* and the *Under the Cherokee Moon*. My project looks at the treatment of Indian characters in several outdoor dramas, as well as changes in treatment of these depictions by the producers of these dramas. I consider changes in narrative format and

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2 These figures are based on the thirty outdoor historical dramas that reported attendance numbers to the Institute of Outdoor Drama. The total attendees for the 2010 season actually exceeds 359,395 because several production companies did not submit reports. Each of the outdoor dramas I attended reported audience statistics and the number of attendees to these shows totaled 100,958 for the 2010 season. “Final Report – 2010 Outdoor Drama Attendance,” *Institute of Outdoor Drama*, 8 December 2010.

3 I place the term “history” in quotation marks here because this is a debated term in discussions about outdoor historical dramas due to its contentious relationship with the idea of entertainment.
structure, script, employment, production companies, casting policies, etc. One of my subjects of research is *Unto these Hills...A Retelling* in North Carolina. In the last decade, the Cherokee Historical Association (the organization which produces the outdoor drama in Cherokee) has implemented script changes, adopted new casting policies to employ more native actors, and transferred control of the organization and production to the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians.

In the case of *Unto These Hills...A Retelling*, the shifts surrounding the drama have been significant. In other cases, shifts have been subtle, as is the case with *Tecumseh* in Chillicothe, Ohio. Though the script has remained virtually unchanged during its forty-year run, some directors have attempted to make changes to the production to more “accurately” reflect Shawnee culture. Adam Burke, the most recent director of the drama, relayed a story regarding the exchange of an eagle feather between two native characters in the show. Previously, an actor on horseback dropped an eagle feather to the ground, and the other actor picked it up. According to Burke, several years ago, a cast member brought this stage moment to Burke’s attention and explained that in Shawnee culture it is profane to allow an eagle feather to hit the ground. Burke worked with the cast so that one actor would hand the eagle feather to the other, in an attempt to more accurately follow Shawnee tradition. In this case, the director instigated a subtle change in an attempt to respect the represented culture. What makes *Tecumseh!* and other dramas interesting and at times troubling cases to study, however, is that other elements that are considered offensive by some remain intact. In *Tecumseh!*, for instance, the mostly white cast still “paints up” to become Indian, an Indian character speaks of himself in a diminutive third-person voice, and a score played by the London Symphony Orchestra evokes old Western films with their problematic genealogy of depictions of native peoples.

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4 Adam Burke, personal interview, 22 June 2011.
Despite many production companies’ attempts to change, whether that change is significant or subtle, there are still outdoor dramas that remain largely unaltered. *Trumpet in the Land* is an example of a drama that holds fast to what I consider, based on my viewing of the show, outdated and stereotyped representations of native cultures. The script, which chronicles the massacre of a group of Delaware Indians who had converted to Moravian Christianity, sets up the Moravian Indians who had adopted white ways as “good” and the Delaware who held onto their native traditions as “savage.” Actors portraying Indians wore maroon tights that matched the red makeup applied to their arms and faces, in an attempt to save time and makeup by not painting their legs. Most of the non-converted Delaware characters speak in grunts and broken English. Margaret M. Bonamico, Executive Director of the production, explained that there are changes that she would like to make (such as acquiring new, more “authentic” costumes), but cannot due to budgetary limitations. There have been virtually no changes to the drama (the only significant change being that there is no longer a live organ playing the music, but rather a recorded soundtrack), but it is because of this lack of change that makes *Trumpet in the Land* an interesting case study. Bonamico’s reply brings up an interesting quandary; what does a production do when it wants to make changes and cannot because of financial considerations? Bonamico also pointed out that they run a program in which they bring in grade school children in order to allow them to experience both theatre and history, which raises the question, do we cease telling the story of the Moravian Indians in eastern Ohio because of questionable practices and representations? To further complicate this inquiry, who has the authority to tell these histories?

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5 Margaret Bonamico, personal interview, 16 July 2011.
Purpose Statement

My dissertation project is a historical study that analyzes production and performance choices which engage representations of Native Americans in outdoor historical dramas, representations that have historically tended toward reinscriptions of unhelpful stereotypes. Specifically, I analyze recent changes in these representations to explore how Native American cultures are now portrayed in this type of performance. With these production shifts, for example, have representations become more responsible and/or “accurate”? I look at not only how these representational practices are informed by the assumptions and views of producers of the drama, but also how audience expectations demand and perpetuate these views. Recognizing the complexities involved in such representational performances, I will assess the current state of the genre and the direction in which I see the genre heading. While other dissertations and theses have examined representations of Native Americans in outdoor historical dramas, each has focused on one particular production as a case study. My project reads across several productions in an attempt to address certain themes and motifs that emerge from outdoor historical dramas as a whole.

Research Questions

In addition to the queries posed earlier, (namely: who has the authority to tell these stories and is it still beneficial to tell another’s story, at the risk of problematic presentations, in order to ensure that story is heard?), questions guiding my research include the following: what sort of constructions of Native American cultures are outdoor dramas helping to build in the minds of audience members? What sorts of conceptions of history are the dramas disseminating to the audience? How does the presence or absence of a Native American community or tribe
around the drama affect depictions and productions choices? What changes have producers made to certain dramas, what and who instigated the changes, and what are the implications of those changes? What sorts of challenges did the dramas face while shifting its format, script, and/or policies? If a particular production has endured little to no change, what is the reason for that stasis? Is there participation on behalf of native populations in the drama, or is it primarily controlled by non-natives?

Methodology & Methods

Historical research dominates my approach. Bruce L. Berg describes historical research as “the study of the relationships among issues that have influenced the past, continue to influence the present, and will certainly affect the future.”6 In the case of my project, I am researching the events, people, and choices that have affected the portrayals of Native American cultures in outdoor historical dramas. In looking to several different dramas’ pasts, I aim to consider how attendant issues of cultural representation have influenced present productions, as well as assess how these issues affect the future of not only the individual productions but also the genre as a whole. Archival research, as well as secondary source material comprises my historical approach.

In order to assess the state of depictions of native cultures in my study, I employ the following methods: archival research, extra-archival fieldwork (which includes close readings of the productions), and personal interviews. As stated earlier, I am basing my research primarily in fieldwork, informed by readings in theatre and performance studies, historiography, and Native

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American representational practices. I conducted my fieldwork over the course of the summer and fall of 2011, during which I observed five outdoor dramas: *Unto these Hills... A Retelling Tecumseh!, Trumpet in the Land, The White Savage, and Under the Cherokee Moon*. At each of the sites I visited, I interviewed people who were involved in producing the show, including actors, directors, members of the Board of Directors, administrative staff, crew members, choreographers, Executive Directors, and playwrights. The people I interviewed include both current and past participants in these productions. I also visited additional tourist sites and/or tours attached to the drama. For example, I toured the Oconaluftee Indian Village and the Museum of the Cherokee Indian while in Cherokee, North Carolina; the Ancient Village, Adam’s Corner, and Trail of Tears exhibits at the Cherokee Heritage Center in Oklahoma; and took backstage tours at *Tecumseh! and Trumpet in the Land*.

As I have stated, my fieldwork consists of three areas of research: archival, extra-archival fieldwork, and personal interviews. The archival materials I have consulted include scripts; soundtracks; show programs; various correspondences including letters, phone messages, faxes, and emails; mission statements, meeting minutes, memorandums, and other assorted Board of Directors materials; audience surveys, production assessments, and attendance records from the Institute of Outdoor Drama; designers’ notes; newspaper articles and reviews; press releases and other advertisements.

In addition, my project includes extra-archival fieldwork. For this fieldwork, I traveled to five separate outdoor historical drama sites and participated in tours, observed productions, and conducted personal interviews. My experiences with the dramas are observatory, as I did not actually take part in the production work studied. I may be considered a participant insofar that I was one of many audience members and experienced the dramas and accompanying sites as
other audience members did. While other audience members may have noticed me taking notes, none of them inquired as to why I was doing so. I believe that many of my fellow audience members regarded me as they did other viewers. I therefore consider myself a participant-observer at the level of audience member. I apply a close reading approach to the plays in terms of scripts, performances, programs, and any accompanying activities or sites such as backstage tours, gift shops, museums, and reconstructed villages. The sites I visited and which inform my study are: Unto These Hills . . . A Retelling (Cherokee, NC), Tecumseh! (Chillicothe, OH), Trumpet in the Land (New Philadelphia, OH), The White Savage (New Philadelphia, OH), Under the Cherokee Moon (Tahlequah, OK), Museum of the Cherokee Indian (Cherokee, NC), Time of War mini-drama (Cherokee, NC), Oconaluftee Indian Village (Cherokee, NC), Backstage Tour of Tecumseh!, Tecumseh! mini-museum, backstage tour of Trumpet in the Land/The White Savage, Cherokee National Museum (Tahlequah, OK), Ancient Village (Tahlequah, OK), and Adams Corner Rural Village (Tahlequah, OK). In addition, I consider two productions that closed production prior to my research. The first is Blue Jacket (Xenia, OH), which closed in 2008. I base my research of the show on archival materials (script, costumers’ notes, programs, newspaper articles, etc.), interviews with past participants, a visit to the site, and my own memories of viewing of the show prior to its closing. The other show is Trail of Tears (Tahlequah, OK), which ceased production in 2006. To research this production, I interviewed past participants and consulted archival materials.

In addition to observing these productions and interviewing those involved, I visited archives to gather additional information about the history of each drama, as well as information on the genre and other productions. These archives included the Institute of Outdoor Drama in Greenville, North Carolina and the Cherokee Heritage Center in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. The
Institute of Outdoor Drama serves as a consultant to outdoor dramas of various genres, including outdoor historical dramas, Shakespeare Festivals, musicals, etc. The Institute also keeps attendance records, conducts audience and production surveys, holds auditions for companies, hosts an annual outdoor drama conference, and collects archival materials on outdoor dramas. While there, I also interviewed Susan D. Phillips, who, at the time, was running the Institute.

The Cherokee Heritage Center previously produced the outdoor historical drama *Trail of Tears* before production of that drama ceased in 2006, and the Center also produced *Under the Cherokee Moon* in recent years. I was able to conduct archival research on both dramas while there and interviewed the Center’s archivist and past *Trail of Tears* actor, Tom Mooney, as well as Tonia Hogner-Weavel who is currently the Education Director for the Center, as well as costume designer for the performance. At both archives I collected primary source material including scripts, correspondences, programs, memorandums, meeting minutes, websites, charters, advertisements, etc.

Limitations

The productions I focus on include *Unto These Hills…A Retelling*, *Tecumseh!*, *The White Savage*, *Trumpet in the Land*, *Blue Jacket*, *Trail of Tears*, and *Under the Cherokee Moon*. I have selected these productions because they all prominently feature Native American characters and cultures. While I will provide a brief background on each production I encountered, I will not be giving an exhaustive history of each, limiting my history of each production to that which addresses issues in representation and any changes that have (or have not) been made. I will not be looking at other types of outdoor drama or indigenous representations concurrent to these case studies, except in limited cases where these might be relevant. I will not be conducting a socio-
economic analysis of the productions’ effects on the surrounding community, nor will I be pursuing a demographic analysis of the audience. Any information relating to these two areas will be derived from other sources, such as studies conducted by the production companies and the Institute of Outdoor Drama. While I believe it is important as well as informative, and it may appear in future iterations of this project, I did not conduct exit interviews with audience members. I chose not to do so because of limited resources and instead chose to focus on the producers’ perspectives and decisions in constructing the performances. Therefore, my analysis is qualitative.

Terminology

As I stated under my limitations, I primarily focus on the producers’ perspectives in this project. In invoking the term “producer,” I do not exclusively refer to the person who is fiscally responsible for putting on a show. By producer, I mean anyone who is involved in constructing and performing the images and representations presented in a particular outdoor historical drama. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, the term “producer” can entail directors, actors, choreographers, playwrights, designers, administrative staff, marketing directors, executive directors, members of the Board of Directors, etc.

When I refer to Native Americans, their cultures, histories, etc., I use the plural form (rather than, for instance, using the generalizing, reductive phrase “Native American” as an adjective). I purposefully choose this form to emphasize that there is not one collective “Native American” figure, culture, or history, although they are often depicted this way, as I will discuss to greater extent in Chapter Four. There are over five-hundred native tribes in the United States, each with their own cultural distinctions. When possible, I note the tribal affiliation of a
particular character, figure, practice, etc., however, this is not always possible. Rather than being reductive, I hope that by using the plural form when talking about Native American cultures I am able to call attention, albeit in a small way, to the multiple cultures invoked by that plural phrase. Additionally, I use the term “Indian” in reference to Western-based constructions of native figures. I use the term “Native Americans” or specific tribal affiliations when looking at actual native populations.

Theoretical Lenses

The issues involved in representing Native Americans in outdoor historical dramas are rarely simple. Though a part of me expected to encounter simplistic notions of “good” and “bad” or “respectful” and “offensive” depictions of Native American cultures, I quickly realized the constructions of indigenous cultures and the ideas these constructs communicate in outdoor dramas are complex and multifaceted. These complexities result from trying to balance audience expectations with notions of accuracy and authenticity, all while trying to entertain. The practical necessity of balancing a budget is also implicated in these issues. In addition, the changes in these dramas and representations have, in many cases, created a palimpsest of sorts. One example of this is the current version of Unto These Hills...A Retelling. The drama, which is performed in Cherokee, North Carolina, changed each year from 2005-2010. The 2011 season was the first time the company retained a version of the script that, in most part, was produced the year before. The result is a layered production that mixes elements of the original production with remnants of each incarnation between 2005 and the present. In some scenes, the accuracy of history in the storyline is questionable, but as playwright Linda Squirrel pointed out, the
audience must be entertained and tickets must be sold. As I conducted my fieldwork, I realized that what I considered complex research questions led to even more complex answers.

Adding to the complexity of the concerns involved in cultural representations within outdoor historical dramas is the issue of authorship. By this I mean that most of the outdoor dramas I encountered are written, directed, produced, designed, and performed by non-natives. In the cases where the productions are now (predominantly) controlled by Native Americans (Unto These Hills…A Retelling and Under the Cherokee Moon), native control was not always the case, and increased agency on behalf of the Native Americans contributed to many of the changes that took place. Therefore, in many of the productions, non-native (usually white) voices and bodies relay the stories and cultures of indigenous peoples. It is because of this tension between native and non-native involvement in the depiction and dissemination of Native American imagery and histories in outdoor dramas that I am influenced by scholars who address representations of the racial Other.

Edward Said’s Orientalism provides a key text in exploring how a culture can be established as an “Other,” appropriated and subjugated by a dominant culture in order for the hegemony to define itself. Said focuses on how Western Europe (and later the United States) has historically inserted itself into a binary relationship with the “East” (Asia and the Middle East). He coins the term “orientalism,” defining it as “a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.” For Said, the relationship between West/East, Occident/Orient is defined by power. Through domination, Western Europe has been able to distort images of the Eastern Other and has thus been able to define itself against those images.

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7 Linda Squirrel, personal interview, 15 June 2011.

Said suggests that the European perception has been that, “The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences. Now it was disappearing. . . .” Replace “Orient” in that sentence with “frontier” and we are left with a similar relationship between white America and the western frontier. In this binary, Indians belong on the frontier and have been constructed as the racial “Other” against which white Americans can define themselves. While Said is specifically addressing relations with Asian and Middle Eastern cultures, his ideas are relative to how non-natives have constructed the Indian in the American imagination.

Philip Deloria also calls upon the racial Other as a tool in establishing identity in his book, *Playing Indian*. In his study, Deloria traces the “playing” of Indian-ness by non-natives through specific historical moments in the American past such as the Boston Tea Party, the emergence of hobby Indian groups in the early nineteenth century, and the counterculture movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Deloria considers this playing as performative acts that involve, but are not limited to, costume, language, behavior, and props. Limiting his consideration to ways in which white, American males perform or play Indian, Deloria not only explores the imagined constructions created by these perpetrators, but also the effects on and involvement by actual Native Americans.

Deloria asserts that the value of playing Indian for these performers is as much about creating a self-identity as about performing an “othered” role. This self-identity may fulfill a longing for national identity, or in the face of modernist identity, may provide an individual identity. Deloria argues that non-natives play Indian in the face of uncertainty, especially regarding identity and values. For instance, Deloria argues that modernist thought caused

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9 Said 1.
changes in how Americans came to view themselves; instead of individuals, Americans began to feel as though they were cogs because of industrial development or just another number because of the weaponry advancements of World War I. Playing Indian allowed for non-Natives to recall a perceived time in American history when this objectification did not occur. Deloria maps his ideas across two axes; the first is an axis that involves negative and positive qualities that are often ascribed to images of the Indian, which thus reflects upon the self-identity of the player. The second axis runs along the line of “interior” and “exterior.” These terms refer to the distance the Indian figure is placed in relation to the player’s self. The Indian figure may be considered as existing within and part of the parameters of the community or nation (interior) or outside those boundaries (exterior). Deloria describes these in terms of axes rather than strict binaries in order to allow for movement along these lines and overlapping. He argues that the changes in the ways people have played Indian are because of players reinterpreting performances to fulfill different needs depending on their specific cultural moment.

Deloria’s ideas regarding playing Indian informs this study because in most of the productions, audiences view non-natives adopting “Indianness” in order to perform. The argument may be expanded to other producers of the drama as well. In other words, the playwright, director, designers, etc. are all playing Indian in one way or another in order to tell a particular story about what they consider “their” local history. Furthermore, in the case of Blue Jacket, the script revolves around a white man who “plays” Shawnee.

Another scholar who has influenced my understanding of native representations is Rosemarie K. Bank. In her article, “Staging the ‘Native’: Making History in American Theatre Culture 1828-1838,” Bank claims that scholarship on performances by and of Native Americans has in large part resulted in stereotyped binaries and thus reinforces ideas of a white-centered
mythological American frontier. Bank sets out to reconsider staging and performance in three
nineteenth-century “cultural intersections”: Red Jacket’s (Seneca) visit to New York City at the
time of the Peale Museum display of two native chiefs (1828), the Andrew Jackson-mandated
prisoner-of-war tour by Black Hawk (Sauk), and the 1836 revival of Pocahontas in Washington
D.C. which featured dance and scalping exercises as part of a protest against Cherokee
removal.10 In looking at these events, Bank discusses audience reception and perception,
shifting attitudes on behalf of audience and performer, how these changes were manifested in the
performances, and how these displays “crossed the border” between perceptions of “real life”
and performance. The idea of border crossing, as well as “cultural collisions,” is employed by
Bank to support her concept of “theatre culture.” This term refers to the incorporation of issues
and identities of a community into performance—in this case, issues and identity of the Indian in
the antebellum American community.

Though Bank looks at performances from the nineteenth century, I have found many of
her ideas useful to my own study. Her notions of “border-crossing” and “cultural collisions”
inform my own understandings of how entertainment and history intersect in outdoor historical
dramas. There is a sense of “border crossing”—shifting perceptions on behalf of the audience
between what is “real” history and what is fiction—in these productions. The notion of “cultural
collisions” is a way of looking at the confrontations of several cultures in outdoor historical
dramas, including white culture, the white construction of native cultures, and the actual native
cultures behind the depictions. Both Said and Bank’s studies are also tied to notions of history,
and how history is represented and performed.

As I stated earlier, I am using a historical approach to examine the decisions, practices, events, and policies that have driven outdoor historical dramas over the years. In analyzing and examining these past practices, productions, and people, I hope to better assess the current state of native representations in outdoor dramas. I also recognize, however, that the study of the history of any topic is not an objective science, nor are the findings “stable.” The materials I have consulted were each produced in a particular moment and naturally reflect the values, assumptions, and beliefs of those who produced the materials. This document itself is informed by my own values, beliefs, and past experiences, and is therefore not “objective fact.” These views of history are informed by historiographic theories, which recognize that the ways in which historical narratives have been constructed and disseminated is significant to the history of a topic. Historian Eric Foner, in *Who Owns History?: Rethinking the Past in a Changing World* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2002) xvii., argues that many people find it hard to accept that “there often exists more than one legitimate ways of recounting past events.” One of the issues with outdoor historical dramas is that the conflation of “historical fact” and entertainment in the productions results in confusion for the audience as to what is “true” and what is not. Many of the producers with whom I spoke pointed out this confusion on behalf of the audience. In some cases, such as with *Blue Jacket*, what was accepted as historical truth has changed, a situation Foner addresses when he suggests that “History always has been and always will be regularly rewritten, in response to new questions, new information, new methodologies, and new political, social, and cultural imperatives.” For the producers of *Unto These Hills* and *Under the Cherokee Moon*, the histories portrayed reflect new cultural imperatives in response to...

11 Foner xvii.

12 Foner xvii.
pressure from Cherokee in the area who disagreed with how the histories were represented. Aside from these changes in history, most of the dramas use a format in which history seems objective and static. During the course of this study, I explore how different views of history affect the representations therein. Furthermore, I have tried to incorporate this multi-perspective view in my historical approach in that I have culled information from numerous sources and have tried to involve numerous voices from producers and participants.

Michel de Certeau, in *The Writing of History*, addresses power relations between Western culture and the “Other” through the discourse of history and historical writing. He opens his book with a frontispiece of Jan Van der Straet’s allegorical etching of Amerigo Vespucci arriving in the “New World” and coming upon the nude Indian woman, “America,” lounging in a hammock. The etching depicts the European “discoverer” attired in Western tunics, holding instruments of technology and a flag bearing his Western affiliation, and a ship behind him, signaling the future for this land. He stands over America, as she reclines, seemingly inviting this colonizing power. De Certeau accompanies this frontispiece with an anecdote about this “inaugural scene” in his Preface, where he comments that “the conqueror will write the body of the other and trace there his own history.” Similarly, many non-native producers of outdoor dramas have traditionally traced their own history and culture onto the body of the native Other. De Certeau contends, “But what is really initiated here is a colonization of the body by the discourse of power. This is *writing that conquers*. It will use the New World as if it were a blank, ‘savage’ page on which Western desire will be written.” I find de Certeau’s imagery to

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14 de Certeau, xxv.
15 Ibid.
be particularly helpful when considering about the many native cultures, figures, and histories in outdoor historical dramas. Oftentimes, native histories have been colonized by non-native producers in an attempt to define and reinscribe Western ways and identities. Through this project, I hope to join other scholars in the attempt to allow native “others” to speak in their own voices about their own histories, figures, and cultures.

Tied to de Certeau’s statement that “This is writing that conquers” is the Western-favored method by which knowledge is transferred. How the knowledge about the histories and cultures depicted in the drama is acquired is also a concern in this project. It seems that the appropriation of Native histories by white producers stems from how each culture treats historical narrative. That is, in Western-based, white culture, histories are often text-based, therefore, the historical information on which many outdoor dramas are based is written by whites. The scripts of Tecumseh!, Blue Jacket, Trail of Tears, The White Savage, Unto These Hills, and Trumpet in the Land were all written by white men who, in large part, based their research on sources written by other white men. Unto These Hills . . . A Retelling, however, relies heavily on embodied knowledge. To learn the traditional Cherokee dances presented in the show, Larissa Fasthorse, a Lakota choreographer, learned from area Cherokee who held the knowledge. Also, oral traditions such as storytelling have been used to garner information about the culture and history. This information is then disseminated to audiences through the show, as well as through the Oconoluftee Village. The notion of embodied and written/recorded knowledge is a reoccurring theme in this study and is largely informed by Diana Taylor’s ideas on the archive and the repertoire. Taylor contends that Western-based societies rely mainly on the written word as the basis for knowledge transmission. In doing so, indigenous forms of knowledge transference, which is founded in embodied practice, has been disregarded and
devalued. Here we can see where Said’s notion of a power-play relationship affects how the Other is fabricated. In outdoor historical dramas, white producers have exerted power over non-natives by privileging their own form of knowledge creation and transmission, thus erasing native agency in how their stories are told. I interrogate this situation in the chapters that follow and look at instances in which embodied knowledge has been granted a place within certain outdoor historical dramas. Theories of representation, history, and the archive and repertoire intersect in complex ways in looking at the portrayals of native cultures in outdoor historical dramas.

Review of Literature

There is relatively little scholarship on outdoor dramas, and even less that problematizes the portrayals of Native American cultures in these productions. This may be due to the perception of outdoor historical dramas as a middle- or low-brow theatrical form. Kermit Hunter laments this outlook in Producing America’s Outdoor Dramas when he describes the perceived state of theatre outside of New York City: “Unless a playwright, an actor, a director, or a technician is actively at work somewhere in the vicinity of Times Square, he is hardly more than a meaningless ripple in the great 3,000-mile sea west of Manhattan. . . .”16 Hunter goes on to celebrate the advantages of outdoor drama, painting the genre as a type of theatre of and for the American public.

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Many early advocates of the genre tried to establish a genealogy of outdoor historical drama through theatrical bloodlines, in an attempt to establish legitimacy for outdoor historical dramas. Samuel Selden, one of the early proponents of the outdoor historical drama, traces the form’s roots back through a familiar, if not well-worn, trajectory of theatre history. He claims that early civilizations’ rituals and ceremonies were performed as open-air drama, and ties in ancient Greek and Roman amphitheatres and Shakespeare’s Globe theatre as other examples of drama presented in the open air. In arguing this connection between the American outdoor drama genre that emerged in the 1950s and historically canonized theatre practices through the sacred element of open air, Selden tries to legitimize American outdoor drama as a significant theatrical form. Bettye Choate Kash adopts a similar argument for the legitimacy of outdoor drama, summarizing the same evolution, but also adding in the outdoor pageants, Passion Plays, and festivities of medieval drama and performance. These attempts to establish outdoor drama as a form to be taken seriously are a common feature in much of the early scholarship written about the genre.

One of the earliest works to address this type of theatre is a pamphlet produced by the Carolina Playmakers, an organization associated with the University of North Carolina in March of 1954. Titled, “Producing America’s Outdoor Dramas,” the publication was primarily written by Samuel Selden with contributions by Paul Green, Kermit Hunter, Harry E. Davis, and Kai Jurgensen, each of whom had been involved in the creation and production of at least one outdoor historical drama. At the time of publication, there were only eight productions running.

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17 Selden, et al. 8.

but the trend seemed to be growing as many other communities expressed interest in establishing their own outdoor dramas. Therefore the pamphlet provides information on the existing productions, a history of this type of theatre, considerations for this theatrical brand, and advice for those who look to start their own outdoor historical drama. This advice is divided into that which addresses the start-up and management of such an endeavor and advice that pertains to the actual creation and execution of the play. Topics covered include establishing a Board of Directors, raising funds, budgets, building a theatrical space, choosing a topic and commissioning a script, directing, acting, lighting, voice training, choreography, scenic elements, and costumes. The pamphlet also includes photographs of existing outdoor theatre structures, a sample proposal for an outdoor drama, and budget estimates for initial costs. The publication serves as a practical how-to manual for starting an outdoor theatre company. Specifically, the contributors attempt to kindle the flames of the outdoor historical drama movement. Selden expresses why he believes the form is so important when he states that, “In the end . . . the chief value to the community will always stand in the quality of the project itself, in its merits as a work of art and in what it does to stimulate a spirit of cooperativeness, a sense of civic pride, amongst all those who participate in the work of bringing it to fulfillment.”\textsuperscript{19} In the early stages of the outdoor historical drama, a production was seen as a source of revenue in terms of community pride, collaboration, and economic growth. The work concludes with an assurance to readers that the Department of Dramatic Art at the University of North Carolina has additional information available upon request for those who are serious in their desire to start such a production.\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{19} Selden, et al. 44.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
The first, and to my knowledge, only book-length publication on outdoor historical dramas followed a decade later in 1965 and adopted much of the tone of Selden’s pamphlet. Titled *Creating Historical Drama: A Guide for Communities, Theatre Groups, and Playwrights*, it also was a group effort, with Christian H. Moe and George McCalmon authoring the text. Despite the recent decrease in audience numbers at outdoor historical dramas, a second edition of this guidebook was released in 2005. An “abridged revision” of the first edition, Scott Parker, past director of the Institute of Outdoor Drama, joined the list of authors and a brief foreword by Romulus Linney was added.\(^2\) It is possible that the second edition was launched in an effort to revive interest in outdoor historical drama. In an interview with Christian Moe, he shared with me that the press was interested in reprinting the book and he felt it needed updating.\(^2\) I found that what is presented in the second edition is similar to what is found in Selden’s 1954 publication. That is, the recent publication presents a how-to guide for creating and developing an outdoor historical drama. While in “Producing America’s Outdoor Dramas,” Selden admits that the this particular form of theatre is “an evolving form and no single shape or style has yet established itself as ‘standard,’” in the 1965 edition of *Creating Historical Drama*, and even more so in the 2005 version, the authors have the advantage of discussing a field that had settled by the time of publication.\(^2\) By 1965 several more productions had emerged and standards had been set, guiding the authors in the advice they provide in the book.

In *Creating Historical Drama*, Moe, Parker, and McCalmon endeavor to explain what historical drama is, the purpose it serves in its surrounding communities, and how to develop


\(^2\) Christian Moe, personal interview, 4 May 2012.

\(^2\) Selden, et al. 2.
such performances. They suggest three types of historical drama—biography drama, pageant drama, and epic drama—and devote a chapter to each type. In their approach to history and the performance of it, they argue that in historical writing for the stage, one must start with the facts and are then permitted to use “imagination and invention” to construct a story, a point that has been debated in recent years as some dramas have been scrutinized for the liberties they take in presenting historical events.\textsuperscript{24} For Moe, Parker, and McCalmon, however, what is of importance in writing a historical drama is that an emotional response is elicited from the audience.\textsuperscript{25}

The authors compare the playwrights of historical dramas to historians, but claim they differ in that playwrights must begin with the facts, but may take license with these facts in order to produce an effective drama. In establishing this correlation, Moe, Parker, and McCalmon attempt to ascertain the credibility and importance of the playwright. The authors also stress that historical dramas are useful in serving as reminders of not just past celebrations but also of past tragedies and they also create a communal experience for those present at these performances. With these ideas in mind, the authors set forth to establish an advisory guide to creating historical drama. They discuss subjects such as research, writing, organizing production staff, cast, and crew, and connecting with the surrounding community.

This book is useful in that it provides foundational information and is one of the few book-length texts on outdoor historical dramas. It is also an example of a particular perception of historical dramas—one that allows for much license in the construction of the narrative and that places a premium on audience emotional response. In my view, however, this approach can be problematic, as it seems to efface ethical considerations of the cultures and pasts being

\textsuperscript{24} Moe, et al. 3.

\textsuperscript{25} I explore this idea of emotional response in terms of catharsis in Chapter Two.
performed. For the most part, Moe, Parker, and McCalmon fail to address the racial and cultural implications of representation in the book, and they do not problematize the treatment of Native American subject matter in outdoor historical dramas. In response to Allan Eckert’s script of *Tecumseh!*, they assess, “Eckert has told the story well,” without questioning his research nor any liberties he took in developing the script.\(^{26}\) They briefly mention in the first chapter that

> Historical drama can often remind communities and their audiences of what is often forgotten or unrealized: the injustices, intolerances, and atrocities of history, the mistreatment and disenfranchisement of people, the failure of the law. Many of the dramas discussed or cited in this book treat subjects such as slavery, the Underground Railroad, pauper auctions in early New England, women’s rights, and the unjust seizure of Native American land. Some wise man once said that those who forget history are doomed to repeat it. . . . The historical dramatist has the obligation of reminding people what should be not forgotten or, in many cases, repeated.\(^{27}\)

In one statement, the authors seem to attempt to “cover their bases.” By nodding to the injustices inflicted on several groups all at once, however, they universalize these experiences. While there is some overlapping in the treatment of such subject matters and subjugated groups, recognition of the idiosyncrasies of each topic is necessary as well. For instance, it is widely accepted today that blackface is not an appropriate practice, so the authors may assume that topic need not be addressed. Redface, however, is still widely practiced in outdoor dramas, thereby the same assumption cannot apply. Instead of addressing concerns of individual representations and

\(^{26}\) Moe, et al. 141.

\(^{27}\) Moe, et al. 8.
topics portrayed in outdoor dramas, the authors of *Creating Historical Drama* provide a blanket disclaimer at the beginning of the book and fail to address such issues further. While issues of representation may not have been considered as significant a concern when the book was originally published in 1965, these issues have moved to the forefront of racial and cultural politics by the time of the latest release in 2005.

The ideas expressed in both “Producing America’s Outdoor Dramas” and *Creating Historical Drama* are also expressed in several published articles written by many of the same men, including Christian H. Moe, Paul Green, Samuel Selden, Kermit Hunter, and others. Most of these articles were published in the late 1950s, 1960s, and into the 1970s in sources such as *Southern Theatre, Bulletin for the American Association for State and Local History, Educational Theatre Journal,* and *Players Magazine* and discuss the same topics covered in the previously discussed texts: advice on how to start an outdoor drama, the benefits to the surrounding community, the enrichment these dramas provide to a sense of history and civic pride, the artistic license allowed in presenting historical drama, and attempts at legitimizing the form by drawing correlations to “traditional” theatre history, especially the ancient Greeks. These texts fail, however, to address issues of representation such as authorship, cross-racial casting, use of redface, accuracy in the depiction of history, authenticity, etc.

By the early 1980s, outdoor historical drama had apparently caught the attention of (at least a couple) graduate students. At this time, two doctoral dissertations were published on outdoor drama: Raymond Carroll Hayes’ “A Study of Hero-Building and Mythmaking in Three of Kermit Hunter’s Outdoor Historical Epic-Dramas” (Indiana University of Pennsylvania 1982) and Bettye Choate Kash’s “Outdoor Historical Dramas in the Eastern United States” (Indiana University 1985). Hayes begins with the usual history of outdoor dramas, and then narrows his
focus to three of Hunter’s plays, Unto These Hills, Horn in the West, and Honey in the Rock. Of particular interest to me is his consideration of Unto These Hills. With a close-reading approach, Hayes looks at how Kermit Hunter’s manipulation and adjustment of historical events and figures contribute to the creation of heroes and myths in his plays. Hayes argues that the reason Hunter creates characters and/or embellished little-known historical figures is because there is less artistic flexibility in using well-known figures. In the case of Unto These Hills, Hayes explains that Hunter took dramatic license to create and expand the story of Tsali, a Cherokee man who is characterized as the martyr whose death allows for some Cherokee to remain in the surrounding Appalachian Mountains. Interestingly, for several years now the Cherokee Historical Association has been trying to change the script of Unto These Hills in order to more accurately reflect the life of Tsali, but has been met with much opposition from those (both non-Cherokee and Cherokee) who believe that Hunter’s Tsali and his heroic deeds are accurate depictions. Hayes notes that Hunter recognized that his story of Tsali was largely fabricated, but that Hunter defended his choices by saying his story keeps with “the ‘spirit’ of the history of the Cherokee.” 28 Hayes attributes much of the play’s popularity in performance to the heroic characters and deeds.

Hayes points out some of the criticisms that were aimed at Hunter for the liberties he took in his treatment of historical events and figures and points out to readers what some of these liberties were, especially with the story of Tsali in Unto These Hills. Hayes does little to problematize, however, the implications of Hunter’s manipulation of historical events and figures. He excuses potential negative effects of this practice by saying that Hunter’s characters

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represent bigger ideas and loftier ideals. He goes on to defend Hunter by noting a “gap” in historical accounts of Tsali:

Numerous versions of these and other anecdotes from the Cherokee history abound, none, unfortunately, written down at the time of occurrence but drawn many years later from the memory of persons reputedly present and recorded by persons who made no claim to being professional historians.29

In other words, Hayes is suggesting that Hunter is excused from staying true to historical record because care was not taken to “properly” preserve the history in the first place. My concern does not lie in Hayes’ defense of Hunter’s strategies, but rather in Hayes’ refusal to problematize this method and his privileging of written records and “professional historians.” I respond to Hayes’ work by looking at the methodologies that have been traditionally used by outdoor historical dramas to acquire information about and tell stories of the past. I applaud Hayes in his critical engagement of Hunter’s plays, and his focus on *Unto These Hills* and the Cherokee community surrounding the drama. Hayes, however, claims that the only way Hunter could help the Cherokee in the struggle for justice was to present them as “pathetic victims of past American indiscretions, upright and deserving of long-awaited redemption.”30 To me, this depiction of the Cherokee as “pathetic” and “upright and deserving of long-awaited redemption” is reminiscent of the romanticized Noble Savage. Although Hayes’ is the earliest work that I have found that engaged in discussion of Native American figures and cultures in outdoor historical dramas, his point of view privileges white authority on the subject and does little to call into question the portrayal of indigenous populations.

29 Hayes 114.

30 Hayes 144.
Bettye Choate Kash’s dissertation, “Outdoor Historical Dramas in the Eastern United States” is similar in style to Selden and Moe’s works. Rather than a critical engagement in the texts of the scripts and performances, Kash gives a detailed account of practically all considerations involved in staging an outdoor historical drama. To research her topic, Kash traveled to twelve different productions located east of the Mississippi River, including: *The Lost Colony*, *Unto These Hills, Horn in the West, The Stephen Foster Story, Honey in the Rock, The Hatfields and the McCoys, The Legend of Daniel Boone, Trumpet in the Land, Tecumseh!, Lincoln, The Song of Cumberland Gap*, and *Blue Jacket*. Kash consulted books, articles, and archival materials for each production in her research. In addition she saw each of the shows she studied and interviewed participants. Claiming “the search for individual freedom” as a common theme among all of the productions, Kash proceeded to look at several production considerations for each play. What results is a detailed account of the history, the physical theatre space and accompanying structures (such as bathrooms, gift shops, horse stables, etc.), the economic considerations, her personal performance reviews, and script analyses for each drama. Furthermore, she provides the seeming “prerequisite” first chapter on the history and evolution of outdoor historical dramas as a genre (and in which she also demonstrates how *The Lost Colony* incorporates all six of Aristotle’s dramatic elements) and a final chapter in which she situates outdoor historical drama within American theatre, once again trying to carve out a place of significance for the form.31

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31 I also call upon Aristotle’s writings on tragedy in my second chapter. I do so, however, not to situate outdoor drama within the Western theatrical canon, but rather to call attention to how some Indian characters fulfill the role of the tragic hero and provide audiences with a cathartic experience.
Kash’s work is incredibly detail-oriented. She reviews how productions go about closing down the facilities at the end of the season, discusses the budgetary considerations for having horses in the production, and uses two pages to discuss rain policies for different shows. While Kash’s work provides meticulous account of the ins and outs of creating and executing a production, there is little critical or theoretical engagement with the material and it does not address issues of representation.

A few dissertations and theses have been written in the last decade, which deal with depictions of Native American cultures in outdoor dramas. Matthew D. Thompson questions how Native Americans, specifically, Cherokee, have been portrayed in outdoor historical dramas in his dissertation, “Staging ‘the Drama’: The Continuing Importance of Cultural Tourism in the Gaming Era” (University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill 2009). I suspect, though he never overtly states it, that one of the reasons he sets ‘the drama’ off with inverted commas in his title is because of the backstage and political drama he encountered as he conducted his research. Using an ethnographic approach, Thompson, an anthropology student at the time, moved to Cherokee, North Carolina and worked for the Cherokee Historical Association during 2006. While there, he worked in the office, mainly organizing archives, and also performed in Unto These Hills during the 2006 season. Timing is everything, and Thompson had chosen the right time to study the drama. The doctoral student moved to Cherokee just as the Eastern Band of Cherokee had taken control of the Cherokee Historical Association and were re-vamping the outdoor drama. Thompson chronicles the development of the Cherokee Historical Association and Unto These Hills through the Cherokee takeover of these previously white-dominated endeavors. He cites the opening of Harrah’s casino in Cherokee as a major factor in helping the tribe take control of many facets of the surrounding community, including the Association,
drama, and accompanying Oconaluftee Indian Village. Through interviews, extensive archival research, and his work with the Association and the production, Thompson was able to shed much light on the turmoil and struggle of the Cherokee Historical Society and its relationship with the surrounding community over the years. He kept a journal of his experiences and uses a narrative approach in much of the dissertation to relay ‘the drama’ behind the drama. He addresses many of the same issues other researchers have also mulled over; how much artistic license is too much? How do white perceptions of self and other affect the construction of Native American characters in this particular drama? How do these constructions thus benefit the predominantly white audiences that attend the show? Additionally, Thompson offers a scene-by-scene synopsis and analysis of the old script.

Thompson’s research is thorough and, quite frankly, enviable. Thompson, because of the investment of time and labor he put into the community, was able to participate in and evoke frank and open discussions with members of the community. His research is significant because it was conducted at the moment of occurrence. He actually experienced the changes he wrote about rather than looking at them in hindsight. He describes the moment during which he was there as a “Cherokee Renaissance” in which the community shifted from “cultural display to revitalization and nationalism” for the Eastern Band. His insights are valuable to me in that they give me a glimpse of what occurred at the time of this immense change in the Cherokee Historical Association and the play. It is impossible for me to gain the same access to that moment because, as I found out this summer, ‘the drama’ has not ended. There are still hurt

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feelings, disappointments, and negative memories that some participants do not want to relive from this time of change.

While experiencing the change as it was happening is invaluable to Thompson’s research, I have the advantage of a different perspective. The changes in *Unto These Hills* did not stop after the 2006 season. In fact, they have had two completely different scripts since, and several incarnations of the current script. While Thompson was able to briefly address some of these changes at the end of his project, in some ways I am able to pick up where Thompson left off in terms of exploring the implications of the many changes that have taken place. Thompson’s work provides readers with an excellent example of an ethnographic project and illustrates the struggle for agency not just in terms of how Native American culture and history is represented onstage, but also in terms of control over the operations of the organization and drama.

Rosemary Virginia Hathaway’s project, titled “Reading Tourist Sites, Citing Touristic Readings: Anglo Constructions of Native American Identity and the Case of Tecumseh” (The Ohio State University 1998) looks at issues of representation in regards to Tecumseh, focusing on several different texts, including Alan Eckert’s *The Frontiersman* and *A Sorrow in Our Hearts*, Orson Scott Card’s *Red Prophet*, James Alexander Thorn’s *Panther in the Sky*, and the outdoor historical drama *Tecumseh!* Hathaway, who earned her PhD in English, approaches the subject from a folklore background, bringing in tourism theory, postmodern theory, and a bit of performance theory to bear upon her subject. She takes an ethnographic strategy in examining *Tecumseh!* in that she worked on the production for one summer. She also interviewed participants and uses a close reading analysis of the script and novels included in the project. Furthermore, while at the performance site, she conducted two surveys and her advisor conducted another of the audience in order to understand what their perceptions of the play were.
Hathaway concludes that through *Tecumseh!* audiences are able to construct the “Other” in ways that distance themselves from any perceived threats the Other may present to the audience’s identity and authority.

I agree with Hathaway when she claims that white constructions of Native Americans have gone “relatively unchallenged.” 33 Though I believe these constructions have been scrutinized in other media (especially film), I do not believe they have been challenged in terms of outdoor historical dramas. I find Hathaway’s work to be articulated well and it calls upon many interesting considerations in terms of portrayals of the “Other.” Hathaway explores issues of authority, accuracy, and authenticity in white constructions of the Tecumseh figure and considers the exorcism of white guilt for producers and audiences in the production. While I explore similar issues, I hope to add additional ways of looking at these issues in addition to examining how they play out in other outdoor historical dramas. One of Hathaway’s strengths is her continual consideration of her own cultural position within this topic, as well as the position of those she interviewed.

A topic that Hathaway notes at several points in her dissertation is the idea that the drama is being performed in a spot where indigenous populations (in this case Shawnee) no longer live in large numbers. After relaying a story of how the show claims to have helped “preserve” the Shawnee Wolf Chant from extinction by recording the only two Shawnee who knew the chant and implementing it into the show, Hathaway points out, “This narrative implies that Shawnee culture, on the brink of disaster in 1974, must surely be extinct now, and that the only ‘survivals’

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33 Rosemary Virginia Hathaway, “Reading Tourist Sites, Citing Touristic Readings: Anglo Constructions of Native American Identity and the Case of Tecumseh” (Ph.D. diss., The Ohio State University, 1998) ii.
of the culture are carried on through the drama itself.” By calling attention to the perception that the Shawnee are not an extant community, but rather an extinct one, Hathaway is noting the perceived absence of this group in the area where a (white) version of their history is told. I take up this idea of absence and expand upon it, as well as the presence that marks the dramas in North Carolina and Oklahoma in Chapters Two and Three.

In her 2007 undergraduate thesis (College of Wooster), Kristen Cooperkline examines the portrayal of Native American cultures and histories in three different outdoor dramas—Unto These Hills, Trail of Tears, and Tecumseh! She explains the birth and development of each of these plays, explores the historical narratives that are presented by each, and looks at each production’s relationship with the tourist industry. Issues of historical accuracy, audience perception, and involvement of Native Americans in these shows are also of concern to Cooperkline. She traces perceptions regarding Native Americans and the “West” performed in these shows back through other entertainment venues including dime novels, literature by James Fennimore Cooper, Wild West shows, and the Western genre of film.

One of Cooperkline’s strengths is her inclusion of primary source material. From newspaper articles to board minutes to personal correspondences, her findings are well-researched. Cooperkline also incorporates an epilogue in which she asserts her personal opinion of each play, claiming Tecumseh! as the one she found most entertaining and suggesting her own hope for the future of Unto These Hills. She explains that this North Carolina production had just gone through a major overhaul at the time of her writing, as it turned control of the production over to the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and hired a Native American

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34 Hathaway 64-65.
playwright, director, and actors. At the time of Cooperkline’s completion of the study, it was too early to assess the success of these changes.

Cooperkline’s study provides a critical look at Native representations in outdoor drama. I feel, however, that the analysis and engagement in the texts can go deeper. As an undergraduate thesis, it does little to dissect the relationship between the performances within the productions and those within the surrounding museums/exhibits, any special activities, such as backstage tours, these outdoor dramas may host in order to attract more visitors, and additional stereotypes beyond the noble savage and the blood-thirsty savage. Cooperkline’s work, however, remains useful and is worth mentioning here because it is one of the few studies that problematizes how Native Americans are portrayed in these outdoor dramas.

My attempt in this dissertation is to add to the conversation created by the recent dissertations and thesis regarding representations of Native American culture in outdoor historical drama. While Hathaway and Thompson each focused on one particular drama, I, like Cooperkline, involve several dramas in my study.

A work that assisted me in providing a language with which to recognize and identify several Indian stereotypes found in performance is Eugene H. Jones’ *Native Americans as Shown on the Stage 1753-1916*. In this book, Jones suggests various Indian character types that have emerged from different performances and provide examples of these types, as well as the functions they have served. His study is a survey of the utilization of and changes in portrayal of Native Americans as “Indian” characters in American theatre during the late eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries. Jones claims that rather than being accurate, these portrayals were distorted images created by white Americans. These images served to cover up the white Americans’ fears of Native Americans and the obstacles they posed to what whites
perceived as their manifest destiny. Though Jones’ findings are grounded in primarily
nineteenth-century constructions of the Indian figure, I argue that these characterizations can still
be found in contemporary outdoor historical dramas. Of greatest use to my own study are his
ideas on the Noble Savage, the Vanishing Indian, and the Red Savage. The Noble Savage can be
seen in several of the productions, including *Tecumseh!, Blue Jacket*, and *Unto These Hills*. The
Vanishing Indian is present in each of the Ohio dramas, as well as the old version of *Unto These
Hills* and *Trail of Tears*. The Red Savage is especially evident in *Trumpet in the Land* and *The
White Savage*. These stereotypes and how they function within outdoor dramas is discussed
further in Chapter Two.

One of the challenges I have faced through this process is maintaining self-reflexivity in
dealing the sensitive subject matter at hand. Because I am a white woman, some may question
whether or not I am exploiting the Other in my academic pursuits. Certainly, there have been
moments when I have had to pause and reflect as to whether or not I am falling into
generalizations and wide-sweeping assumptions. I recognize that my own values, background,
and experiences inform not only what I write, but how I have approached this topic. Richard L.
Poole deals with similar issues in “History, Archive, Memory, and Performance: The Lewis and
Clark Bicentennial Play as Cultural Commemoration.” In this article, he explains his experience
writing a production for a commemoration of the Lewis and Clark “Voyage of Discovery” in
2004. Poole talks through his own struggle with many of the concepts with which I also
wrestled—history, performance, archive, repertoire, representation. During the course of the
article, he analyzes his approach and the challenges he faced in writing a commemorative piece
that celebrated an event many native members of his audience may not find worth adulation. He
also self-reflexively shares his struggle with his own construction of the Indian. In reviewing the
dialogue he wrote for the Indian characters, he ponders, “Did I create a dialogue that reflected stereotypical attitudes? Yes, clearly I did. Obviously, my creative imagination drew from my own mental archive.”35 I am guessing that in the future I will look back at parts of this dissertation and reflect in a manner similar to Poole’s. I, like Poole, am influenced by my own mental archive. My own mental archive is filled with stereotyped images of Indians from my childhood—an archive that inspired me to take on this topic. In this process, however, I do not wish to speak for Native Americans (like Amerigo Vespucci imposing his own history on the Other per de Certeau’s example) in regard to representation. That is part of the reason I chose to conduct interviews—I want to give voice to others with regard to these issues. Through this project, I want to call attention to ways in which Native American cultures and histories have been appropriated by non-native producers and commodified into stereotyped images in order to meet audience expectations, and how recent changes have sought redress some of these issues. With the historical approach I have chosen, I have been able to utilize archival research, observation, and personal interviews in order to collect voices with which this narrative has been constructed. I recognize that there are multiple ways to piece together and relay the information herein, and I hope that my contribution can open a dialogic space in which readers can form new considerations of and cultivate new discussions about how Native Americans are portrayed in outdoor historical dramas.

Chapter Breakdown

I have chosen several different dramas to investigate, rather than concentrating on one particular case study. Furthermore, rather than taking up each play independently, I have identified several different topics I read across the chosen productions. In Chapter One I provide background information on outdoor historical drama in general, as well as background information on each individual production I have selected for this study. This background information includes a brief history on each of the selected outdoor dramas, including how the drama was founded and information on the producing organization. In addition, I explain some of the changes that have taken place at certain dramas. The historical narratives I construct and present in this chapter are, of course, dictated by my own priorities in this study, namely, depictions of Native American cultures.

Chapters Two and Three are companion chapters in which I consider how perceptions of absence and presence affect the productions. In the cases of Unto These Hills...A Retelling, Under the Cherokee Moon, and Trail of Tears, the dramas are produced in Cherokee territory where contemporary Native Americans live, thus creating a strong and current presence of native cultures surrounding the drama at hand. For the other productions (Blue Jacket, Tecumseh!, The White Savage, and Trumpet in the Land), which all take place in Ohio, there is a distinct absence of dominant native communities in the area in comparison to the dramas in North Carolina and Oklahoma. In Chapter Two, I consider how, in the dramas where absence is perceived by producers and audiences, stereotypes such as the Noble Savage and Vanishing Indian allow for a cathartic experience on behalf of audiences who, in large part, regard Indians as relics of the past. In Chapter Three, I look at how Cherokee presence around Unto These Hills and Under the
Cherokee Moon has resulted in increased agency and control over the dramas for the people being depicted.

Chapter Four focuses on issues of accuracy and authenticity in outdoor historical dramas. I look at the ways in which historical accuracy is distorted in order to entertain audiences’ expectations. I also look at how non-native and native producers try to achieve “authenticity” in the ways Native American cultures are portrayed. Drawing from Diana Taylor’s notions of the archive and repertoire, I explore how the depictions of history and cultures in the productions are constructed and transmitted into the production. To do so, I focus specifically on the practice of redface in many of the dramas. Finally, I present the case of Blue Jacket, which stopped production in light of changes to what was considered the historical “truth” of the title character. By bringing in Deloria’s ideas of “playing” Indian, I consider what was at stake for the producers and community in the situation surrounding Blue Jacket.

I dedicate Chapter Five to the production I saw in Tahlequah, Oklahoma titled Under the Cherokee Moon. This production diverges from the other productions I saw by breaking away from the representational mold. Instead, the drama relies heavily on audience interaction with the performers and storytelling. Additionally, it addresses issues in performing history with its metatheatrical style, which calls attention to both the constructed nature and polyvocality of history. In my estimation, this play provides other outdoor dramas with a fiscally- and ethically-sound alternative to the spectacular format traditionally used.

As I stated earlier, the images and representations in outdoor dramas are not innocuous. They carry implications that are harmful to producers, audiences, and the people being portrayed. The historical approach I have adopted has allowed me to consult and gather various sources and voices in an attempt to glean a picture of representations of native cultures in these dramas in the
past, the state of the issue in our present-day, and where it is headed in the future. Historian W.H. McDowell claims that,

The study of history provides a framework which we can use to make sense of our experience and guide our actions. The future is, in any case, partly conditioned by the past: it is not entirely predictable, but equally it is not the outcome of pure chance.\textsuperscript{36}

I hope this project helps to make sense out of present experiences with outdoor historical dramas. More importantly, though, I hope that it will help condition the future in a way that relieves it of the harmful representations found in many outdoor historical dramas.

CHAPTER I: UNRESOLVED HISTORIES

“As in all history, there was no resolution.”

Jack Zierold¹

I remember the sound of the horses’ hooves. I remember the darkness falling and the glow of the fires onstage. I remember the horror I felt when the young Indian boy ran onto stage and was shot by the soldiers. I remember the awe I felt in watching these spectacles onstage—from the horses, to the fires, to the battles scenes, to crowds of Indians. Not only was this my first encounter with outdoor historical drama, it was also my first experience going to the theatre.

As I mentioned in the Introduction, the historical narrative I present regarding outdoor historical dramas is naturally bound to my own subjective relationship with the topic. In talking about the history of outdoor historical drama in general, as well as the individual histories of the shows chosen for this study, I feel it is also important to reveal some of my own history with the form. In the construction of any history, the researcher’s own relationship with the subject affects the historical narrative’s construction. Therefore, by calling attention to my own past with outdoor historical dramas, I hope to better situate myself within the subject material and in turn, offer the reader an understanding of the perspectives with which I approach the subject.

My parents first took me to see Blue Jacket in Xenia, Ohio when I was about six or seven years old. Though much of it scared me, I was fascinated by the Indian characters (as a young

¹ Jack Zierold, letter to Mark Sumner, 6 August 1973, Institute of Outdoor Drama, Greenville, North Carolina.
child, I had no idea they were for the most part, white actors in makeup and wigs). It wasn’t until I was in my early twenties that I would encounter outdoor historical drama again. One of the acting professors at Ball State University, where I was an undergraduate, announced auditions for the upcoming summer season of Blue Jacket. Though I was tempted to audition, I had already lined up an internship elsewhere. My friend, Greg, however, took part in the show and I attended the production to support him. I was yet again enthralled by the show, but was surprised at how my perspectives had changed since my childhood. This time, the makeup and wigs were glaringly obvious, as well as many of the other theatrical conventions that I had viewed as authentic in my childhood. These were my only two experiences with outdoor historical dramas until now, however they had left such a distinct impression on my memory that they inspired this dissertation.

I reveal this to mark myself not as someone who approached this research tabula rasa, but rather, as someone who had previously been affected by this subject. Though my excitement for the topic has not diminished, my perspectives certainly have, hence the epigraph which opened this chapter. My history with outdoor dramas, to paraphrase this chapter’s epigraph, is unresolved. Jack Zierold wrote these words to Mark Sumner, of the Institute of Outdoor Drama, regarding the opening season of Tecumseh!, and though his words were speaking specifically about the drama in Chillicothe, Ohio, I believe they can serve as reference point for this chapter. It is not just my own history with outdoor dramas, for neither is the history of the theatrical form, nor the histories of individual productions by any means resolved. It is important to look at these histories in order to understand the changes that have been made to the dramas, as well as the implications these changes have had on production participants, audience members, and the Native American cultures represented. In this chapter, I aim to provide the reader with a brief
description and history of outdoor historical dramas in general, as well as each individual production on which I focus in this dissertation. This is by no means an exhaustive attempt to provide the descriptions and history of the outdoor historical drama as a theatrical form. My goal is rather to provide readers with an overview of pertinent information to inform their understandings of the form, as well as the individual productions.²

For each of the shows I’ve chosen as case studies, I will provide a brief description of the drama in addition to tracking significant changes to the production. The historical narratives I provide in this chapter are constructed from both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include personal interviews and archival materials such as unpublished letters, memoranda, meeting minutes, charters, programs, and newspaper articles. For each of the productions, I will provide information regarding the drama’s genealogy (based on the historical narratives constructed by others as well as the archival materials I consulted in my research), reasons for the show’s decline, the catalyst(s) for change for the productions, and descriptions of those changes. These latter two elements will be examined much more in-depth in later chapters. Through provision of these descriptions and histories, I hope to lay a foundation of knowledge for my readers, upon which we can explore in subsequent chapters some of the issues that have emerged from these unresolved histories.

Outdoor Historical Dramas

The historical narrative often given for outdoor historical dramas may be described as “epic.” Many scholars and practitioners of outdoor historical drama claim roots pre-dating ancient Greek theatre. Samuel Selden describes “drama presented under the open sky” as “the oldest drama in the world.”3 Scholars including Selden, Christian Moe, and Betty Choate Kash trace a history of outdoor historical drama from the rituals of ancient Egypt, through ancient Greek and Roman theatre, up through medieval liturgical festivals and The Globe theatre of the Renaissance. Certainly the common denominator amid these various performances is the outdoor element. The historical narrative usually picks up again in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, at which point scholars often draw parallels between outdoor historical dramas and community pageants. Selden selects Percy Mackaye’s *The Pageant and Masque of St. Louis* presented in 1914 as a prime example of the pageant form.4 These pageants were usually visually spectacular, celebrated local history, and depended on community involvement. In terms of form, Selden describes pageants as “historical panoramas, moving tableaux using some dialogue and considerable action.”5 While outdoor historical dramas were influenced by these pageants in their use of spectacle, history, and the surrounding community, the form of outdoor historical dramas takes a different shape.

Selden marks this “change in form” with the staging of Paul Green’s *The Lost Colony* in 1936. Chronicling the historical mystery of the lost inhabitants of the Roanoke Island colony, the drama is still staged annually and is considered by most outdoor historical drama

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4 Selden, et al. 8-9.
5 Ibid.
practitioners and scholars to be the first outdoor historical drama. Whereas pageants depict a large scope of time (often the entire history of the community) and offer little in the way of character development, *The Lost Colony* and the outdoor historical dramas that followed focus on a narrower time frame and concern a select group of characters. There is usually a distinct plot in outdoor historical drama that drives the narrative of the script forward, rather than a constantly-changing stream of vignettes. Christian Moe classifies both pageant-style performances and dramas like *The Lost Colony* as “‘live’ dramas that use historical materials,” and distinguished the latter style as “epic dramas.” The outdoor historical dramas I address in this study are, for the most part, what Moe considers “epic drama.” That is, they follow a traditional narrative plot and focus on several principal characters. Moe considers epic dramas to be “fluid” because “it’s characteristics of shape and style are not yet standardized.” While I would agree that this may have been the case when the first edition of Moe’s book was released in 1965, I contend that at the time of the second edition in 2005, most of the outdoor historical dramas followed a relatively standardized formula. This is in part because of the decrease in new dramas being developed in the outdoor historical drama form. This idea of fluidity, however, has begun to emerge once again as some outdoor historical dramas change their formats. For instance, since 2005, *Unto These Hills* has experimented with form several times and has now settled into a script which incorporates both a traditional narrative style and pageantry in an attempt to show the history of the Cherokee people, the story of Tsali, and contemporary Cherokee culture.

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7 Ibid.
As stated earlier, the outdoor historical dramas that I am focusing on are currently, or
began as, what Moe calls “epic dramas.” They are presented outdoors, use a traditional narrative
structure in which a historical event or figure is presented using a distinct plot and developed
principal characters. After the premiere of The Lost Colony in 1936, other outdoor historical
dramas began cropping up, including The Common Glory in Williamsburg, Virginia, Unto These
Hills in Cherokee, North Carolina, and Horn in the West in Boone, North Carolina. By the
1950s, these four dramas were playing to audiences and literature on outdoor dramas began to
emerge. In 1954, Samuel Selden, chair of the drama department at the University of North
Carolina, as well as director and advisor to several outdoor historical dramas, along with
contributions by Paul Green (playwright), Kermit Hunter (playwright), Harry E. Davis (director),
Kai Jurgenson (director), William M. Hardy (general manager), Victor Michalak (voice
director), and Foster Fitz-Simons (choreographer), composed a pamphlet titled, “Producing
America’s Outdoor Dramas.” One of the earliest writings on the form, the pamphlet was written
to satiate requests for a guide to producing outdoor dramas. Selden describes the impetus for
producing the pamphlet:

With the recent growth of outdoor historical dramas in the United States, there has
developed a widespread interest in the concept, purpose and techniques of these
plays. Many inquiries concerning the forms of the dramas and the methods of
producing them have come to the University of North Carolina. In an effort to
answer the most frequent questions, the Department of Dramatic Art prepared
over a period of time a number of short mimeographed guides covering the
organization of the theatre projects, the writing and directing of the plays, the
designing of the theatre structures, and the management of the dramatic enterprises.⁸

Though this description suggests the publication was primarily a how-to guide, it also provided a platform for the authors to declare outdoor historical dramas as a distinct and new form of theatre, theorize the purpose and appeal of the dramatic form, and to proselytize its benefits to individuals, communities, and the nation. In terms of its appeal, Selden suggests that its popularity is due to

[T]he fundamental urge each of us have to escape the confines of our cramped way of living in a modern world. We work in little rooms; we sleep in little rooms; we eat in little rooms; we play, dance, and even watch the movies and television with our elbows pinned to our sides. But, however civilized we have become, we never feel that this crowding is comfortable and right. Both our bodies and our spirits long for freedom. So, every once in a while we rebel. Then we get into our cars and drive into the country, to the seashore or to the mountains. We step into a wall-less amphitheater; above us is the sky, around us are the trees or mountain tops. Slowly, as the night settles around us and the music begins to speak, we are ready to see courageous men and women walk before us. The lights go up and the play begins. There is no comparable experience to be found anywhere.⁹

⁸ Selden, et al. 2.

⁹ Selden, et al. 10.
Selden goes on to suggest that a second reason for the popularity of this type of drama is “the insatiable interest each of us has in the history of our country.” Both of these reasons identified by Selden suggest a uniqueness to the form reminiscent of the type of uniqueness and exceptionalism attributed to the United States by such figures as Alexis de Tocqueville and Frederick Jackson Turner. The idea of freedom, particularly in terms of wide-open spaces of land traversable by Americans, espoused by Selden’s first comment has been touted since the early nineteenth century. Furthermore, the notion that this travel may be accomplished by car in the form of a road trip is a characteristic often assigned to 1950s American culture. Dimitri Ioannides and Dallen J. Timothy acknowledge “The advent of the private automobile and the massive growth of the interstate road infrastructure” as contributing factors in the growth of American tourism after World War II. John A. Jakle also cites “Pent-up buying power and increased leisure time” during this post-war period as reasons why many Americans spent their increased wealth on hitting the new interstate highway system in their automobiles. The rhetoric in many of the materials from the early planning stages of these outdoor dramas refers to notions of patriotism through tourism. In a letter from the early days of the Cherokee National Historical Society, the producing entity of Trail of Tears in Oklahoma, Colonel M.A. Hagerstrand, the Executive Vice-President of the group, states “this organization has been formed to assist in increasing the interest of tourists and vacationers in the places of historical

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10 Ibid.


interest in this part of eastern Oklahoma.”13 In 1996, the Institute continued to encourage scripts with patriotic appeal, claiming that “The most popular audience scripts are strong on patriotism.”14 In many of the materials on outdoor historical drama, the cultural moment during which outdoor historical dramas gained popularity is characterized by its stress on tourism and history and patriotism through interest in both areas.

Selden’s claim that Americans have an “insatiable interest” in national history is supported by Matthew D. Thompson, who in his dissertation on *Unto These Hills* in Cherokee, North Carolina, suggests that during the post-World War II moment in time, local and regional histories became more popular, thus feeding a “nationalist storytelling.”15 The nationalist overtones that characterize outdoor historical dramas in the first publication on the topic are highlighted even further by Paul Green. Green, who wrote numerous outdoor historical dramas, reinforces the idea that outdoor historical dramas are a uniquely American form of theatre because of the combination of story material, prevalence of transportation by automobile, and the outdoor element:

This is a vast country, full of legends, historical figures and noble events—all waiting to be used. And with the convenience of the automobiles and good roads there is no reason why audiences cannot be drawn to any place if there’s an interesting and colorful show to be seen. And there’s something about a

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13 Colonel M.A. Hagerstrand, letter to unknown, date unknown, Institute of Outdoor Drama, Greenville, NC.

14 Mac Harris, “Notes on a phone conversation with Scott Parker Re: New Script,” 9 July 1996, Institute of Outdoor Drama, Greenville, NC.

production outdoors that seems to fit the temper of the American people, their mind and athletic muscle power.\textsuperscript{16}

In drawing a connection between American national identity and outdoor historical drama, Selden, Green, and the other authors of this pamphlet attempt to carve out a place for their form of drama in the national repertoire. Green and Kermit Hunter both eschew Broadway in their writing, claiming that Broadway is confining and inaccessible to much of the population.\textsuperscript{17}

“Producing America’s Outdoor Dramas” is not only a how-to guide, but also a sales pitch, as it serves many purposes from providing advice to encouraging the development of these dramas to theorizing about the subject. It is an important document to the history of this theatrical form in that it laid a foundation for how outdoor dramas would be conceived, constructed, and produced for the next fifty years. Furthermore, the authors of this guide stressed an element they deemed necessary for outdoor historical dramas: community support.

The need for community support is a trope that has emerged in one shape or another in almost every conversation I have had with practitioners, as well as many of the primary and secondary sources I have read. Selden cautions potential producers,

\begin{quote}
The venture should have strong community backing. It is not enough to have an author or a director just want to put on the play, nor for a small group of sponsors just desire it. The community as a whole must be vigorously interested in it, interested to the extent of being willing and eager to work hard every step toward making it a success.\textsuperscript{18}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{16} Paul Green, “The Outdoor Drama in America,” “Producing America’s Outdoor Dramas” 6.

\textsuperscript{17} Selden, et al. 6-7.

\textsuperscript{18} Selden, et al. 11.
Despite his encouragement of future outdoor drama producers throughout the pamphlet, Selden insists that community support is of utmost importance. Herb Friedman, one of the founding board members of *Tecumseh!* insists, “If you don’t have wide support and people that believe in what you’re doing and public acceptance you cannot start an outdoor drama.”¹⁹ In our interview, Friedman reiterated the need for local support, especially in the form of financial support several times. During the course of my research, the idea of community and community support emerged often in a variety of ways. It has the power to build a drama, and it also has the power to run a production into the ground. Nonetheless, community and local support are integral components to outdoor historical dramas.

In addition to the “Producing America’s Outdoor Dramas” pamphlet, resources for those wishing to start outdoor productions also emerged in the form of the Institute of Outdoor Drama (IOD), which began in 1963. Housed at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, the organization was formed to provide advice and guidance to groups who wish to produce outdoor dramas of various types including historical dramas, Shakespeare festivals, musical theatre productions, and religious dramas. The Institute was established to provide consultation in various facets of outdoor drama including new play development, board recruitment, fundraising, strategic planning, amphitheater design, marketing, etc. Now housed at East Carolina University, the Institute continues to provide service to outdoor dramas nationwide. The organization advertises itself as “the only organization in the U.S. providing national leadership in fostering artistic and managerial excellence and expansion of the outdoor drama movement.

¹⁹ Herb Friedman, personal interview, 13 July 2011.
through training, research and advisory programs.” 20 In addition to consultation regarding outdoor drama development and sustenance, the Institute also holds an annual conference on outdoor dramas; maintains an archive of materials including scripts, programs, marketing materials, photographs, design plans, budgets, charters, correspondences, etc.; and conducts surveys regarding audience demographics and responses, attendance trends, and economic impacts on surrounding communities. The IOD has been an important part of the outdoor drama movement since its inception in 1963 because it has provided leadership during the formation of most outdoor historical dramas and continues to provide leadership to thirty-eight outdoor historical dramas. The Institute is particularly important to the productions included in this study because each of the dramas included are active members. 21 Additionally, the Institute provided guidance to two of these shows, Unto These Hills and Trail of Tears, when they underwent substantial changes to the productions.

Over the course of the last seventy years, there have been many changes to outdoor historical dramas, and yet there has also been a sense of stasis. In some cases, such as in Cherokee, North Carolina and the drama in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, there has been much change as Cherokee have taken more control over the drama and how their cultures are represented. 22 In other cases, such as in many of the dramas in Ohio, the productions have undergone relatively little change. A trend that has been shared by most, if not all, outdoor historical dramas is a decline in ticket sales. Many participants in outdoor historical dramas point to the 1990s as the

20 “About the Institute of Outdoor Drama,” Institute of Outdoor Drama <http://outdoordrama.unc.edu/history> (2 February 2012).

21 Productions pay yearly fees to remain members of the Institute. In return, the drama receives consultation services from the IOD.

22 Specific examples of these changes will be addressed in the chapters that follow.
beginning of this drop in numbers and continue to see the drop occur today. In a 1994 letter from Scott Parker, director of the IOD at the time, to Marion Waggoner, producer of Tecumseh!, Parker relays, “We’re beginning to hear from more and more of the larger dramas and it seems that none of them are doing particularly well.”\textsuperscript{23} In my interviews with production participants, the interviewees suggested various reasons for the slipping audience numbers. Many, including Susan Phillips who works at the Institute of Outdoor Drama, point to the recession as a major factor in the decline. Phillips calls attention to the effect of the economy on family budgets; “This year specifically we are still in, we are trying to claw our way back from this recession we’ve been in and so when something like that happens, the first thing that goes is vacations and things like that, so I don’t think people are traveling as far.”\textsuperscript{24} Rising gas prices are often cited as a reason for the struggling ticket sales as well.

Not only does the economic state of affairs affect the wallets of families, but it also affects the governmental wallet. Lee Crouse, who played Captain Dawes in Tecumseh! during the 2011 season and served as the Assistant Pyrotechnician, recalled his experience with Theatre West Virginia, which produces the outdoor historical dramas, The Hatfields and McCoys and Honey in the Rock; “they got a good portion of stuff from the state. And the state made this massive cut and in 08 they almost closed.”\textsuperscript{25} Adam Burke, the current Artistic Director of Tecumseh! also told me about cuts in government funding for the arts:

We get all of our funding—almost all of our funding from ticket sales. Well, ticket sales and things we sell here, gift shop, things like that. The State of Ohio

\textsuperscript{23} Scott Parker, letter to Marion Waggoner, 18 July 1994, Institute of Outdoor Drama, Greenville, NC.

\textsuperscript{24} Susan Phillips, personal interview, 14 June 2011.

\textsuperscript{25} Lee Crouse, personal group interview, 22 June 2011.
has pretty much cut all arts funding. They cut straight across the board, I mean, museums, state parks . . . federally there’s nothing available now. So all of our funding comes from ticket sales.\textsuperscript{26}

Without government subsidy, many outdoor dramas have to seek increased private funding. The cuts in government support, hikes in gas prices, and suffering economy are fairly recent shifts, however, and as illustrated by Scott Parker’s letter, decreasing ticket sales were evident in the 1990s. Some people point to weather as a discouraging factor for outdoor drama. Friedman shared with me his view on the topic; “The main thing that brings audiences back . . . is not the economy. We have a good show and the weather is our big, big deterrent.”\textsuperscript{27} Certainly, many of the participants with whom I talked mentioned that they are at the mercy of the weather. In fact, I experienced that first-hand when I visited Cherokee, North Carolina. My plan was to see \textit{Unto These Hills . . . A Retelling} on Wednesday, June 15, 2011. When I picked up my ticket from the Cherokee Historical Association office and asked when cancellations would be announced in case of inclement weather, the employees laughed and said that shows never close for bad weather. The abridged version of this story is that one of the worst thunderstorms in recent history blew through the mountains that night and I was fortunate enough to be able to book my hotel room for an extra night so that I would have another chance to see the show.

While severe weather can certainly have drastic effects on a production season in outdoor drama, Danny Mangan views issues with weather to be more of an attitude shift on behalf of the audience. Mangan, who has worked in the capacities of performer, choreographer, and technician in three different outdoor historical dramas including \textit{The Legend of Daniel Boone},

\textsuperscript{26} Alan Burke, personal group interview, 22 June 2011.

\textsuperscript{27} Herb Friedman, personal interview, 13 July 2011.
Trail of Tears, and Blue Jacket, suggested to me that the concern with weather has more to do with concern for comfort:

[outdoor dramas] are competing with the weather element. People are getting more accustomed to being climate-controlled all the time so they don’t want to sit outside on a 100-degree night to watch a show. They don’t really want to sit in wet rain anymore. They’re getting more pampered to luxury so it’s really hard to get them to sit in the metal seats in an amphitheater where it’s not air-conditioned—it’s hot, it’s muggy. The seats are uncomfortable. And most outdoor dramas can’t afford to put in comfy, stadium seating. Or to have air conditioning or all of that other stuff that makes a viewing environment comfortable.²⁸

This concern with comfort has influenced decisions at the Cherokee Heritage Center in Tahlequah, Oklahoma. While Trail of Tears was still in production, an air conditioning system was installed in the Tsa-La-Gi amphitheater to try to fight the extreme heat during the Oklahoma summers. It goes without saying that the staggering costs to run an outdoor air conditioning system did not help the production budget.

This idea of shifting audience attitudes is one that John Tissue brought up when I asked him about the decline in outdoor drama attendance. He does not, however, perceive weather-related shifts. In an interview with Tissue, the Executive Director of the Cherokee Historical Association, the producing body of Unto These Hills, he expressed what he sees as a change in the way that audiences watch and engage in visual presentations. “I think we have to think about it in the chunks where people are willing to think,” he suggests, “like people want blogs, and

²⁸ Danny Mangan, personal interview, 13 September 2011.
podcasts—they’ll watch that. They want things in tinier chunks.” Tissue credits changes in technology as a contributing factor to this shift in how people are able to focus on visual presentations. Recently he has mulled over whether to allow tweeting, texting, and posting videos to YouTube by audience members in the theatre; can these forms of communication be used to garner more audiences? Tissue and other producers of outdoor dramas, however, face a difficult dilemma—they must try to cultivate younger audiences while still catering to an older crowd. As Tissue puts it, the 55-74 year age group is the “bread and butter” for many outdoor dramas. Therefore, striking a balance between generational modes of viewing and communicating is a difficult challenge facing a dramatic form that is still predominantly geared to the older generation.

Tissue and others also note that because many outdoor historical dramas have been continuously running for several decades, it is challenging to garner audiences who will continue to see the same show year after year. Tissue notes,

[P]eople aren’t going to put up with having the same thing—you know, maybe they’d watch the same Unto These Hills every year for forty years, but now people expect something to be different. What’s going to bring me back? What have you done for me lately? What’s going to bring me back this year? . . .

[T]here’s got to be something that draws them back because there’s too many choices.

29 John Tissue, personal interview, 15 June 2011.

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid.
This idea of a plethora of choices is one that is widespread amongst outdoor door drama participants. It is a question that theatre practitioners across the board ask; how do we compete against film, television, video games, etc.? Tom Mooney in Tahlequah, Oklahoma mentioned the fact that when *Trail of Tears* began, most people only had three channels on their television sets, whereas now a great number of people receive over one hundred channels, thereby adding to the competition to outdoor dramas. I asked Greg Bergman, who was an actor in *Blue Jacket*, what brought audiences back to the show year after year. He replied,

> You know, I don’t know. I was wondering the same thing, I mean, the theatre seats between 1200 and 1500. It’s huge . . . Even in 2000 it was like the twentieth year of *Blue Jacket* . . . and I thought, we do eighty-two performances for twenty years in this small, little po-dunk town in Ohio, how is this open? I mean we would sell out some nights…what on earth? If they’ve seen it once, for God’s sake, it does not change. Why on earth are you coming back? It never changed . . . how it stayed open as long as it did is beyond me. I mean, I think it’s a fantastic show, but no other shows run that long, so I had no idea.32

Many production companies have attempted to supplement their main show with other productions such as a musical to bring in new audiences. Burke, however, warns that this practice may potentially lead to a decrease in quality of shows.33 Some of the dramas examined in this study have undergone changes to the old script and/or changes in the activities offered alongside the traditional script. For instance, the producers of *Unto These Hills* have not only changed scripts for the main show, but they have also added “mini-dramas,” which are featured

32 Greg Bergman, personal interview, 28 July 2011.

33 Adam Burke, personal group interview, 22 June 2011.
at the Oconoluftee Indian Village (I will treat changes such as these with more detail in later chapters.). Other dramas, such as *Tecumseh!* and *Trumpet in the Land* have been unable to change because of copyrights on the script that has been used for the last few decades. Regardless, most of the practitioners with whom I spoke expressed a desire to keep their dramas fresh.

As the discussion above illustrates, outdoor historical dramas have begun to decline in audience attendance over the years and many are now facing severe financial situations. Some people point to the economy and weather as factors. The weak economy, however, has been a recent development and the weather has always been a factor. While both may contribute to decreasing audiences, the decline has been occurring for the last two decades. Shifting attitudes and a familiar product seem to also be perceived as factors affecting the success of outdoor dramas. In the remainder of this chapter, I will track the histories and some of the changes incurred by the particular outdoor historical dramas I researched for this study. The producing organizations of some of these dramas instigated changes to meet some of the challenges posed to their drama, whether that be decreased attendance or criticism of the representational practices employed by the company. We shall see, however, that even when producers try to address criticism, budgetary concerns factor into the decisions made, especially in light of the financial woes plaguing many productions.

*Tecumseh!*

Though the Institute of Outdoor Drama declares on its website that North Carolina is “the nation’s definitive center for information on writing and producing modern American Epic Drama,” Ohio currently boasts three outdoor historical dramas in addition to *Blue Jacket*, which
closed production after the 2007 season.\textsuperscript{34} Not only does Ohio have more outdoor dramas than many states, a couple of those productions, at various points in their histories, have been considered models for other productions to follow. One of those productions that has been considered a leader in the field is \textit{Tecumseh!} Staged in Chillicothe, Ohio at the Sugarloaf Mountain Amphitheatre, the drama centers on the eponymous Shawnee chief who tried to unite various Native American tribes in an effort to fight against white “settlers” and the United States military and retain their land. The action of the play spans a number of years, from 1784 to 1813, and includes several historical figures including frontiersman Simon Kenton, military general (and later President) William Henry Harrison, Tecumseh’s brother Tenskwatawa (also known as The Prophet), and Shawnee war chief Blue Jacket. Allan W. Eckert based the script on his novel \textit{The Frontiersman}, which is part of his \textit{The Winning of America} series. Produced by the Scioto Society, \textit{Tecumseh!} opened in 1973 and has played to more than 2.4 million audience members.\textsuperscript{35}

I was fortunate in that I was able to interview Friedman who was one of the founding board members of the Scioto Society and the play, as well as a previous local business owner. According to Friedman, a man approached him about starting an outdoor historical drama in the area. That man was W.L. “Rusty” Mundell, who would go on to become Executive Director of The Scioto Society and later found \textit{Blue Jacket}. According to a trip report written by Selden, Mundell originally wanted the drama to be produced in conjunction with Ohio University. In his report regarding his consultation visit, Selden commented that he “recommended that they think

\textsuperscript{34}“About the Institute of Outdoor Drama,” \textit{Institute of Outdoor Drama} <http://outdoordrama.unc.edu/history> (2 February 2012).

\textsuperscript{35} The Scioto Society, Inc., “2011 \textit{Tecumseh!} Show Program” (Chillicothe, OH) np.
seriously of making the community a partner in the venture—if they go ahead with it—in order to be able to draw on community resources and get the community to feel it had a personal responsibility for making it a success.”

Mundell apparently paid heed to Selden’s advice, because he approached his fellow Chamber of Commerce member, Friedman, and convinced him to join in the endeavor. When I spoke with Friedman, who had never seen an outdoor drama when he agreed to join the effort to start an outdoor historical drama in the Chillicothe area, he recounted his travels to various productions in those early years:

Now when we went around, I learned a lot of things I didn’t know. Believe me, we wanted to know how they did this and how they did that. We met with many people that were starting in the outdoor drama. I met for years with a fellow up north here who wanted to start an outdoor drama. This is after I went to these meetings, Institute meetings. And I met him there . . . and I expressed basically the same things I’m explaining to you. You can’t do it—you can’t do it unless you have a strong financial basis.

This assertion that a strong financial basis is necessary to start an outdoor drama was stressed repeatedly by Friedman in our interview. He explained that to start Tecumseh!, he and Mundell traveled around the three-county area surrounding Chillicothe in order to garner financial support for the outdoor drama. The large net that they cast over these three counties influenced the naming of the production organization. Friedman revealed that they wanted the name to reflect the area because they “needed help from a lot of people.” Therefore, they came up with the

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37 Herb Friedman, personal interview, 13 July 2011.

38 Ibid.
“Scioto Society” to encompass the region. To supplement the private financial support they received, they held numerous fundraising activities. According to Friedman

We did *everything* to raise money. We had auctions . . . you name it. We did *everything*. We even started a thing in the park—the Feast of the Flowering Moon. This was a farming community and we started that to raise some money . . . and we also brought Native Americans here, and I mean real Native Americans in here in order to help draw some crowds.\(^{39}\)

It seems the Feast of the Flowering Moon featured Native American dancers to attract attention and was a precursor to the opening night of the drama, when the Scioto Society brought in Shawnee visitors, including a descendent of Tecumseh, to watch the show and take part in the opening celebrations. I will further discuss this incorporation of Shawnee guests later in the study.

After much time and effort, the Scioto Society was able to open *Tecumseh!* in 1973. Upon seeing the drama that first season, Christian Moe commented in a letter to Mark Sumner at the Institute of Outdoor Drama, “This one is going to be a winner, I think.”\(^{40}\) Of the first performance, Friedman recalls that it was “*long*.”\(^{41}\) Adam Burke has heard the same comment:

It did go through a lot of changes from the very first version of the script to when it actually opened because the original script was *really, really* long. It was written by a novelist. . . . And it was very long. And so through production, from what I understand, it changed quite a bit to make it the dramatic play it is now.\(^{42}\)

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\(^{39}\) Ibid.  

\(^{40}\) Christian Moe, letter to Mark R. Sumner, 12 September 1973, Institute of Outdoor Drama, Greenville, NC.  

\(^{41}\) Herbert Friedman, personal interview, 13 July 2011.  

\(^{42}\) Adam Burke, personal group interview, 22 June 2011.
It seems, based on my conversations with members of the Tecumseh! team and the archival materials I came across, that most of the script changes over the years involved expanding some smaller male roles, as well as female roles, and eliminating others. This fine-tuning and compression of the script seems to be the most significant change that has occurred to the production over the years. Burke recalls three major changes to the script, which included the removal of the Tribal Historian, who was a narrator figure common to this type of drama, as well as the addition of other characters. In terms of the drama, there has been relatively little change since its inception, aside from directorial nuances that may present certain moments or characters in new ways. Burke explains that most of the changes “were put in by directors over the years in an effort to make the show somehow more dramatic or better in their opinions, not to change the viewpoint of the play itself.” Burke’s emphasis on keeping the play’s “viewpoint” intact goes back to the responsibilities the producers have to the copyright of the script. Additionally, major changes to the play’s viewpoint oftentimes require an organization to revisit their mission in producing the drama.

The Scioto Society has added amenities to the theatre-going experience at Sugarloaf Mountain over the years, in trying to keep with their mission “to promote the cultural, historical, educational, and economic environment of this county, the state of Ohio, and the nation in general.” These additions include a backstage tour, a gift shop, a small museum space, and a dinner before the show. In 1997 The Columbus Dispatch published an article announcing that the Scioto Society had approved a long-term plan to construct a “historical theme park” which

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43 Ibid.

would include “an Indian village, frontier fort and frontier town.”45 Visitors would be welcomed to the park during the day, and able to attend the dinner and show in the evening. The initial phase of the plan, which was projected to cost between $15 million and $20 million, was to be accomplished within a couple of years. This plan, however, never came to fruition.

Despite a failed attempt to expand the activities available to visitors, the Scioto Society, and specifically its production of *Tecumseh!* is viewed by many in the field as one of the more successful dramas. Some, including Burke, point to consistency as the key to the production’s longevity. Burke notes, “Our script over time, I believe, has worked really well. We’ve also had a very continuous leadership . . . we’ve had very strong leadership that had the idea that A) we want to honor the story, honor the characters and B) we want to make it a really good play.”46 Marion Waggoner reasserts this idea of continuity in leadership when he said, “And how many leaders has the Scioto Society had? In forty-five years…? Three . . . that’s a lot of continuity.”47

Viewed as a leader in the world of outdoor historical drama, *Tecumseh!* has many strengths. Retention rate of producers—from actors and artistic directors to administrative staff and executive directors to board members and volunteers—seems to be high. This speaks highly of the organization and production. I also wonder, however, if that sort of retention has inhibited the opportunity for change. On the other hand, when one considers that *Tecumseh!* ranked third amongst the outdoor drama series that reported results to the Institute of Outdoor Drama in terms of ticket sales for the 2010 season, might there be a mentality of “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it”?48

This dilemma regarding change will re-emerge in later sections of this study.


46 Adam Burke, personal group interview, 22 June 2011

47 Marion Waggoner, telephone interview, 29 July 2011.

Blue Jacket

A history of *Blue Jacket* is a bit more difficult to construct than that of *Tecumseh!* This is partly due to the fact that *Blue Jacket* is no longer in production. The history and information that I am able to glean for this drama is derived from personal interviews, show programs, unpublished notes, correspondences, and newspaper articles.

The non-profit organization, First Frontier, Inc. produced *Blue Jacket*. Staged in Xenia, Ohio, it focused on the figure of Blue Jacket, a Shawnee chief thought in legend and presented in the play as a white captive (a fantasized trope that provides validation for those who “play Indian”) who came to adopt Shawnee culture as his own. In the play, he ends up meeting his white brother on the battlefield and must choose between his blood-kin and his adopted community. According to show programs, this outdoor historical drama began as a dream imagined by Dotty Martin. Mrs. Martin and her husband, Don Martin, saw an outdoor drama in North Carolina while on vacation in 1975 and upon their return, Mrs. Martin felt compelled to start an outdoor historical drama in Brown County, Ohio. With Mr. Martin’s support and assistance, Mrs. Martin contacted the Institute of Outdoor Drama and W.L. “Rusty” Mundell, who was with *Tecumseh!* at the time, and began working on plans. Though they met many challenges along the way, the Martins were instrumental in helping to establish *Blue Jacket* as a production, from securing land to commissioning a script to establishing First Frontier, Inc. In June of 1982 *Blue Jacket* premiered at Caesar’s Ford Park Amphitheatre.49

I found little information in the way of changes incurred by the drama. It seems that by the 2000s the drama was suffering severe financial woes. Two of the people I interviewed

49 “*Blue Jacket* Show Program – 26th Anniversary Season,” (First Frontier, Inc., 2007) 4-6.
regarding the show and its eventual closing remarked that the production had trouble with finances. Information and research regarding Blue Jacket’s true genealogy had adverse effects on the drama as well. Questions regarding whether or not Blue Jacket was white emerged in the late 1990s and DNA evidence claiming Blue Jacket was indeed Native American was released via a conference presentation and shortly thereafter in a publication by researchers from Wright State University.50 These issues regarding Blue Jacket’s racial background will be discussed in more detail later in this dissertation, but I will provide an overview now, as it pertains to the history of First Frontier, Inc. and the drama. Newspaper articles regarding the DNA findings ran in *The Plain Dealer* and *The Columbus Dispatch* in April 2006, releasing the news to the public. In *The Columbus Dispatch*, Mike Lafferty reported that, “The producers of *Blue Jacket*, in which the chief in battle kills a man said to be his brother, Charles Swearingen, remain nonplussed. Art and controversy, they say, often go together and *Blue Jacket* is set to open its 25th season June 16th.”51 Concern over the research and its effect on the show was the subject of several email messages between the Institute of Outdoor Drama and the producers of the drama, with both parties wondering how detrimental the news might be and whether or not it may even be helpful in terms of publicity for the show.

At the same time, limited funds caused much worry for First Frontier, Inc. An “emergency fundraising campaign” raised $100,000 just before the twenty-fifth anniversary season opened in 2006 and allowed First Frontier, Inc. to run the 2006 season, although the funds

50 Bill Sloat, “DNA study challenges long-lived Indian tale, legend surrounding Blue Jacket’s history ‘not based on reality,’” *The Plain Dealer* 13 April 2006.

51 Mike Lafferty, “Chief Blue Jacket’s DNA all Indian, tests indicate-Report he was captured white boy is debunked,” *The Columbus Dispatch* 14 April 2006.
Gratitude for the fundraising campaign is evident in the 2006 show program, in which the Executive Director states,

> Recently, finances have come close to stopping our drama forever; however the community spoke up and said, ‘This will not happen.’ Through donations, through gifts in kind, *Blue Jacket* appears before you once more and from those of us who have given this show all we have and the little left over, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts.  

Sparrow’s words not only thanked those who reached out to the drama, but also alerted audience members of the precarious nature of the financial situation at First Frontier, Inc. The outpouring of last-minute support from the community is not surprising in light of Danny Mangan’s thoughts on the drama’s place within the community. When I mentioned that there had been talk of trying to revive the drama or produce a new drama altogether, Mangan, who was with *Blue Jacket* from 1994-1995, replied, “It wouldn’t surprise me. I mean, the community in Xenia, Ohio loved the drama.” At another point in the interview, Mangan noted, “Now in Xenia, Ohio, you were a god if you worked for the outdoor drama.” Despite the warm reception by the community, the drama only survived one additional season after the twenty-fifth anniversary in 2006. Although the drama had the community support that is so stressed by leaders of outdoor drama, if the local community was no longer supporting the drama as audience members,

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52 Michael Grossberg, “Emergency Fundraiser rides to ‘Blue Jacket’ rescue-Campaign reaches $100,000 goal for struggling drama,” *The Columbus Dispatch* 23 May 2006.


54 Danny Mangan, personal interview, 13 September 2011.

55 Ibid.
survival could prove difficult. Greg Berman noted that it seemed to him most of the audience members in 2000 when he performed in the show were not part of the local community, but rather, out-of-towners who were passing through.\footnote{56 Greg Bergman, personal interview, 28 July 2011.} First Frontier, Inc. seemed to try some changes in the 2006 season to attract local audiences; the organization brought back a production of The Legend of Sleepy Hollow to supplement their main show, as well as implemented some changes in the presentation of Blue Jacket. Terry Morris of the Dayton Daily News proclaimed, “While W.L. Mundell’s script hasn’t changed, director Mark Guinn’s interpretation of it has. The just-opened 25th anniversary version contains several mostly effective new twists.”\footnote{57 Terry Morris, “New ‘Blue Jacket’ staging effective; Actors project loudly and clearly, and new visuals and twists have been added,” Dayton Daily News 20 June 2006.} From Morris’s article, it seems that these changes include a new aggressiveness to the character of Blue Jacket, increased significance for the character of Chief Blackfish, and re-staging of some of the battle scenes.

The simultaneous financial struggles and de-stabilizing DNA reports proved too much for the drama to withstand. In 2008, it was announced that Blue Jacket would not return for a twenty-seventh season. Initially, it was suggested that the drama would be on hiatus while producers worked on a new script, however in 2009, First Frontier, Inc. filed for bankruptcy. In a Dayton Daily News article, Terry Morris cites First Frontier, Inc. president Jim Harworth as stating that the organization may attempt to produce an original outdoor drama about Simon Kenton in the future.\footnote{58 Terry Morris, “Bankruptcy dooms ‘Blue Jacket’; Outdoor drama about Shawnee war chief has ‘ridden into the sunset,’ one creditor says, but plans for new show are on horizon,” Dayton Daily News 2 June 2009: A5.} Ironically, according to notes in the show program, Simon Kenton was originally the historical figure Dotty Martin had in mind when she wanted to start an outdoor drama.
drama in the Xenia area. As of this point, I have not found any further materials suggesting that a new drama is in progress.

*Trumpet in the Land/The White Savage*

There are two additional outdoor historical dramas in Ohio, both of which are produced in New Philadelphia at the Schoenbrunn Amphitheatre: *Trumpet in the Land* and *The White Savage*. Though they are two different dramas, I include them in the same section because both are produced by the same organization, the Ohio Outdoor Historical Drama Association. Additionally, the director/actor of *Trumpet in the Land* is also the director, lead actor, and co-author of *The White Savage*, resulting in what I consider cross-pollination between the two dramas.

Marketed by the producers as “Ohio’s First and Finest Outdoor Drama,” *Trumpet in the Land* began as an idea in the 1960s. In a 1965 letter from Arthur K. Kirk to Mark Sumner at the Institute of Outdoor Drama, Kirk expresses his interest in establishing an outdoor drama in Ohio. Much like the Martins, who were inspired to establish *Blue Jacket* after seeing an outdoor drama in North Carolina, Kirk was influenced by his experiences as an audience member at *Unto These Hills* and *The Stephen Foster Story*. Kirk wrote to Sumner:

> I live in a section of Ohio that has some historic incidents in its past. One is a massacre of an Indian village whose inhabitants were Christians trained by the Moravians. Nearby is Shoenbrunn, the first town in Ohio. It also was a Moravian

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59 “*Blue Jacket Show Program – 26th Anniversary Season*” (First Frontier, Inc., 2007) 6.
settlement. . . . There are some people here who are interested in producing a pageant such as the ones at Cherokee or Bardstown.  

Kirk goes on to inquire about how to proceed with the dramatic project. In addition, Kirk sent a letter to the producers of *Unto These Hills* asking for advice in launching a production. The Institute of Outdoor Drama conducted a Feasibility Study in 1967 and in the report the massacre of the Moravian Indian converts was proclaimed to be a good dramatic topic:

> For the purposes of a drama, Tuscarawas County is fortunate in being the site of one of the most colorful, deeply moving, and powerful tragedies in our history—the Moravian Mission experiment which culminated in the horrifying murder of some ninety Christian Indians at Gnadenhuetten in 1782 by frontiersmen.  

The author of the report reinforces the dramatic impact of this historical event by pointing out the “characters who once loomed large on the American scene” and the “exciting and stirring action and conflict” of the subject. The author also cautions that “This is the raw stuff of drama, but without a good script it is worthless.” Eventually, the massacre at Gnadenhuetten in 1782 of the Delaware Indians who had converted to Christianity became the subject of the outdoor historical drama, *Trumpet in the Land*. In April of 1967, Paul Green, who was experienced in writing outdoor dramas such as *The Lost Colony*, accepted the request by the recently formed

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60 Arthur R. Kirk, letter to Mark Sumner, 9 February 1965, Institute of Outdoor Drama, Greenville, NC.


Ohio Outdoor Historical Drama Association, Inc. to write the drama. The Ohio Outdoor Historical Drama Association succinctly stated their goals in a report: “To build the amphitheater, to write the play, to preserve our heritage of history, these are our plans. . . .”

Having already secured $200,000 from the State Legislature and land from the Tuscarawas County Commissioners, it seems the organization used the report to raise additional funds through donations and grants. The show premiered in 1970 and, like Tecumseh!, was long. Margaret Bonamico, the current General Manager of Trumpet in the Land, revealed to me in an interview that Paul Green re-wrote the original script to make the drama shorter for subsequent seasons and returned to New Philadelphia once a year until his death to attempt further improvements on the script because he was never completely satisfied with the show.

There have been a few changes over the years to the programming offered at the Schoenbrunn Amphitheatre. In 1984, the use of a live organ for the drama’s musical needs ceased and pre-recorded music replaced the live music. A backstage tour was also added as an attraction to visitors. Perhaps the most significant change for the Ohio Outdoor Historical Drama Association was the addition of a second drama in 1996 called The White Savage.

According to Bonamico, the board wanted another historical drama to help increase audience numbers. Co-written by Mark H. Durbin and Joseph Bonamico, the play follows Simon Girty, a historical figure who associated with both Native Americans and the British in the late eighteenth century. In addition to writing the play, Joseph Bonamico also directs and performs

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64 “Plans for Paul Green’s Ohio Symphonic Drama,” Ohio Outdoor Historical Drama Association, Inc., n.d., Institute of Outdoor Drama, Greenville NC.

65 Margaret Bonamico, personal interview, 16 July 2011.

66 Ibid.
the role of Simon Girty. The organization also offers a musical each summer in addition to the two mainstay shows.

It seems the Ohio Outdoor Historical Drama Association was also looking into outreach opportunities with the Delaware Tribal Councils in the mid-1980s. Rachel Redinger, founder of the Ohio Outdoor Historical Drama Association, seemed to be the leader in this effort. In a memo to the Board of Trustees in 1986, she wrote,

The most pressing [project] is the Delaware Indian Culture Center. In a way this has been taken care of for one phase. The three Tribal Councils have agreed to establish the Center here with our help. A non-profit corporation will be established and it will be separate from OOHDA. Close co-operation [sic] with OOHDA is desirable to help achieve the best potential the Center can offer the community.67

Mention of this possible alliance appears in several correspondences during this time. Redinger, however, left OOHDA around the same time, and so it seems that the plans for a working relationship between the OOHDA and the Delaware Tribal Councils may have fallen through.68

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67 Rachel Redinger, Memo to The Board of Trustees of OOHDA, 26 August 1986, Institute of Outdoor Drama, Greenville, NC.

68 I am not sure whether or not an alliance was ever formed. During my visit to New Philadelphia, nothing was mentioned regarding such a partnership and I found nothing in the Institute archives to suggest that a relationship was established. I did find materials, however, which suggest that Redinger continued to work with the Councils and became part of the Delaware Indian Heritage Committee, which co-hosted a symposium titled, “Algonquin People of the Ohio Valley: Ancient Traditions With Relevance for Yesterday and Today” in 1986. Nothing in the materials suggests that any alliance with the Ohio Outdoor Historical Drama Association ever formed.
Like *Tecumseh!*, the dramas produced by the Ohio Outdoor Historical Drama Association have undergone relatively few changes, aside from minor script changes and directorial nuances. Furthermore, there has been relatively little turnover in the leadership in the last twenty-five years; Margaret Bonamico has been the General Manager since 1987, while Joseph Bonamico has been artistically involved with the dramas for thirty seasons.⁶⁹

*Unto These Hills*

The last two productions I include in my dissertation are both outside the state of Ohio, and both take place in Cherokee communities. Unlike the Ohio productions I have addressed, which have remained relatively static over the years, the dramas in Cherokee, North Carolina and Tahlequah, Oklahoma have experienced immense change, especially in the last two decades. These changes have affected administration, casting and employment, the productions themselves, and the communities surrounding the dramas.

As with the other dramas for which I have given background information, the narrative I provide for *Unto These Hills* in Cherokee, North Carolina is an abridged version of a much longer and complex history. Much of my information comes from an excellent source on the drama, a dissertation by Matthew D. Thompson called “Staging ‘the Drama’: The Continuing Importance of Cultural Tourism in the Gaming Era.” Thompson spent a period of several months working at the drama as both an archivist and performer. His contact with both the archival records and the production during a time of immense change provided him with a

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⁶⁹ Margaret Bonamico relayed to me that she has been General Manager since 1987 in our personal interview on July 16, 2011. The length of Joseph Bonamico’s tenure with OOHDA is stated in the 2011 Show Program on page 5.
detailed body of knowledge on the topic. I hope to supplement the information he has provided by adding some of the changes that have occurred since his work in Cherokee during the summer of 2006.

During the 1940s, the Western North Carolina Associated Communities (WNCAC), which would later become the parent organization of the Cherokee Historical Association (the governing body of Unto These Hills), formed. Thompson notes that mostly white, middle-aged, wealthy men formed this group and that they tried to develop tourism in the Great Smoky Mountain area surrounding Cherokee, often with their personal money.\(^{70}\) The drama was but one part of the organization’s larger plan and Thompson argues that the selection of an Indian figure as the subject for the production allowed for white identification with the land. In other words, the focus on the Indian figure allowed for the WNCAC to identify with the Appalachian mountain “folk”, despite being “outsiders.”\(^{71}\) The group approached Paul Green to write the script, who suggested they approach Samuel Selden, who directed them to Kermit Hunter. The group offered Hunter, a graduate student at the time, $500 to write the play.\(^{72}\) Hunter later became one of the leaders of the outdoor historical drama scene and would also write the drama in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, among others. The WNCAC created the Cherokee Historical Association to run the drama and with various donations, grants, etc. (including $5,000 in tribal money from the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians), Unto These Hills debuted in 1950. The play chronicles the story of the Cherokee in the region from first contact through the removal of most Cherokee during the Trail of Tears. While episodic at the beginning of the drama when retelling

\(^{70}\) Thompson 34-35.

\(^{71}\) Thompson 37-39.

\(^{72}\) Thompson 40.
the “history” of the Cherokee in the area, the plot fixes on Tsali and the legend surrounding his sacrifice for the Cherokee who remained in the area.\textsuperscript{73} In addition to the drama, the Cherokee Historical Association also opened the Oconoluftee Indian Village, a historical reenactment attraction. Though the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians donated money to start the drama, Thompson refers to the relationship between the Cherokee Historical Association and the Cherokee as one of “guarded ambivalence.”\textsuperscript{74} As the drama continued to attract audiences during the next couple of decades, tensions between the Cherokee and the producers of the drama increased. Thompson argues that the increasing tension was due to the Cherokee Heritage Association’s “greater sin”:

the way it handled its day-to-day business such that a small group of outsiders were able to hold onto Cherokee as their private clubhouse for as long as possible. CHA leadership allowed \textit{Unto These Hills} to collapse because the primary purpose of the organization was not running the theatre but providing a meeting ground for mountain elites to socialize and network. . . . The organization became obsolete to its socialite constituency and then the drama collapsed.\textsuperscript{75}

As tensions increased, it seems the success of the show decreased. Though a decline in attendance began in the 1970s, the production budget did not have a year in the red until 1996. From 1996-2000, the Cherokee Historical Association saw a profit loss each year for the drama.\textsuperscript{76} Many of the sources I consulted, as well as Thompson, describe the condition of the

\textsuperscript{73} I place “history” in quotation marks because the historical content and accuracy of Kermit Hunter’s script is highly debated and criticized. I will explore these issues further in Chapter Four.

\textsuperscript{74} Thompson 46-47.

\textsuperscript{75} Thompson 72-73.

\textsuperscript{76} Thompson 86.
Cherokee Historical Association, as well as the drama, at this time as grim. In 2004 the Board relinquished control of the Cherokee Historical Association to the tribe.\textsuperscript{77} Thompson credits some of the increased strength of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians to the opening of Harrah’s Cherokee Casino in 1997, which sparked a “renaissance” for the tribe.\textsuperscript{78} The casino ushered in “social and political changes” according to Thompson, including the establishment of the Cherokee Preservation Foundation, revitalization of downtown Cherokee, and increased employment opportunities in the area.\textsuperscript{79}

The Cherokee Historical Association inherited by the tribe was one of disarray. The facilities were in bad shape, and the technology within the office was outdated. John Tissue noted that previous to his arrival to the Association in 2005, the office had “a fax machine, a single phone line, and one computer in the office that ran DOS.”\textsuperscript{80} Furthermore, Thompson notes that because of the turnover of leadership, there was “a lack of institutional memory.”\textsuperscript{81} By the close of the 2005 season, the Cherokee Historical Association had a new production staff. In what Thompson refers to as a “devastating move,” non-Indians were fired “en masse” at the end of the 2005 season because they were seen as part of the problem.\textsuperscript{82} A great deal of the new cast and crew lacked outdoor drama experience, though the Association saw the change in cast and crew as necessary in saving the show.\textsuperscript{83} Though the abrupt changes to the Association and

\textsuperscript{77} Thompson 209.

\textsuperscript{78} Thompson 80.

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{80} John Tissue, personal interview, 15 June 2011.

\textsuperscript{81} Thompson 97.

\textsuperscript{82} Thompson 102.

\textsuperscript{83} Thompson 104-105.
the drama may be considered “devastating” by many, it has also allowed for continued self-
representation in the drama, seeing as the increased (though not exclusive) employment of
Cherokee and other natives in the drama is a practice that continues today.

In addition to the drastic changes in staffing, the Cherokee Historical Association also
instigated a change that had been discussed for several years. The 2006 season premiered a
completely new show at the Mountainside Theatre in Cherokee, North Carolina. John Tissue,
who was working at the Association at the time but was not yet the Executive Director, noted
that “the idea was that the Kermit Hunter script was patronizing and outdated and needed to be
updated.”84 Some of the ways the old script was considered patronizing included the use of
third-person speech by the Native characters, as well as the Noble Savage traits displayed by the
roles. Tissue explained that the intention in bringing in a new playwright was to turn the drama
into “something that was acceptable to the tribe, both in how its people talked and how the
Cherokee were portrayed and kind of updated the history which was not entirely accurate.”85

The new playwright who was commissioned to work on the drama was Hanay Geiogamah, a
Native American playwright, scholar, and Artistic Director for the American Indian Dance
Theatre. In a newspaper article regarding the changes, Geiogamah told Tim Whitmire of the

_Cincinnati Post_

The old drama that had been performed for 55 years and was replete with
historical inaccuracies and an almost nonexistent portrayal of Cherokees and their

84 John Tissue, personal interview, 15 June 2011.
85 Ibid.
culture, their music, their humor. . . . It had become a very powerful anachronism right in the very heart of the Cherokee community.⁸⁶

Eddie Swimmer, who was a performer in the 2006 production and is the most recent production’s director, added, “Native American people have always been storytellers, but history is always told by the conqueror. Now, it’s time for us to tell our story.”⁸⁷ According to various sources, including Thompson, Tissue, and some of the other performers from the 2006 season, the script that year was not only a drastic change because it wasn’t Hunter’s long-running script, but also because audiences were not used to Geiogamah’s use of non-linear structure, emphasis on dance, and overall reliance on indigenous modes of style. Though the drama was a refreshing change for some, audience response was generally not positive.⁸⁸ After the 2006 season, the former Executive Director, James Bradley, resigned and John Tissue took his place.

In 2007, the Cherokee Historical Association brought in a new team of playwrights to complete another re-write. The writers had worked in television in Los Angeles and had also written most of the exhibits displayed in the Museum of the Cherokee Indian in downtown Cherokee. The 2007 script seemed to rely too much on the history, however, at the expense of dramatic appeal. Linda Squirrel, the current playwright and Cherokee Historical Association employee, told me in an interview that “they did a lot of good writing, but it seemed to be too much we were covering in a huge span of time and the audience seemed to have gotten lost.”⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Ibid.
⁸⁸ This audience response is on behalf of natives and non-natives and due to a host of reasons, which I will touch on again in Chapter Four.
⁸⁹ Linda Squirrel, personal interview, 15 June 2011.
Mike Crowe, Jr., who has performed each of the new scripts, commented on the 2007 script; “It was a lot to take in. It was—from feedback that I’ve received concerning that year—a lot of people thought it was too dry.”90 After the 2007 season, when audience numbers once again dipped, Linda Squirrel began working on a new script. Squirrel explains her motivation to re-write the script:

[B]eing an employee of CHA, I had the advantage of seeing what worked, by hearing from our customers, what they liked and what they didn’t like. So I just kind of picked it up and started playing with it and then just kind of ran with it after that. The first year it was a little rough but as each year has progressed we’ve evolved so now we’re at a pretty good point with it.91

In our interview, Tissue echoed the idea that the script has grown and progressed over the years. This “evolution” of script is common according to Scott Parker, who noted in a correspondence with the previous Executive Director of the Cherokee Historical Association, “it usually takes three to five years of working on a script and its production before it reaches its potential.”92

Squirrel’s is a palimpsest of sorts, in which remnants of the Hunter’s original script, Geiogamah’s re-write, and Hearst and Lee’s 2007 script are still evident. Squirrel also lays her own perspective of the show and the stories therein over the other versions of the drama. From my discussions with Tissue and Squirrel, it seems this script will be used for a while.

90 Mike Crowe, Jr., personal interview, 16 June 2011.
91 Linda Squirrel, personal interview, 15 June 2011.
92 Scott Parker, email to James Bradley, 25 July 2006, Institute of Outdoor Drama, Greenville, NC.
Though there has been immense upheaval within the Cherokee Historical Association during the last decade, much of it seems to have settled and stabilized. The main concern at this point is continuing to rebuild an audience.

**Trail of Tears/Under the Cherokee Moon**

The historical overview I provide regarding the drama in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, similar to the information I presented regarding *Unto these Hills*, relies heavily on a limited number of sources. I gathered information from my conversations with people in Tahlequah, as well as correspondences and other records I found in archives. Much of my information, however, comes from an informational document put together by the staff at the Cherokee Heritage Center, titled “Frequently Asked Questions.”

In 1963, Martin A Hagerstrand, a U.S. Army retiree, and William Wayne Keeler, Chief of the Cherokee Nation, led an effort to create the Cherokee National Historical Society, Incorporated (CNHS). Hagerstrand stated in a letter to the Institute of Outdoor Drama that the organization was “established for the purpose of preserving the story of the Cherokee in the West.”93 The organization, which is a non-profit venture, states in its by-laws that Cherokee members must comprise at least one-half of the board. According to the “Frequently Asked Questions” document, the board of directors is often 90-100% Cherokee, differentiating it from the boards governing other outdoor dramas on which I focus. The organization outlined four phases of development: 1) a Village 2) an Outdoor Drama 3) a Cherokee museum 4) a Cherokee National archives. In 1967 the Tsa-La-Gi Ancient Village opened, and the drama opened two

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93 Col. M.A. Hagerstrand, letter to Director of the Outdoor Drama Institute, 7 July 1964, Institute of Outdoor Drama, Greenville, NC.
years later in 1969. Titled *Trail of Tears*, the play was written by Hunter, who also authored *Unto These Hills*. In some ways a continuation of the Cherokee, North Carolina production, the script focuses on the forced removal of Cherokee and their struggle on the Trail of Tears, as well as the challenges and injustices they faced once the Trail ended. Phase three of the original plans was completed in 1974 when the Cherokee Heritage Center opened, and Phase Four was later completed with the opening of the National Cherokee Archive, also housed at the Center. In addition to completing the four phases of the original plans, the CNHS opened Adam’s Corner Rural Village in 1979, which consists of seven buildings that replicate 1890s Cherokee life in the area.

For most of the drama’s run in Tahlequah, the producers used Kermit Hunter’s *Trail of Tears* script. They changed to a script by Jim Vance during the 1984 and 1985 seasons, which employed the same title as Hunter’s play. In 1986, CNHS returned to the Hunter script. The 1990s brought difficult times for the drama. The production went dark for the 1995 season. In a letter from the Institute of Outdoor Drama in 1995, Scott Parker reveals that the CNHS board had hired “all new management folks,” and had requested a consultant from the Institute to “help get the show back up in the next year or so.” Apparently the consultant found a grim situation when he visited the site. In a reply to the consultant’s report, Parker wrote, “I feared you would find a very discouraging situation out there, but I didn’t think it would be quite as bad as it

94 The organization that oversees the Village, the drama, the museum, and the archives is called the Cherokee National Historical Society. The phrase Cherokee Heritage Center was applied, starting in 1983, to the collection of sites run by the Cherokee National Historical Society. Oftentimes, however, Cherokee National Historical Society and Cherokee Heritage Center are used interchangeably. Information from “Frequently Asked Questions,” Cherokee Heritage Center, Tahlequah, OK.

95 Scott Parker, letter to Marion Waggoner, 12 July 1995, Institute of Outdoor Drama, Greenville, NC.
apparently is.” 96 Details of the causes remain unclear, and as in any account of history, there are multiple sides of the story, and I have been exposed to a limited number of perspectives. I will examine details involved with some of the issues at play in later chapters, but generally from the materials I have read, it seems as though there were concerns with the script and tensions with Hunter resulting from those concerns, as well as management problems that led to the facilities and drama falling to varying states of disrepair. Part of this neglect of the facilities and grounds seems to be partly due to the year-long hiatus for the drama. In 1996, Hunter’s script returned to the stage at the Cherokee Heritage Center, but it would turn out to be the last season for his script. In 1997, the Center presented Joe Sears’ Trail of Tears: Nation and from 1998-2000 the theatre went dark again. Joe Sears returned in 2001-2003 with a drama titled Trail of Tears, in 2004 Layce Gardner provided a script of the same name, and 2005 saw the last drama titled Trail of Tears, this version by Richard Fields. 97 From what I gathered in talking with people and looking through the archives, it seems as though the reasons for the many changes in script resulted from growing uneasiness over the old Hunter script, increased desire for a more historically and culturally accurate script, issues within the creative team overseeing the drama, and a desire to keep the show fresh and new to attract audiences. Tom Mooney noted that constant changes in the script may have hurt the revenue in some ways because the tour buses that used to bring groups to the show needed to know what would be presented years in advance. As he put it, “they plan their tours two or three years ahead of time and so being consistent with what you deliver is an important factor. We kind of got sporadic there for a while…” 98

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96 Scott Parker, letter to Marion Waggoner, 10 October 1995, Institute of Outdoor Drama, Greenville, NC.

97 “Frequently Asked Questions,” 22 February 2011, Cherokee Heritage Center, Tahlequah, OK.

98 Tom Mooney, personal interview, 27 September 2011.
The Cherokee Heritage Center was not able to increase ticket sales during the 2000s and the drama ceased in 2006. In 2007, the Center premiered a completely new show, titled *Under the Cherokee Moon* by Laurette Willis. Not only was there a complete break from the old script, but the Tsa-La-Gi Amphitheatre no longer housed the performances. They were presented instead in the Ancient Village and the Adam’s Corner Rural Village. Variations of *Under the Cherokee Moon* have been produced yearly since 2007, and in the summer of 2011 the Center also added *Cherokee Legends after Dark*, a family-oriented evening of Cherokee storytelling performed by actors from the Ancient Village.99

The drama in Tahlequah, like the drama in Cherokee, has endured much change over the years. I will examine the reasons for these changes as compared to the relative stability of the Ohio shows further in Chapters Two and Three. It is important to note that all of these dramas have changed in some ways, drastic or minor, over the course of their multiple seasons and that many of these changes were reactionary. Often, they were responses to shifting attitudes and perceptions in society, especially regarding representations of others, specifically Native American “others” in these cases.

The histories of the dramas I examine in this study, as well as the history of outdoor historical drama as a theatrical form, are unresolved. As producers return to their shows year after year, the legends surrounding the productions shift and take new shape, such as the case at *Tecumseh!*, where I often heard the phrase, “Well, I heard it this way…” when addressing a particular moment or event in the drama’s past. Audience members often return to the show with changed perspectives because many of them return as adults trying to capture a glimpse of their own pasts. Scholars such as myself approach the archival materials documenting the

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99 More attention will be given to the most recent programming at the Cherokee Heritage Center in later chapters.
histories of the shows with different agendas, piecing together the pasts in different ways. We all approach these outdoor dramas with various perspectives, understandings, and purposes, which change over time. From our experiences with these dramas, we glean different perceptions of the messages they communicate about cultures, histories, and ourselves. As these new understandings of outdoor dramas and the representations they produce surface, the histories change. This dissertation is my attempt to contribute to the discourse surrounding outdoor historical dramas and it is my hope that others will also pursue the subject so that these histories remain “unresolved.”
CHAPTER II: ABSENCE

“Even among those presuming their absence, Amerindians still exercise a presence, at the very least in symbolic and discursive terms.”

Maximilian C. Forte

The sign displayed the phrase “Beat the Braves!” I drove past again just to be sure I had read it correctly; indeed, I had. I immediately recognized the meaning behind the words communicated by the sign—a local business was trying to support their hometown team by declaring words of encouragement to the local high school sports team. And though as an adult I’m not supportive of the practice (I grew up cheering for the Piqua “Indians” in my own hometown.), the appropriation of native imagery as a mascot was not what made me look twice. What baffled me was the fact that this sign was displayed in Tahlequah, Oklahoma, home to a large Cherokee population. Although it was the opposing team who had adopted the “Braves” moniker, it was jarring to see the phrase “Beat the Braves!” publicly pronounced in the capital of the Cherokee Nation and the United Band of Keetowah Cherokee Indians. For me, the strong presence of a contemporary Cherokee community infused this slogan with a layered set of meanings and tensions that I had not perceived to such great degree before, thus making the sight particularly worthy of a double-take.

In the next two chapters, I consider ideas of absence and presence in regard to native representations in outdoor historical dramas. The questions driving my exploration include: how does the absence of a large Native American community affect the outdoor dramas I witnessed in

Ohio, as well as the inverse: how does the presence of a large Native American (particularly Cherokee) population affect the productions I observed in North Carolina and Oklahoma?\(^2\) Does the presence of Native American tribes around Tahlequah exert more influence on the outdoor drama there than it appears to exert on local mascots and athletic team support (or are there different rules at play between these two sets of representational practices)? I look at how these distinct conditions of absence and presence have created differences in how the dramas are produced today, including ways in which Native Americans are portrayed in both the script and the production. I consider how productions in Ohio try to address this absence, as well as how the presence of the Cherokee instigated change in the dramas of North Carolina and Oklahoma.

In her dissertation on white-produced depictions of Tecumseh, Rosemary Virginia Hathaway notes the idea of absence in regard to the outdoor drama in Chillicothe. When toiling with the reasons *Tecumseh!* and other stories featuring Native American figures remain popular, she concludes, “Because they, unlike other ethnic groups in the area, are perceived as ‘extinct’ or at the very least silent, they pose no threat to the hegemonic order, and thus Native Americans become a much easier ‘Other’ for white Midwesterners to sympathize and identify with.”\(^3\) I

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\(^2\) I recognize that there are Native Americans currently residing in Ohio, however in this case, I am referring to an absence of a large population such as the case in and around the locations of the Ohio dramas. It is important to note, however, that there is an organization in the Dayton, Ohio area called the Miami Valley Council for Native Americans that holds meeting and events in order to preserve native cultures in the area. This organization is near the sites of *Tecumseh!* and *Blue Jacket*. Thus, in some ways, the perceived “absence” of Native Americans is imagined, however I refer to them as “absent” because relative to Cherokee and Tahlequah, non-native people in the area do not have the degree of everyday contact with native cultures.

\(^3\) Rosemary Virginia Hathaway, “Reading Tourist Sites, Citing Touristic Readings: Anglo Constructions of Native American Identity and the Case of Tecumseh” (Ph.D. diss., The Ohio State University, 1998) 19.
agree with Hathaway in that the absence of Native Americans provides non-natives an easily accessible construction to manipulate to their own needs in terms of identity-construction. I would like to contribute to what Hathaway is arguing by looking across several productions to consider the measures non-Native producers have taken to compensate for this absence.

Matthew Thompson, on the other hand, suggests the idea of presence in his dissertation regarding the history and changes of Unto These Hills. Focusing on the effects of Harrah’s Casino in Cherokee, North Carolina, Thompson argues that the area surrounding Cherokee, as well as the tribe therein has experienced a “renaissance” in the last decade. This revitalization, according to Thompson, has revived the attractions along the Qualla Boundary, in addition to increasing agency on behalf of the Cherokee. This agency implies a strengthened presence of Cherokee surrounding Unto These Hills.

In this chapter and Chapter Three, I explore these notions of absence and presence and add to Hathaway and Thompson’s ideas in examining the issues and conditions that emerge from such juxtaposition. I begin by looking at how the Ohio dramas I encountered are marked by absence. I consider how the absence of a prominent Native American community results in fantasized constructions such as the Noble Savage in these productions. Using the theories of Aristotle and Bertolt Brecht, I also consider how the absence surrounding these plays has created spaces in which the mainly non-native audience can experience a catharsis of white guilt, and the implications of such purging. After looking into the absence that characterizes the Ohio dramas, I consider, in the next chapter, how the presence of large Cherokee communities in North Carolina and Oklahoma has served as the catalysts for change in each of those locale’s dramas.

In the Introduction to this project, I discussed arguments surrounding white constructions of the “Other,” specifically the Native Other. Scholars such as Edward Said maintain that the
ideas projected onto the Other are used to define the Self. Similarly, Carter Jones Meyer and Diana Royer argue that “Non-Indians, enamored of the perceived strengths of native cultures, have appropriated and distorted elements of these cultures for their own purposes, more often than not ignoring the impact of the process on the Indians themselves.”^4 The idea that non-natives use Indigenous figures as screens upon which they can project perceived idealized qualities of self is shared amongst many scholars. Hathaway views the white-produced “Indian” construct to be a “tabula rasa” on which non-natives can depict an imagined, “ambiguous” image.\(^5\) “As long as Native Americans play no role in the lives of the white audiences who attend the show,” Hathaway contends, “the historical figure of Tecumseh will continue to be distorted to match the ‘fantasy Indian’ identity in each audience member’s mind.”^6 Hathaway’s statement—“As long as Native Americans play no role in the lives of the white audiences”—is contingent upon the notion of absence. As long as Native Americans are perceived as absent from the quotidian lives of audience members and producers, there is little resistance to the manners in which non-natives portray native characters. Thus, as a result of this perceived absence, non-natives control the (often stereotyped) forms the imagined Indian figure takes.

There are two characterizations that re-occur in outdoor historical dramas: the Noble Savage and the Savage Indian.

While the idea existed prior, John Dryden coined the term “Noble Savage” in *The Conquest of Granada* in 1670, for the character that evoked many ideal qualities—determination, pride, bravery, strength. Alongside those qualities, however, still lurk the “savage”

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^5 Hathaway 51.

^6 Hathaway 115.
characteristics that make the stereotyped figure unpredictable, more in touch with nature than civilization, and ultimately disposable. Jeffrey Mason suggests that this figure was introduced in the United States as a counterpoint to the “bad” Indian: “The problem was how to elevate those who were historical enemies not only of westward progress, but of civilization itself as white culture defines it. . . . The solution was the ‘noble’ savage, a return to the idealism of Montaigne and Rousseau.”⁷ Many current and past outdoor dramas feature this character type, including Tecumseh! and Trumpet in the Land. Historian Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr. describes the Noble Savage or “good” Indian as friendly, courteous, and hospitable to the initial invaders of his lands and to all Whites so long as the latter honored the obligations presumed to be mutually entered into with the tribe. Along with handsomeness of physique and physiognomy went great stamina and endurance. Modest in attitude if not always in dress, the noble Indian exhibited great calm and dignity in bearing, conversation, and even under torture. Brave in combat, he was tender in love for family and children. Pride in himself and independence of other persons combined with a plain existence and wholesome enjoyment of nature’s gifts. According to this version, the Indian, in short, lived a life of liberty, simplicity, and innocence.⁸ Berkhofer’s description of the Noble Savage is a good summary of the concept, and will therefore serve as an example to which I will refer in the following paragraphs. This image of

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the Noble Savage is presented in Act I, scene I of *Trumpet in the Land*, particularly through the character of White Eyes. The idea of “dignity in bearing, conversation” is delivered through White Eyes’ lofty manner of speaking;

White Eyes: Let the warm sun of friendship beam forth.

Councilors (*in one voice*): It is so. We the Grand Council do declare it!

White Eyes: For now our white brother –

The teacher of our people in the East –

Comes to meet with us here by the Big Spring,

Here by the sweet-flowing waters.

Big Cat: We wait for him.

Strong Rock: We reach our open hands.

Big Cat: Our council member, Chief Pipe, comes not.

White Eyes: He still growls in the forest,

But he will see, will see.

The way of the teacher is good (Act I, Scene 1).*

Not only is the language lofty in tone, but it also possesses a lyrical quality and is patterned on the page in a verse-like structure. It should be noted that this manner of speaking is not continuous and characters go in and out of this rhythmic form. Furthermore, the dialogue is fashioned in a call-and-response style, reflecting the worship traditions in many Protestant church services. This mirroring of worship practices ties these native characters to the theme of Christian brotherhood inherent to the story. As future converts, these characters are marked by

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Christian features from the start of the play. Furthermore, they illustrate to white audiences the “tabula rasa” quality often perceived in Noble Savage characters. That is, these “good” Indians are portrayed as clean slates onto which the white settlers may inscribe their Christian doctrine. Strong Rock also demonstrates the welcoming attitude described by Berkhofer when he proclaims “We reach our open hands.” The last lines of this dialogue serve to foreshadow the foil to the Noble Savage character; that is, the Savage or “bad” Indian, represented by Pipe in this drama.

Later in Act I, Brother David Zeisberger, a Moravian missionary, and a group of his followers (including native converts and whites) move their mission to Ohio, specifically to Chief White Eyes’ Delaware territory. Upon arriving, White Eyes welcomes the missionaries:

White Eyes: Welcome home, my brother!—Welcome to our Tuscarawas Valley.

Big Cat & Strong Rock: Welcome.

Brother David: (Gesturing about.) Home—yes. The new home of our people!

Voices: Home, our new home! (Act I, Scene 3)

Again we see the Indian characters, led by Chief White Eyes, welcoming the missionaries to their land, offering to share their land as a home to the Moravians.

Chief White Eyes and his Delaware are lifted to Noble Savage status in juxtaposition to Chief Pipe, who embodies the “savage” side of the Indian. Berkhofer describes how this figure has been depicted in popular imagination:

Nakedness and lechery, passion and vanity led to lives of polygamy and sexual promiscuity among themselves and constant warfare and fiendish revenge against

10 Ibid.

11 Green 24.
their enemies. When habits and customs were not brutal they appeared loathsome to Whites. Cannibalism and human sacrifice were the worst sins, but cruelty to captives and incessant warfare ranked not far behind in the estimation of Whites.  

As one can see from this description, the “savage” Indian serves as an antithesis to the Noble Savage. The “good” side of this binary is welcoming, courageous, determined, and proud, while the “bad” side inflicts war and violence, is “loathsome” in appearance, and gives in to immoral pursuits. Reflections of these contrasting incarnations can be found in many outdoor dramas, and of the dramas I encountered, they are most pronounced in *Trumpet in the Land*. Using Berkhofer’s description of the savage Indian as our example, one can detect the ideas of lechery and constant warfare in the narration that opens Act II; “Pipe and Girty now made life a terror at Schoenbrunn with their drunken pow-wows in the streets, their brutal pillaging and marauding.” Pipe’s lines reveal, however, that his savage behavior, is based in “fiendish revenge”:

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\begin{align*}
\text{Faded are the beams of peace} \\
\text{With the dark killing never ended.} \\
\text{Fires of hate burn flaming in our blood,} \\
\text{Fires of hate flame in our blood.} \\
\text{Hear our pray’r, O Great Spirit,} \\
\text{Begging you will avenge us! (Act 1, Scene 4)}
\end{align*}
\]

12 Berkhofer 28.

13 Green 65.

14 Green 34.
Pipe seeks revenge for the murder of many of his people, including his father. His revenge, however, is set against a story of forgiveness and redemption, so although his vengeful attitude may seem justified, it is portrayed as the wrong path in the drama. *Trumpet in the Land* provides audiences with an example *par excellence* of the Savage Indian stereotype. One of the actors with whom I spoke corroborated with this conclusion. She expressed that, with the exception of *Tecumseh!*, the outdoor dramas in which she has been involved “do not portray the Native Americans as heroes,” but rather more often as “villains who terrorize the poor, provoking white settlers. Even *Trumpet in the Land*, which centers on a great tragedy brought on by the American militia, has the stereotypical ‘bad Indian,’ Captain Pipe, who tries to chase out the missionaries and threatens their lives.”15 Particularly in the case of *Trumpet in the Land*, the behavior of the “bad” Indian seems even more savage when presented alongside the noble qualities of the “good” Indian.

Both of these stereotypes—the Noble Savage and the Savage Indian—can be found in many outdoor historical dramas. In cases where a prominent Native American community is absent from the surrounding area, these depictions fill in the gap with fantasized images that are subject to non-native use and manipulation. Gerald Vizenor refers to the Noble Savage figure as “a simulation, the absence of natives; the *Indian* transposes the real, and the simulation of the real has no reference, memories, or native stories.”16 If the Noble Savage is an ideal “simulation” of Native Americans, created in the absence of any actual Native American voice or input, then, according to Vizenor, the Noble Savage has no foundation, no background,

15 Anonymous, e-mail to the author, 15 July 2011.

nothing to support it as “real.” Closely tied to the image of the Noble Savage is the image of the “vanishing” Indian. This figure relinquishes his control, his land, often his life, to “white progress.” In popular culture, this figure is sometimes killed, or we sometimes see him riding off and disappearing into the horizon. In Trumpet in the Land, we see some of the Indian characters disappear as they convert to Christianity. Audience members watch the Indian characters “vanish” as they shed their native strappings for white manners of dress, movement, and speech. Whether it is through conversion, death, or some other exit, audiences are given the impression that the Indian is now absent. Oftentimes, this matches what many audience members and producers learned in school—that is, Native Americans were pushed west or killed during westward expansion and are no longer in our midst.

This notion of the “vanishing” Indian, as well as the Noble Savage, in popular culture has created a temporal dissonance in how people view Native Americans in contemporary society. Larissa Fasthorse, a Lakota playwright in Los Angeles, shared with me a story about a group of high school students with whom a friend of hers was working. The students told her friend (who is also of Lakota heritage) that there were no Native Americans in the Los Angeles area—that they didn’t exist there anymore. Fasthorse’s anecdote illustrates the popular perception of the extinct Indian which only allows room for the conception of a Native Americans as relics of the past. The temporal dissonance resulting from the presumption that Indians are of the past is one that seems to pervade much of American society, not just students in Los Angeles. Berkhofer states, “In spite of centuries of contact and the changed conditions of Native American lives, Whites picture the ‘real’ Indian as the one before contact or during the early period of contact. . . . White Europeans and Americans expect even at present to see an Indian out of the forest or a

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17 Larissa Fasthorse, personal interview, 4 August 2011.
Wild West show. . . .”18 I believe the absence of a large, concentrated Native population in Ohio feeds this notion of Indians as historical beings, rather than contemporary people. For outdoor historical dramas, this image is what helps sells tickets, though it does not help in constructing an appropriate image of contemporary Native culture in the minds of audience members.19

These images of the Noble Savage, the “vanishing” Indian, and the temporal dissonance that suggests that Native Americans are of the past all feed into the “white guilt” that many audience members seem to experience at these outdoor dramas. Audience members see the image of a “good” Indian and watch events in which whites kill or push away the Indians. In the end, because many audience members perhaps believe that Indians are of the past and do not have exposure to actual Native Americans, it seems there is nothing to do about the injustices except to feel pity and remorse. This sense of guilt feeds into a cathartic experience for many audience members. Before exploring how this catharsis plays out in certain outdoor historical dramas, it is important to establish an understanding of the term.

18 Berkhofer 29.

19 Granted, these outdoor dramas feature characters from the past by virtue of being a history play, but I contend that because of the absence of contemporary Native Americans around particular dramas and the image of the vanishing Indian, audiences often are unable to conceive of contemporary Native Americans. Anthropologist Johannes Fabian addresses this type of disconnect in Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object. In it, Fabian considers oppressive uses of time, in which temporality is used to distance self from Other. In what he calls the “denial of coevalness,” Fabian suggests that there is a “persistent and systematic tendency to place the referent(s) of anthropology in a Time other than the present of the producer of anthropological discourse.” Although Fabian refers to anthropologists, I believe this “persistent tendency” extends to representations of Native Americans in performance. Johannes Fabian, Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983) 31.
Taken from Aristotle’s *Poetics*, as well as *Politics*, the definition and invocation of the term has been long-discussed and disputed.\(^{20}\) In *Poetics*, one of the characteristics Aristotle assigns tragedy is the ability of “effecting through pity and fear the purification [*katharsis* or catharsis] of such emotions.”\(^{21}\) Marvin Carlson suggests several ways in which this term has been interpreted. One of the most common interpretations of the term links catharsis with the medical connotation of the term used by the Greeks which referred to purgation. In other words, through the use of pity and fear, tragedy rids audience members of those passions. Carlson points out that Aristotle’s invocation of the term *katharsis* in *Politics* seems to support this understanding of the term. In *Politics*, Aristotle claims that those with a surplus of emotions may be “lightened and delighted” through a cathartic experience (in this case Aristotle is applying the idea to music). Carlson notes that another interpretation of the term regards it as a “moral rather than medical term, as purification rather than elimination or purgation.”\(^{22}\) Finally, Carlson calls attention to a more recent translation of the concept in which the term refers to the structure of the tragedy—that is, the cathartic affects not the audience, but rather the plot.\(^{23}\) For the purposes of this study, when I refer to catharsis, I will be invoking the first interpretation outlined. In its iteration here, I will be using catharsis to describe a purging effect on the audience. Specifically, I believe the outdoor dramas I have studied have traditionally relied on elements of a tragic plot

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\(^{20}\) For reasons of space and focus, I am prevented from going too far in depth with a term as fraught and contested as catharsis. I recognize that much has been discussed and written about the term and to explore catharsis in outdoor historical dramas could potentially warrant a dissertation in itself.


\(^{23}\) Ibid.
structure and tragic hero, both of which created a space for audience members to purge feelings of pity and guilt.

Hathaway comments on this idea of experiencing and purging white guilt in *Tecumseh!* and refers to it as a “dutiful” process. She notes that “By witnessing the show . . . some tourists . . . can leave with a sense of having fulfilled their culturally sensitive ‘duty.’”

Hathaway goes on to analyze the cathartic process based on her reading of the show, as well as her interviews with various producers including a principal actor in the show as well as Marion Waggoner, past Executive Director of The Scioto Society, Inc. In addition to viewing Tecumseh as a figure by which audiences can work through their own guilt, she explains that because of the inclusion of “bad” Indians and “good” whites (such as the Galloways) alongside the “good” Indians and the “bad” whites, white audience members can come to terms with white involvement in the historical events depicted. Hathaway reasons, “Watching the show helps white audiences both recognize and then reject the ‘collective guilt’ both the producer and the lead actor himself claim not to feel, and to reassure ourselves that the passion both sides felt for their cause somehow led to the ‘proper’ result.”

Though, in Hathaway’s estimation, white audiences eventually reject the guilt they experience, it is still a consideration.

One of the issues some theorists have taken with the notion of catharsis is that it doesn’t lead to any action or change. This was one of Bertolt Brecht’s biggest concerns with Aristotelian-based or “dramatic theatre.” Brecht wanted audiences to engage in a show intellectually as well as emotionally. He wanted his audiences to actively think while watching theatre, rather than passively consume, as he considered them to do while watching dramatic

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24 Hathaway 19.

25 Hathaway 103-104.
theatre. Through active engagement, Brecht believed that audiences could leave the theatre and instigate change rather than merely experience catharsis and be done with it. He proclaimed that his work deviated from Aristotelian-based drama in that his epic theatre makes nothing like such a free use as does the Aristotelian of the passive empathy of the spectator it also relates differently to certain psychological effects, such as catharsis. . . . it would not dream of handing the spectator over to an inspiring theatrical experience. Anxious to teach the spectator a quite definite practical attitude, directed towards changing the world, it must begin by making him adopt in the theatre a quite different attitude from what he is used to.26

Brecht rejected catharsis because he felt that audience members became “hypnotized” and passive when subjected to such an experience.27 For Brecht, the cathartic experience lacked critical and intellectual engagement on behalf of the audience and therefore did not stir them to action. He argued that Aristotle’s notion of catharsis is a purging that is “performed not only in a pleasurable way, but precisely for the purpose of pleasure.”28 In other words, for both producers and audience members, catharsis is done for their own benefit and spiritual well-being and not to stir action for others.

Several people with whom I spoke during my research echoed Brecht’s concerns regarding catharsis. These participants relayed to me that they believe these dramas have


traditionally provided a cathartic experience for audience members, but that the purgation is self-

serving and leads to little change in attitude or action. John Tissue, the Executive Director of the

Cherokee Historical Association, sees this effect in the old version of Unto These Hills, thusly:

[M]ostly white folks who come to the show really want to have this cathartic

moment watching the Trail of Tears on stage, and be sad about that and feel guilty

and kind of do their penitence. I know that sounds terrible but that’s kind of the

way people feel about it. That is not the big chunk of the story for the Cherokee.

They see you know, yeah this was an awful moment, look what happened to us,

but we are now beyond that. This is an important part of our history, but not the

only part of our history. And people have a really hard time with that…I actually

had a woman who cried and cried and cried about how we destroyed the show and

minimized the Trail of Tears and we were awful people for doing that and I tried

to explain that this is the show written by the Cherokees to portray their history.\(^{29}\)

Based on the responses Tissue has received and his observations, the catharsis is not just about

feeling sad and sorry, but that witnessing the drama has served as an act of penitence for some.

This aligns with Hathaway’s labeling the process of seeing the show and feeling sad as a

“culturally sensitive duty.” Just as Brecht suggests, however, this act of penitence seems to have

had little effect in instigating change. This catharsis was part of the old show in which Cherokee

agency was absent. In that condition of absence, non-native audiences could attend the show,

purge some of their guilt and/or pity for the Cherokee, and leave feeling “lightened,” as Aristotle

suggested, and self-satisfied that they had fulfilled an ethical deed. Like Brecht’s differentiation

of his “epic” style of theatre and the Aristotelian style, the differentiation created by absence and

\(^{29}\) John Tissue, personal interview, 15 July 2011.
presence demonstrates an eschewing of catharsis. By pointing to some Cherokees’ views on the matter, Tissue signals that one of the results of increased Cherokee presence in the production has been the removal of that cathartic effect, to the chagrin of one audience member in particular. The woman’s complaint that the show had been “destroyed” and that the Trail of Tears was “minimized” within that drama supports the idea that many audience members not only experience the purging of white guilt at these dramas, but they also seek it.30

I spoke with Marion Waggoner, who, in addition to working with Tecumseh!, was a consultant for the Institute of Outdoor Drama. In my interview with him, Waggoner also addressed the issue of white guilt and catharsis. Waggoner, like Hathaway and Tissue, seems to subscribe to the idea that many people perceive the catharsis they experience at an outdoor historical drama as a ‘duty’ fulfilled. Calling the notion of guilt a “cop-out,” Waggoner explains, “it allows you to cleanse yourself of it and say, ‘Ok, I’m done with that now, I can move on, that’s all behind me.’ In other words, I feel the guilt, cathartically I’ve experienced it, now I’m done with it and we can move on.”31 Reflecting Brecht’s ideas on the matter, Waggoner goes on to argue that this type of response is not helpful, because in his view, theatre is about “transmitting ideas,” an act that is hard to accomplish if the audience is caught up in their own

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30 In a 2004 pamphlet for Unto These Hills (two seasons before the Cherokee Historical Association changed the show), the synopsis advertises that the “compelling story…builds to a stirring climax with the cruel removal of all but a remnant of Cherokee on the infamous ‘Trail of Tears.’” In advertising the “stirring climax” the pamphlet speaks to what many audience members had come to know and expect from the drama. Unto These Hills pamphlet (Greenville, North Carolina: Institute of Outdoor Drama, 2004).

31 Marion Waggoner, telephone interview, 29 July 2011.
In discussing what he hopes the audience walks away with after seeing *Tecumseh!*, Waggoner asserts the following:

That when they walk away, that they would walk away not feeling guilty. That story is not, for me—was never about a sense of collective guilt on the part of white people. Nor was it ever an overglorification of native people. I simply hope that they would view it from a balanced standpoint in terms of a theatrical story. And walk away thinking that “you know what, we might not ought have done that.” Or “maybe there was a diff”—what I’m really hoping is that they walk away thinking, making that applicable to now.33

Though Waggoner hopes that people don’t walk away with a sense of guilt, it would seem that in bringing it up he is acknowledging that it does occur. Like Brecht, Waggoner expresses a desire for critically-engaged audience members who leave applying what they witnessed to their own lives. In my estimation, however, it is more challenging for that desire to be fulfilled in the case of *Tecumseh!*, due to its use of the Noble Savage figure and the perceived absence of actual Native Americans for the drama’s audiences. *Tecumseh!* provides a good example of how these elements of stereotyped Indian characters, collective guilt, and catharsis coalesce in situations of absence.

*Tecumseh* as portrayed in Chillicothe’s outdoor historical drama is a strong example of both the Noble Savage and Aristotle’s definition of a tragic hero. It seems that the image of the Noble Savage was a conscious decision on behalf of the producers when they constructed the drama and its hero, and their effort seemed to have been effective. In a 1973 letter to Mark

32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
Sumner, the director of the Institute of Outdoor Drama, Jack Zierold commented that Tecumseh was “too goody-goody right off the bat, and his brothers and contemporaries make too much ado about how good he is. We mere mortals cannot empathize with him, and throughout the play he remains a shadow, mysterious and alien.”

Apparently, the character’s nobility was overwhelming in its early iteration. According to Zierold, the character did not evoke empathy from the audience and came across as an enigma. Zierold’s concern that audiences would not empathize with the hero is significant to the cathartic effect for the audience. Aristotle, in his recipe for tragedy, calls for the hero to be “a man who is not eminently good and just, yet whose misfortune is brought about not by vice or depravity, but by some error or frailty. He must be one who is highly renowned and prosperous. . . .”

Eckert’s initial characterization of Tecumseh was too extreme in his goodness to fit the Aristotelian mold for a tragic hero who is not “eminently good.” The figure needed to remain recognizable as both the tragic hero and the Noble Savage figure that was already familiar to the collective consciousness of the people in the audience in order for the audience to relate to him. By breaking down Aristotle’s description of a tragic hero, as well as our operating definition of the Noble Savage, we can see how the character of Tecumseh came to exemplify each figure throughout the play.

The opening narration of the play, which proclaims “This is the land which gave birth to the greatest Shawnee – the greatest Indian! . . . A son wise and able, filled with vision and purpose. Before his twentieth summer he was respected by all Shawnee and feared by all whites,” fulfills Aristotle’s dictate that a tragic hero must be “highly renowned and

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34 Jack Zierold, letter to Mark Sumner, 6 Aug 1973, Institute of Outdoor Drama, Greenville, NC.

prosperous.” It also establishes Tecumseh as the lofty Noble Savage, distinct from his Indian counterparts. Tecumseh’s role as a warrior and chief also gives him the highly revered status needed for an Aristotelian tragic hero.

In the first scene of the play, Tecumseh refuses to participate in the torture of a white captive, asking his fellow Shawnee warriors, “Is it courage to torture to death a man who cannot defend himself? . . . I will gladly kill any foe in battle, but I will not be part of killing any man helpless in our grasp.” In these lines, Tecumseh illustrates noble qualities by demonstrating both determination in battle and mercy. Furthermore, this moment illustrates Hathaway’s contention that in this drama, audiences are privy to “good” and “bad” Indians, as well as “good” and “bad” whites. Here we see both “noble” and “savage” behavior on behalf of the Indians. Hathaway suggests that this duality on both sides of the conflict reassures audiences that the outcome at the end is “proper.” By seeing both “good” Indians like Tecumseh and “bad” Indians, like those who want to torture captives, the end in which many of the Indian characters are killed, is justified.

Tecumseh’s relationship with the Galloways, a white family with whom he forms a close bond, is also important to the development of Tecumseh as both a Noble Savage and a tragic hero. Upon our first exposure to the Galloways, the family comes upon Tecumseh’s old home and decides to settle there:

Galloway: This is the place, my dear. This is where we Galloways are going to sink roots permanently!


37 Eckert 7-8.
Mrs. Galloway: Ohhh, it’s a lovely place, James. Is this where the Indian village was?

Galloway: Aye – right here it was. We called it Chillicothe, but they called it Chalaghawtha. Over a thousand wegiwas there were, and beautiful to behold, back then in ‘eighty-two….Even though Clark ordered it destroyed, we hated putting the torch to it. And I made up my mind right then that one day I’d be back to claim this land (Act I, Scene 7). 38

Tecumseh, who has been secretly watching this land claim, reveals himself from hiding and the two men exchange words regarding the land:

Galloway: . . . As I say, we’ve come in peace. My family and I . . . we’ve come to settle here. That is, we want to settle here, if it is not your land.

Tecumseh: I lived here once – But no more. I live now on the Tippecanoe, far from here.

Galloway: I’ve never seen a more beautiful place. I feel I belong to this land, rather than it belonging to me. I admire the Shawnee for having picked this spot for their Chalagawtha. It’s a land a man might willingly die for.

Tecumseh: Many did. The hearts of many Shawnee still weep with the memory. Was-he-kee-she-ke ne cana. I greet you in peace also, James Galloway…It is good that the first white man to come here is one who loves the land, and wishes to live on it and care for it (Act I, Scene 7). 39

38 Eckert 30-31.
39 Eckert 32.
Tecumseh exemplifies the Noble Savage’s “friendly, courteous, and hospitable” way by proclaiming that he greets the outsiders “in peace.” Additionally, we see the “vanishing” Indian figure at play in these lines. Galloway reveals that the Indians no longer live there because he and his men destroyed the land, but he is quick to note that he “hated” to do it. When Tecumseh enters the scene, he demonstrates absence despite his physical presence by using past tense (“I lived here once - But no more.”). He further evokes the “vanishing” Indian by warmly remitting what was his home to the white man (“It is good that the first white man to come here is one who loves the land. . . .”). Here, the Indian figure is replaced by a white family on the land he once occupied. By assuring them he no longer lives there he is proclaiming his absence. In expressing his approval of the family’s occupancy, he is assuaging any guilt they may feel. One might consider that this alleviation of guilt may be transferred to the non-native audience members who currently reside on what was once Tecumseh’s land. In this transference of land, the notion of the “vanishing” Indian and his current day absence is reinforced to audiences.

Another important function the Galloway family serves is the provision of characters with whom the audience can associate. Jenny Male, the current fight director, dance choreographer, and historian for the production points out that there “has to be some sort of white person that you can see the show through . . . The Galloways are that person . . . the Galloways are friendly and that’s why they see him as a man versus this leader who wants to kill all the Americans.” Because of the Galloways’ bond with Tecumseh and their view of him as a man, audience members are also able to feel connected to the hero. The audience’s association with the Galloways once again allows for an alleviation of white guilt. Instead of taking the land, the Galloways ask permission to settle there and they exhibit the same fervent investment

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40 Jenny Male, personal interview, 13 July 2011.
in the land that Tecumseh feels. The drama provides the audience with a lens through which they can view the Shawnee and themselves; most people would like to imagine that if they were in a similar situation, they would behave in a manner similar to the Galloways. Therefore, the audience creates an imagined space temporally situated in the past in which the “good” Indians welcomed whites to their land, and whites graciously promised to take care of the land. Through the Galloways, the audience can purge their own guilt because of the idealized ways in which the family treats Tecumseh and his brethren. The family also allows the audience to relate more to the hero, thus allowing them to purge their pity at the point of Tecumseh’s death.

Another way in which Tecumseh satisfies Aristotle’s description of a tragic hero is in the nature of his downfall. Aristotle calls for a hero whose downfall is caused by “some error or frailty.” In *Tecumseh!*, one can point to the hero’s decision to put his brother, Tenskwatawa, in charge of the tribe as the cause for Tecumseh’s downfall. When Tecumseh sets out to gather support from other tribes at the end of Act I, he designates Tenskwatawa as chief in his absence. He departs, warning his brother not to provoke General William Henry Harrison to attack while he is gone. During the course of the second act, Tenskwatawa’s hunger for power grows and he commands the tribe to attack Harrison’s men in Tecumseh’s absence. The resulting loss for the Shawnee weakens the alliance Tecumseh has built and eventually leads to the battle in which Tecumseh dies. Through the narrative of the play, Tecumseh’s appointment of Tenskwatawa becomes the hero’s tragic error. This dramaturgical move also relieves some of the blame for Tecumseh’s downfall and death from being assigned exclusively to white forces, thus assisting the purgation of white guilt for white audience members. *Tecumseh!* provides a strong example of how many outdoor dramas have traditionally used features of the Noble Savage, the
Aristotelian tragic hero, and the vanishing Indian to provide white audiences a cathartic experience in which they can purge pity and guilt.

In addition to presenting characteristics of the Noble Savage and the tragic hero, as well as suggestions of the vanishing Indian, it seems that some outdoor historical dramas rely on the depiction of violence to foster a cathartic experience for audience members. Violent battle scenes are often included to create spectacle and entertain audiences. Based on my observations, the dramas marked by absence seem to portray violence much more graphically. From my childhood encounter with *Blue Jacket*, I can vividly remember a particular scene in which a young Indian boy is shot by white characters. While I have no other vivid memories of any particular moments in the show, that violent image has remained. Greg Bergman, who performed in *Blue Jacket*, noted “You don’t want to bring a toddler on down. I mean there’s a lot of booming noises and gunfire and explosions and it’s not suitable for anybody under the age of, certainly not under the age of six or so, because there’s just too much going on that’s going to cause them to be in a nightmarish state.”41 This violence characterizes other dramas, as well. In a 1995 letter from Scott Parker, director of the Institute of Outdoor Drama, to Marion Waggoner, Executive Vice President of *Tecumseh!*, Parker offers, “There is a tremendous amount of violence in *Tecumseh!*: battles, hand-to-hand combat, gun play and the like. I think you need to review how all this affects the audience. Is it too much?”42

While spectacle can certainly entertain, there can be harmful effects of the violence, aside from disturbing children and disrupting family-night-out. Hathaway argues that the staging of the show “fails to problematize the conflict between Anglo and Woodland natives, but instead glorifies the violence of that

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41 Greg Bergman, personal interview, 28 July 2011.

42 Scott J. Parker, letter to Marion Waggoner, 12 July 1995, Institute of Outdoor Drama, Greenville, NC.
conflict." When a depiction does not engage in the impetus for the conflict, but instead focuses on the spectacle of violence, the result can be a reinforcement of a stereotyped correlation between natives and violence.

While Aristotle considered the element of spectacle the “least artistic” of the six elements of tragedy he identified, he nonetheless claimed that spectacle has “an emotional attraction of its own.” The violence I saw in some of the dramas had this spectacular effect. The most notable use of this type of spectacular violence I observed occurred in Trumpet in the Land. One interviewee who had performed in the drama, perhaps put it best; “My grandfather took me to see Trumpet when I was maybe six. My that massacre was traumatizing at that point!” In the drama, the white leaders of David Zeisberger’s Moravian mission are sent to Fort Detroit for questioning, leaving the Native converts at the Gnadenhutten mission. The American militia trick the Native converts into thinking they are providing protection by taking them to Fort Pitt. The militia escorts them to the schoolhouse on the Gnadenhutten settlement and during the course of the night, the militia massacres the congregation. In the script, children deliver lines such as, “Are the Americans going to kill us, Mama?” (Act II, Scene 6). One of the converts, Isaac, previously Chief Glikkikan, leads his people in prayer:

Isaac: (His hands uplifted.) If we are to perish, then let it be without hate in our hearts.

Voices: Yes, yes, without hate!

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43 Hathaway 88.
45 Anonymous, e-mail to the author, 1 August 2011.
46 Green 86.
Isaac: We pray forgiveness for those who destroy us. Let it be said that here at Gnadenhutten, the place of our sacrifice, we forgive, and so we shall triumph in our death.

Voices: (Brokenly.) Yes, yes. As it says—forgive our enemies! (Act II, Scene 6)\textsuperscript{47}

Even in the face of death, these characters hold fast to their Christian faith and noble character, asking for forgiveness for their adversaries. They fulfill the description of the Noble Savage in that they retain their “dignity,” “even under torture.” But this depiction also complicates the notion of the Noble Savage. Since the converts have assimilated to white ways and now mirror the white missionaries in attire, speech, behavior, and faith, the “savage” is no longer prominent. The narrator speaks one last time before the massacre begins, saying, “The dawn came—the last day on earth for these helpless ones (His voice almost a cry.) Remember, O let us remember!” (Act II, Scene 6).\textsuperscript{48} His use of the word “helpless” suggests that without the “savage” part of the Noble Savage, the Indian converts thus become helpless and need to be cared for by whites. Because the narrator serves as the lens through which the audience sees the story and their guide through the experience, the stage direction, “His voice almost a cry,” instructs the audience on how they should feel at that moment. The plea to “remember” calls the audience’s attention to the events about to unfold. What ensues in the script is dictated through stage directions and dialogue:

(Isaac is seen detaching himself from the group and moving toward Williamson. He kneels out of sight of the audience, and Williamson raises his mallet and

\textsuperscript{47} Green 87.

\textsuperscript{48} Green 88.
brings it down with a thud, the music giving its groan of pain and the People likewise. Again, Williamson’s voice is heard.) Anna Benigna, wife of Glikkikan—come to judgment! (Anna detaches herself and moves forward and kneels out of sight. Again the lifted mallet, the thud and the painful response of the music and the condemned ones. All the People kneel now as if for their execution, and as the organ swells in loudly, the scene fades away…) (Act II, Scene 6).49

What ensued onstage was much more graphic than what the stage directions describe. In production, the massacre takes a long time to stage.

A silhouetted representation of a schoolhouse on a wheeled platform is placed center stage. A table is situated downstage of the schoolhouse frame and centered. Benches arranged in two rows leading up to the table complete the set. As the massacre begins, Isaac is called up to the table. He approaches, leans down and the audience watches what appears to be his skull getting crushed with a mallet and blood and bodily bits flying from the impact. This action is not silhouetted nor created by shadow play. It is staged realistically so as to appear as if it were actually happening before the audience’s eyes. We see this occur with a couple more characters before chaos breaks out and the soldiers go about killing the native converts with knives, the mallet, and other weapons. The schoolhouse frame is lit, and the end tableaux is comprised of native bodies strewn across the floor, white soldiers upright, the schoolhouse structure engulfed in flames, and everything drenched in red stage light. The scene seems to stretch out for dramatic affect and, to me, was discomforting to the point of being horrifying to witness. The spectacle hypnotized me. Whereas Brecht argues for a separation of theatrical elements in order

49 Ibid.
to avoid audience members becoming enraptured by the spectacle, this production tried to
seamlessly integrate everything together in order to create a graphically representational
portrayal of this horrific act. Once again, audience members become passive in their observation
and experience a purgation of pity and fear as they watch the massacre.

The violence portrayed in the drama is also a talking point during the backstage tour for
which visitors can pay an additional fee. The tour guides, who were also actors in the
production, spent what seemed to me an inordinate amount of time talking about the staging of
the massacre. The guides explained that they use fake blood and eggs to create the effect of the
blood and bits splattering. The mallet comes down on the egg housed within a blood bag, which
creates the illusion of “bits of skull” projecting through the air. During this segment of the tour,
the guide tried to assure us that the blood and bits during the massacre is “not supposed to be
gross, but to capture the audience’s attention and pull them in.”

While one might argue that the atrocities inflicted upon native populations should not be
covered up or sugar-coated, the emphasis on violence in the production of *Trumpet in the Land*
seems, in my eyes, to be too graphic and too focused on the brutal annihilation of the converted
Indians. By having the narrator encourage the audience to “remember” immediately before the
staged massacre, the image of the violent act is cemented into the minds of audience members.
The explanation of the staging during the tour did not help to alleviate the discomfort at seeing
the scene later that night; in fact, after seeing the production, I wondered why the tour guide
seemed to find the effects and the scene so fun, or, to harken back to Aristotle, “pleasurable.”
For some audience members (and perhaps even producers), the scene may have provided them
the opportunity to purge their guilt or feel that their “cultural duty” had been fulfilled, but I find
this to be a dangerous prospect. Akin to James D. Watts, Jr.’s review of depictions of the Trail
of Tears, I fear that this production “focuses only on the horror and tragedy, not on the people’s efforts to rise from disaster and rebuild life anew.”50 The script attempts to end on a hopeful note, as the returning missionaries vow to rebuild Schoenbrunn, but absence marks the stage with the charred schoolhouse remains and a doll that once belonged to one of the deceased converted children. The stage directions and dialogue at the end read:

(As one voice they burst into their challenging call to the audience and to the night around, the music also thundering forth its affirmation and its command.)

People: All hail the day when men on earth
In brotherhood shall live
And truth and honor come to birth
And friendly hands forgive.
Then loudly let our trumpet sound
A summons to the wide world round
Till nations’ hate and killing cease
And men shall dwell in peace! (Act II, Scene 9)51

The words of the song promote a sense of peace, but I am unsure of what the “challenging call to the audience” is supposed to be. The absence of Indians at the end of the play, and the absence of a large population of Delaware in eastern Ohio where this play is staged makes me skeptical of who shares this call for peace. Certainly, because of its 1972 publication date, one can assume that audience members felt their peace was threatened more by communist nations than Native

51 Green 96.
Americans. Here again, the notion of the “vanishing” Indian gives way to temporal discontinuity, which speaks to the perception of Indians as a relic of the past in areas of absence. Berkhofer notes, “If Whites regarded the Indian as a threat to life and morals when alive, they regarded him with nostalgia upon his demise—or when that threat was safely past.” Because there is an absence of a large Delaware or Shawnee delegation in Ohio, whites do not see the Indian as a threat, and are free to construct a nostalgic image and thus control the way Native Americans are represented in outdoor historical dramas.

*Tecumseh!* and *Trumpet in the Land* offer two examples of outdoor historical dramas in which elements such as Indian stereotypes, the notion of the “vanishing” Indian, the tragic hero, spectacular violence, and white guilt converge to create a cathartic experience for the audience. I find Waggoner’s desire for audience members to leave “thinking” admirable because it suggests a desire for change in people’s perspectives and understandings of Native American cultures. Despite this desire, I believe that the lack of exposure to contemporary Native American cultures in most of the audience members’ lives enables the cathartic experience, and thus discourages change. Some might question my application of western thought to native subject matter. I contend that while the plays I address deal with native topics in terms of content, the form these plays take are based in Aristotelian conventions, suggesting an absence of native agency in how their stories are depicted. In addition to stereotyped motifs present in the script of these dramas, there is another element that signals absence to audiences: employment and casting.

In addition to witnessing storylines in which the Indian characters are either killed or pushed off their land, the perception of absence is reinforced by the absence of native actors in native roles. When the outdoor historical drama movement grew during the 1950s-1980s,

52 Berkhofer 29.
production teams were comprised of mostly non-natives, particularly whites. Actors, directors, designers, choreographers, and administrative teams were predominantly non-native. This has been and continues to be the case for many productions, especially in Ohio where there is not a large pool of Native American artists. The result is that not only do non-natives control how the Indigenous characters and cultures are represented via the script, but also visually in terms of dance choreography, musical scores, costume designs, property designs, embodiment by the actors, etc. Furthermore, audience members’ belief that Native Americans have vanished is substantiated by the presence of mostly white actors onstage in native roles. The area in which this issue seems to be the most sensitive is casting.

For years, non-natives actors have been cast in native roles, and oftentimes natives have been cast as background actors with no lines (this has historically been the case more so in areas with a large Native American presence, such as North Carolina and Oklahoma). Many critics have called for the casting of natives in native roles, but as Marion Waggoner points out, that isn’t so easy:

I used to travel around the country auditioning native talent—Oklahoma or wherever I could find it, working with different individuals. So a lot of effort has been put into that…there’s been some effort made here to tell this story in an appropriate manner. And not be condescending. So I think that comes into play and I think that when someone says, ‘You oughta hire Indians actors.’ And my reaction always was, ‘Show them to me. Where are they?’…someone told me once in Oklahoma, ‘Why the hell would I want to come back to Ohio? You kicked us out of there once.’

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53 Waggoner, telephone interview, 29 July 2011.
In this case absence creates an obstacle; very practically, there are not enough native actors who want to move to Chillicothe for the summer. That may be due to low pay, location, or the stereotyped nature of the material. Jenny Male, from Tecumseh!, adds,

And I will say we make every effort, we would love a whole lot of Native Americans to come out for the show. The truth is, only—we had a Tecumseh, 1995 to 2000, that was full-blooded…And that was awesome…but for theatre—for film Native Americans seem to come out. But the theatre conferences were for casting…its almost all people in college or just out of college just trying to find a summer job, and from all over the spectrum, of all kinds of backgrounds.\textsuperscript{54}

The question of who can play a Native character becomes even more complex when one considers tribal affiliation. Is it enough for someone of native descent to play Tecumseh, or must the person be Shawnee? What percentage Shawnee must the person be? When I asked Larissa Fasthorse, a Lakota dance choreographer for Unto These Hills, how she felt about non-natives playing native roles she responded,

To me, it’s two-fold . . . . First off, I do believe I’ll just say it right out, I do believe in color-blind casting. Because native actors are fighting so hard for that. That they don’t just be cast, they can’t just be cast in native roles. And that’s a constant struggle . . . and I believe that if native actors are going to be asked to cast color blind, it has to go both ways, you know. So I do believe in color-blind, one-hundred-percent. That said, though, I also believe in putting forth some

\textsuperscript{54} Jenny Male, personal interview, 13 July 2011.
effort to reach out to all, to make it truly an effort to cast any color. Which, unfortunately, most of these people don’t do.\textsuperscript{55}

Fasthorse’s response complicates the matter even further. In all honesty, I face a quandary as I introduce her to readers. I make a point to identify her as Lakota, but based on what she said—that native actors don’t want to be cast just because they are native—makes me question my choice. While noting her native ancestry alerts the reader that I am giving voice to the very people whose absence I am concerned with, I am also anxious about falling into the problematic trap of looking to her precisely because she is native. This is a conflict that lacks resolution, but I return to a point Fasthorse made in her comments; that is, she believes in putting forth the effort to reach out to all. In casting and in my own research process, an openness to engage with all provides a much broader base of knowledge and talent.

Though I have pointed out several issues that emerge in the absence of Native Americans, I do not mean to make it seem as though the productions in Ohio have ignored that absence. In fact, each of the dramas I visited has “imported” native presence and/or introduced educational measures to train their participants about native cultures and histories. For example, the dramas in Ohio each use Shawnee sign and language workshops and guides to educate casts on Shawnee phrases and gestures. Each production also reaches out in other ways to varying degrees.

Greg Bergman recalled to me some of the educational outreach the directors conducted, such as distributing Shawnee language guides, with the cast of \textit{Blue Jacket}. He also noted the presence of Native Americans during the production season, although this was not orchestrated by First Frontier, the organization that produced \textit{Blue Jacket}. The Miami Valley Council for

\textsuperscript{55} Larissa Fasthorse, personal interview, 4 August 2011.
Native Americans held an annual event on the Blue Jacket site. Bergman recalls his perception of the event thusly:

One time every year there was an Indian … not reunion, but an activity … that would be here on the site. And I remember that the producers and stage managers were very, very stringent on, when that is going on take no liberties on your sign language, your words, things of that nature.\textsuperscript{56}

When I asked for clarification on what he meant by “Indian reunion” he replied,

Like truly Native American…It was called the, I forget what they called it, but they had all these teepees out on the site and they had like pow-wow type things going on. It was literally Native American tribes and they would see the show and then they would have a big, like festival. And so that was going and everybody was very, very strict about, “make sure you take no liberties and make up a word or a hand signal or do something offensive on a hand signal that they would only know.” So, that was stressed, I remember.\textsuperscript{57}

Here we see a marked difference in how the producers treated the show, based on the presence of native peoples. According to Bergman’s recollection, accuracy and respect were especially stressed when the Council had their gathering on the grounds. In absence of actual indigenous people, an offensive hand signal may go unnoticed to an audience ignorant of the language, and therefore did not raise too much concern, whereas in the presence of Native Americans, producers regulated the cast’s behavior to a greater extent. Admittedly, behavior may change and become more guarded in any situation when authority is present, but I think it is important to

\textsuperscript{56} Greg Bergman, personal interview, 28 July 2011.

\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.
point out this instance of changed behavior in the presence of Native American spectators. As I have stated previously, with presence there is the potential for resistance. The fact that producers warned the cast to maintain accurate representations while in the presence of Native Americans suggests that the producers were anxious about the possibility of inaccurate representations and the conflict that could result. Here we have a very clear example of how the perceptions of absence and presence change the representations of Native American culture onstage in outdoor historical dramas. Specifically, this instance supports the notion that presence affects representation.

What also troubles me about the scenario Bergman described is that it seems an opportunity to interact with and learn about the cultures depicted was missed. I asked Bergman if they ever received feedback from the Native American guests. He answered, “Not at all...I mean, we would see them and we were introduced to them. But other than that, we had no interaction with them at all.”58 Danny Mangan, who performed in Blue Jacket in 1994 and 1995 also recalls the presence of the Miami Valley Council:

Blue Jacket had a little more consideration towards the Indians than Boone [i.e. The Legend of Daniel Boone, an outdoor historical drama in Kentucky] had, but only because it's kind of the heart of the Miami Valley Council with the Shawnee and they hold their pow-wows once a year on the Blue Jacket site. So, a lot more of them saw the show or were involved with it so they made sure it kind of stayed a little more politically correct...59

58 Ibid.
59 Danny Mangan, personal interview, 13 September 2011.
Both Mangan and Bergman recollect a marked difference in regulated behavior when the Shawnee had their annual gathering at the production site. To be fair, these are only two accounts of a production spanning several decades, so perhaps in other years there was more interaction between the producers of *Blue Jacket* and the members of the Miami Valley Council. It seems, however, based on Bergman’s account that there was a missed opportunity for engagement between those whose story and history is being told and those who are relaying the story. In Mangan’s perception, there was some involvement on behalf of the council members, but to what extent is unclear. One similarity in their accounts, though, is the acknowledgement that behavior was more closely guarded when the Council was present. In noting that “they made sure it kind of stayed a little more politically correct,” Mangan suggests that native presence regulated behavior. Furthermore, Mangan seems to believe that this attention to representation was only because there was a presence by the Council, rather than because of some sort of ethical consideration. In both cases, it was the presence of contemporary Native Americans that seems to have affected the behavior of non-native casts and crews, and not concern for how another culture was depicted. Additionally, aside from causing stronger regulation of behavior, the presence of Native Americans in these situations did not seem to result in much exchange or interaction.

In contrast to the limited interaction outlined by Bergman and Mangan, *Tecumseh!* seems to have made concerted effort over the years to import Native American (specifically Shawnee) input and presence. In the early stages of the drama’s development, producers visited Shawnee tribal leaders in Oklahoma. Herbert Friedman, who worked with Mundell to establish

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60 I should note here that not all members of the Miami Valley Council are Shawnee, so not all of the members may feel connected to the story and history being related through the production.
the outdoor drama in Chillicothe, also remembers visiting with members of the Shawnee nation; “I have been out there on the reservation. We’ve kept in contact with these people.” Marion Waggoner gave more details of this trip taken by Mundell and other founding board members:

[T]hey traveled to Oklahoma…to meet with some of the direct descendants of Tecumseh. Arthur Rollete, who then was tribal chairman . . . and other direct descendants of Tecumseh, so this is something else that Rusty did that was out of the norm of the time and that was to elicit the involvement of the native people that were being written about. And so quite a bit of time was spent out there with different clan members, many who supported the show, some who were against the script being developed.

Recognizing the absence of Shawnee in the Chillicothe area, the early producers sought native input. To what degree their input affected the script and production is unclear, but Rollete and other members of the Shawnee Nation were invited to the opening night of *Tecumseh!* In a video shown to the cast at the beginning of each season, called *The Making of Tecumseh!*, Alan Eckert states that after that first performance, Rollete hugged him and cried, saying “You have brought Tecumseh to life again.” This story seems to be held dear by the various producers at the drama, even today, and provides the impression of validation of their work. This visit from Rollete was not the only instance of “importing” presence—Friedman recalls hosting “Native Americans…I mean real Native Americans” to perform dances at one of the fundraisers for the

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61 Herbert Friedman, personal interview, 13 July 2011.
62 Marion Waggoner, personal interview, 29 July 2011. It should also be noted that Hathaway argues that “it is unclear whether the tribe ever officially ‘authorized’ the production” (63).
Friedman’s stress on the adjective “real” suggests an absence of Native Americans in the area.

Mundell also tried to bring in native presence for the actual show. In a letter to Sumner he wrote, “We are working on the importation of Shawnees to participate in the drama—no real actors . . . mostly bow shooters and horse riders . . . but Shawnees, nonetheless.” It is interesting that Mundell noted that they would bring in “no real actors.” This denotation may signal the belief that there were no “real” Shawnee actors to be found, or that they would not possess the talent or be as reliable as non-Shawnee actors. Furthermore, his interest in bow shooters and horse riders may have to do with a desire to add to the spectacle of the show. It is impossible to interpret what the motivation was behind his desire for Shawnees in the show—whether it was for spectacle, authenticity, agency on behalf of the Shawnee to tell their own history, trying to fulfill some sort of “ethical duty,” etc.—but the desire to place Shawnee presence onstage from the beginning is one is not always found in outdoor historical dramas.

Over the years, the Scioto Society has sought Native presence in other ways. The music used in the show is by Carl T. Fischer, who was three-fourths Cherokee, and Academy Award nominee Graham Greene, who is full-blooded Oneida, provided the recorded narration. Arthur Rolette also recorded some Shawnee words and phrases, which continues to be distributed to the cast on CD. The cast members with whom I spoke described several other activities and resources they use to learn about the history and culture of the Shawnee, including copies of

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64 Herbert Friedman, personal interview, 13 July 2011.

65 W.L. “Rusty” Mundell, letter to Mark R. Sumner, 11 December 1972, Institute of Outdoor Drama, Greenville, NC.
Eckert’s novel upon which the play is based, Shawnee sign language and spoken language workshops, etc.

All of these activities and gestures serve to, in some ways, validate the producers in their endeavors to tell Others’ stories. Hathaway considers the problematic implications of this type of validation and authority, focusing on Waggoner, who was the Executive Director at the time of her research. I agree that the politics of trying to deal with an absence of the Other when trying to represent that Other’s culture and history is tricky and complex. Gerald Vizenor contends that “the dominant society has created a homogenized history of tribal people…that white people know more about the indian they invented than anyone.” A potential consequence of the absence of Native American involvement in these dramas is that what is constructed and performed onstage is an “invention,” such as the Noble Savage. In addition, another potential outcome of the educational activities conducted with casts, as well as the perception of authority resulting from imported presence, is that non-native producers begin to think they know more about the Other they have invented than anyone else. This perception of expert knowledge gives the non-natives a sense of control and power over the native Other.

While the interest in the figures and stories being performed in these outdoor dramas generates opportunities for producers to grow in understanding and to change their perceptions, this interest can also lead to tensions when combined with the absence of a native community. One of the struggles in outdoor dramas has been over whose history is being told and who has the right to tell it. The desire to take pride in and to share the history one claims has been the motivation for many to produce outdoor historical dramas. At a conference keynote roundtable,

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Scott Parker noted, “The first question we usually ask these communities is ‘Why do you want to do this?’ . . . the number one reason is that they’re proud of their heritage . . . of the history of the area. They want to celebrate it, and they want to preserve it.”67 There is danger in this enterprise, however; as Johnson and Underiner put it, “It would seem that the heritage of an indigenous people is only enhanced when it is framed by and for European conventions and taste.”68 By portraying Native American histories and cultures through white-produced representations in their absence, negative consequences can emerge such as stereotyped figures. For some, the transference of histories is as easy as the land transferences depicted in Tecumseh!. That is, the non-natives want to settle on the land previously occupied by Indians, the Indian asks that the non-natives take care of the land, leaves, and causes no subsequent disturbance. Hathaway notes that “the impression that remains at the end of Tecumseh!—that after the last battle scene, when the ‘Indians’ slink off into the wings it is symbolic of their ‘slinking’ across the Mississippi; they slink towards obsolence. . . .”69 In this storyline, the Indian becomes absent and leaves control to the non-native. Art historian Deborah Root contends that cultural appropriation “signifies not only the taking up of something and making it one’s own but also the ability to do so.”70 In many cases, Native American figures, histories, and cultures have been appropriated because of the absence of Native Americans. In some cases, Native American communities have responded to these issues of absence with strengthened presence and the reclamation of control.

68 Johnson and Underiner 53.
69 Hathaway 118.
“Natives and their stories actuate a presence, not an absence.”

Gerald Vizenor

In her dissertation, Julie Pearson-Little Thunder describes the difficulty in self-representation:

Group self-representation is always, necessarily, a two-sided coin. One side faces inward, towards the group that ‘authorizes’ its speaking, that is to say, recognizes the authenticity of the artist’s statement, by virtue of her/his situatedness within the group; and the other side faces outwards towards the dominant society.

With this statement, Pearson-Little Thunder encapsulates one of the struggles that has faced the outdoor historical dramas of Cherokee, North Carolina and Tahlequah, Oklahoma. As Cherokees have struggled to take control of their own representation through the dramas, they have had to look towards both the Cherokee community and the non-natives that comprise their audiences. In the beginning of Unto These Hills and, to an extent, Trail of Tears, there was an absence of native agency in spite of the physical presence of a Cherokee community. In our conversation, Danny Mangan, who has performed in both Blue Jacket and Trail of Tears, called attention to this physical presence; “[E]verything in Tahlequah is Cherokee nation-owned. So

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they have a lot more reverence toward the whole Indian aspect of things. . . .”

The notion of reverence is a matter of perspective, though, as indicated by many Cherokees’ responses to the show. During the last half of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century, members of the Cherokee communities in North Carolina and Oklahoma fought for control of their self-representation within the outdoor dramas produced in each location. The impetus for change in both of these situations emerged from frustrations over the depiction of Cherokee people, culture, and history. Though the motivation for change was similar, each show faced its own idiosyncratic challenges along the way. The remainder of this chapter will examine how the presence of a Cherokee community in Tahlequah and in Cherokee, North Carolina instigated change for each drama. Although I treat the cases separately, there is overlap in some of the challenges and tensions that resulted from each. Gerald Vizenor asserts, “survivance, in the sense of native survivance, is more than survival, more than endurance or mere response; the stories of survivance are an active presence.”124

Through active presence, the Cherokee people of North Carolina and Oklahoma have been able to reclaim control over representations of their culture.

Though control over the outdoor drama in Tahlequah, Oklahoma on behalf of the Cherokee has increased in recent years, the situation there has been unique in comparison to the other shows included in this study. As explained in Chapter One, Cherokees have been involved in the production of the drama since its inception. One example of this participation is the dictation in the by-laws of the Cherokee National Historic Society that at least 50% of the board is comprised of Cherokee individuals. M.A. Hagerstrand, the Executive Vice-President of the

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3 Danny Mangan, personal interview, 13 September 2011.
4 Vizenor 15.
organization, assured Virgil Harrington of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in a 1966 letter that “Our present work force is about twenty-four. . . . All are Cherokees, ½ or more degree of blood.”

Cherokee employment, as well as historical and cultural preservation, was also an aim for the project, which included not only the drama, but a historically reenacted village, a museum, and an archive. In a letter written ten years after construction had begun, Hagerstrand listed the perceived contributions of these projects:

Substantial employment for Cherokees and economic benefits for the entire area.

Education of the general public in the unique culture of an advanced Indian tribe.

Preservation of priceless historical records and artifacts. Exhibition and promotion of talents of Cherokee artists. Extensive research into Cherokee culture and history. Development of pride in heritage for the persons of Cherokee descent.

Contribution to a better understanding between peoples of diverse cultural heritage.

This proclamation differs from similar statements by other producing entities in that it is Cherokee-centered. In words, at least, the focus of the organization seems to be the benefit of the Cherokee people, rather than the economic interests of the non-natives in the area. Whether or not the Cherokees present in the area felt the “development of pride in heritage” through the Trail of Tears drama is a matter of contention.

Tension surrounding the drama and the Cherokee National Historic Society can be traced back to the 1960s. The presence of the Cherokee community resulted in strong investment in

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5 M.A. Hagerstrand, letter to Virgil Harrington, 17 March 1966, Cherokee Heritage Center, Tahlequah, OK.

6 M.A. Hagerstrand, letter to “Friend” (of the Cherokee Historical Society, Inc.), date unknown, Institute of Outdoor Drama, Greenville, NC.
and concern for the preservation and representation of Cherokee culture. With regard to a prospective director of the drama, Hagerstrand, who in addition to being Vice-President of the organization also spearheaded the development of the drama, wrote, “There are some ‘sensitive’ areas of concern in this part of the country and we cannot afford to have less than the best, both from professional and a personal standpoint.” By referring to the sensitivity needed for “this part of the country,” one can assume that Hagerstrand meant the seat of the Cherokee Nation, realizing that there were concerns to be considered that were nonexistent in other areas. The deep investment some individuals felt toward the Cherokee Cultural Center project is reflected in several letters Hagerstrand exchanged with Nancy Hope Smith, a Cherokee woman from Tulsa. Smith wrote to Hagerstrand in 1966, voicing her concern,

As a Cherokee interested in the preservation of some aspects of our heritage I have favored the plans for the restoration of the ruins of the old seminary, the construction of the Indian village and museum, and the production of the drama. However, my visit left me with many unanswered questions.8

Smith proceeds to cite concerns with the architectural styles of the structures in the Ancient Village, as well as the removal of the old seminary foundation. She sums up her apprehensions by saying, “However, I think I am not alone in wondering if this Cherokee Cultural Center may not become a point of ridicule to the Cherokees rather than a memorial to great people’s accomplishments.”9 She concludes by explaining why she feels compelled to voice her concerns; “So that you will not think that I am unduly critical, it may be well for me to tell you

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7 M.A. Hagerstrand, letter to anonymous, 20 April 1966, Cherokee Heritage Center, Tahlequah, OK.
8 Nancy Hope Smith, letter to M.A. Hagerstrand, 30 August 1966, Cherokee Heritage Center, Tahlequah, OK.
9 Ibid.
that I am five-eighths Cherokee and a direct descendent of persons prominent in past Cherokee affairs. I am interested in authenticity as I am sure you are also.”10 Hope’s letter demonstrates a situation not experienced to such great extent in the dramas marked by absence. That is, the people who are represented in the drama and accompanying sites felt empowered to voice their views on such representations in Tahlequah. This agency to speak did not necessarily always mean they were able to control the representations, but I argue that the impetus for change began in acts, such as this, when Cherokees gave voice to their concerns. Another letter from Smith to Hagerstrand expressed her desire to see Cherokee employment within the Cultural Center, as well as the provision of source materials regarding the depiction of early Cherokees in the village.

The question of who has the authority to tell a particular story is illustrated in several letters exchanged between the Principal Chief, W. W. Keeler, and one of the Board members, Mildred Parks Ballenger from 1965-1966. In these exchanges, concern for Hagerstrand’s racial background and ability to lead the Cultural Center project are expressed. Ballenger claims,

Your appointee of the Park Hill project is destroying everything Cherokee (historic) in the area. . . . He and some other mixed bloods have very little concern of the historic value of this area. . . . A number of Cherokee people who have found out what is happening at Park Hill are really horrified that so much is being destroyed in such a highhanded manner by an outsider, of your choosing while

10 Ibid.
we, the people concerned have to stand helplessly by and can do nothing to stop this destruction of our Cherokee landmark.  

In most of her letters, Ballenger claims to be speaking on behalf of numerous Cherokee, although I did not find any other letters corroborating this point. What we see represented in this letter is a racial tension that persists today in Tahlequah. This tension exists not only between Cherokee and non-natives, but between “full-bloods” and “mixed-bloods.” For some in the Tahlequah area, the amount of Cherokee blood lent more or less authority to a person. In another letter, Ballenger brings in the topic of funding:

I have just visited a number of Cherokee families who are in a deplorable condition and practically on starvation while you give $15,000 a year of their money to a slick-tongued promoter who has had his sticky fingers out for our Cherokee money ever since the judgment was rendered. I do not want to disillusion you but this is why he has courted your favor. . . . I dislike very much writing this, but I feel I represent the real Cherokee and I have so little contact with you, the only way I can inform you of our condition here is writing. . . . I now understand why so many of the Cherokees wanted a per-capita payment. They knew the mixed-blood would allow so much of their Cherokee money to go to a non-Indian scoundrel. I am, sincerely for the real Indian.

Disputes over how to allocate tribal funds was a reoccurring theme that I came across in the archive. Furthermore, the question of who is a “real” Cherokee or Indian and who is not seems

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11 I should note that Hagerstrands’s race is white, and he married a woman of Choctaw and Cherokee heritage.

Mildred Parks Ballenger, letter to W.W. Keeler, date unknown, Cherokee Heritage Center, Tahlequah, OK.

12 Mildred Parks Ballenger, letter to W.W. Keeler, 22 December 1965, Cherokee Heritage Center, Tahlequah, OK.
to be of utmost concern to Ballenger. Her statements imply that she feels that she has a greater degree of authority over Cherokee issues than others. I also found an undated flyer in the same folder which addressed Ballenger’s points regarding the poor conditions of many Cherokee in the area. The flyer was sponsored by the National Indian Youth Council and lists several reasons the organization, along with the Five County Cherokee Organization and the Creek Indian Tribal Centralization Committee “all join to denounce this ‘Cherokee Village’ as an indignity and a cruel misuse of our living heritage.” These issues of authority and funding added to the tension surrounding the Cherokee Cultural Center and the outdoor drama.

It is important to note that Hagerstrand sent a letter to Keeler in 1966 defending himself against the allegations against him. In the letter he stated that “the wild claims bandied about so recklessly about my nefarious interests and purposes are totally without foundation.” In the pages that follow, Hagerstrand defends himself point-by-point and argues, “I believe I have worked sincerely for Cherokee interests.” It is difficult to decipher how many people opposed Hagerstrand, but the issue seemed disconcerting enough that he addressed the complaints to Keeler in a letter. Regardless, I call attention to these letters to illustrate the tensions that surrounded the Cultural Center project.

The racial tensions described persisted through the duration of the drama’s run. As recently as the early 2000s, reports of racial tensions within the show emerged. In an email, one of the directors reported that

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13 National Indian Youth Council, flyer, date unknown, Cherokee Heritage Center, Tahlequah, OK.
14 M.A. Hagerstrand, letter to W.W. Keeler, 10 January 1966, Cherokee Heritage Center, Tahlequah, OK.
15 Ibid.
It has come to my attention from various cast members that much trouble brews backstage. Trouble, that has been allowed to fester and rot, has now become an open sore. And not just backstage but on stage. Racial slurs and fights in the dressing rooms from male and females. Children openly fighting and calling each other racial names. . . .

The email goes on to express the racial tensions occurring between Cherokee and non-Cherokees, at a time when the cast was predominantly comprised of Native American performers.

Mangan described a different experience while with the drama: “When I was there in ’84, it wasn’t overwhelming, but if you really paid [attention]-there’s a lot of racial tension in Oklahoma between the Indian heritage and the non-Indian heritage. . . . Just in general through the community it existed.” When I asked if those tensions seemed any more or less heightened within the cast, Mangan responded,

Not within the cast. Basically the three or four cast members who were of Indian heritage realized they were overwhelmed by the whiteys and they just fit in. But I know there was, you know, the director would take extra efforts to try to direct the show in order to not inadvertently offend anyone.

Mangan’s comments reinforce the awareness of presence when he points out the director’s attempt to “not inadvertently offend.” But they also raise another interesting point in that despite the presence of the Cherokee early in the drama’s history, the cast was still overwhelmingly

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16 Anonymous email, early 2000s, Institute of Outdoor Drama, Greenville, NC.

17 Danny Mangan, personal interview, 13 September 2011.

18 Ibid.
white. In this way, the production in Tahlequah was similar to the productions in Ohio. There was Cherokee presence onstage during the drama, though mostly as background crowd-fillers and backup dancers. Mangan also noted that the “three or four” Cherokee cast in the show were “GIs” [“General Indians”]. 19 This practice contradicted a flyer distributed by the Cherokee National Historical Society in the early years of the Cultural Center project. In the section on the outdoor drama, the flyer declares, “It is intended that all possible cast positions be filled by Cherokees.” 20 In a 1968 letter from Hagerstrand to Kermit Hunter, Hagerstrand comments on a potential actor for the show:

Offhand, from his physical description and his photograph, it wouldn’t take a great effort to make him look like an Indian! Insofar as I am concerned, we need to make this a quality effort in every way, first using persons of Cherokee descent who are fully qualified both professionally and personally; second, using persons of Indian descent from other tribes, perhaps; and third, others. . . . As time goes on, we should be attempting to train local Cherokees as replacements, but not at the sacrifice of quality. 21

Hagerstrand’s comments reflect a quandary that was discussed in the last chapter; that is, some producers’ view that the use of native performers and maintaining “quality” in a performance can be at odds with each other. Although Hagerstrand states that using “others” should be the last resort, his first statement seems to advocate the use of a non-native, made to look like a native.

19 Ibid. “GI” is an “industry term” for outdoor historical drama. I heard this phrase, which refers to “General Indian” many times during my research.

20 Cherokee National Historical Society, “Heritage” flyer, date unknown, Cherokee Heritage Center, Tahlequah, OK.

21 M.A. Hagerstrand, letter to Kermit Hunter, 25 November 1968, Cherokee Heritage Center, Tahlequah, OK.
His last statement supports the aim to cast Cherokee in “all possible cast positions.” Even in 1996, one director bemoaned having to dismiss a Native actor because he was “sorry to lose the Cherokee look.” The stress here is not on having to dismiss a Cherokee performer, but on losing the “look” of a Cherokee, which may be interpreted as the reduction of the actor to spectacle. Despite their presence in the surrounding community, Cherokees still had to struggle for presence onstage in the *Trail of Tears* drama.

One of the biggest points of contention regarding the drama that I came across concerned the *Trail of Tears* script and its author, Kermit Hunter. Hunter, who wrote numerous outdoor historical dramas, including *Unto These Hills*, was commissioned to write an outdoor drama for the Cherokee National Historical Society which would “provide an excellent means for dramatizing and perpetuating the history of the Cherokee and for improving the moral and esprit of member and descendants of the Cherokee nation.” Hunter’s contract with the Cherokee National Historical Society negotiated more power and control than usually allotted to playwrights. In the contract, Hunter was also named “co-producer” of the drama, “with responsibilities for recruiting of production and cast personnel, for costumes, for choreography, and for general supervision over the preparations for the initial performances.” In this leadership capacity, Hunter exerted control and input in almost all areas of production. In a letter to T.R. Cobb in 1963, Hunter advised Cobb in the project plans and expressed his interest in the project; “I would like to see this project go though, because this is a story and a people that I

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22 Nat Eek, letter to Mac Harris, 30 June 1996, Cherokee Heritage Center, Tahlequah, OK.

23 W.W. Keller, letter to unknown, date unknown, Archival Folder – “Cherokee National Historical Society, Correspondences 1963,” Cherokee Heritage Center, Tahlequah, OK.

24 “Memo to Executive Committee,” Cherokee National Historical Society, 1963, Cherokee Heritage Center, Tahlequah, OK.
love. . .” Based on this letter, Hunter’s intentions seem sincere. The script that Hunter created, however, is one that possesses some of the now-problematic elements of many outdoor drama scripts discussed earlier such as stereotyped figures, violence, and skewed histories. The play chronicles the Trail of Tears and the disputes and factions that arose once the Cherokee relocated to Indian Territory. Several of the people I spoke with noted that many of the Cherokee, especially in the last few years Hunter’s script was used, disapproved of the way their people and history was being depicted in the drama. Tom Mooney, the archivist at the Cherokee Heritage Center and previous performer in the drama, noted that many people had problems with historical and cultural inaccuracies in the script. Most outdoor historical dramas admit to manipulating history in the name of entertainment. The presence of Cherokee around *Trail of Tears* applies additional pressure to producers to be accurate, due in part to the presence of living descendants of the characters depicted in the play. This sensitive issue is evident in a list of suggestions that was compiled by a committee of reviewers and sent to Hunter in response to his first draft of the script. One reviewer cautioned that

> Since it is obvious that the author is making use of names of people who actually existed, in order to give the plot historical significance, I am wondering if the sponsors of the project have obtained permission of living relatives to do so. If not, such permission might be solicited, thereby resulting, not only in good publicity, but in curbing any possible reprisals if any living relatives should take issue with the interpretations placed on their ancestors by the lines as written.

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25 Kermit Hunter, letter to T.R. Cobb, 23 July 1963, Cherokee Heritage Center, Tahlequah, OK.

26 Tom Mooney, personal interview, 27 September 2011.

27 M.A. Hagerstrand, letter to Kermit Hunter, 20 September 1966, Cherokee Heritage Center, Tahlequah, OK.
I cannot ascertain whether or not this suggestion was heeded, based on my research in the archive, but it is an interesting and well-founded warning that arose because of the presence of Cherokee descendants in the area.

In the 1990s, the Cherokee National Historical Society appears to have wanted a new script. In 1996, Nat Eek, the director of the show wrote to Scott Parker of the Institute of Outdoor Drama, and noted, “The Kermit Hunter script is serviceable but old-fashioned, predictable, lacking in character development (as is most historical drama), and certainly out of sync with the current Native American concepts.”28 A stream of letters between Parker, Hunter, and some of the other producers in Tahlequah during the first six months of 1996 reveals much about the tensions regarding the script. For the 1996 season, the organization had asked Hunter for some revisions to the script. Hunter did so, but begrudgingly (as evidenced in some of his letters to Parker). Judging from Eek’s letter to Parker, it appears as though the organization was still not satisfied with the script and Hunter offered to write a new script after Parker had informed him that, “All of this may be too little, too late anyway. They may have already made up their minds that they need a new script and a new playwright. . . .”29 During the course of these exchanges, Hunter addressed a letter to the Cherokee National Historical Society, “My Dear Friends,” and wrote,

As this new season is about to begin for the drama, I think back to that day when Bill Keeler, Mort Harrison, Early Boyd Pierce, and I walked the bushes at Park Hill and envisioned a Cherokee establishment there to memorialize the traditions and idealism of a great race of people. Bill asked me how I saw the project, and I

28 Nat Eek, letter to Scott Parker, 11 June 1996, Institute of Outdoor Drama, Greenville, NC.

29 Scott J. Parker, letter to Kermit Hunter, 1 July 96, Institute of Outdoor Drama, Greenville, NC.
explained several things: a theatre to tell the story, a development of the ruins of
the old seminary as a tourist attraction, an archive to house certain treasures, and a
museum to show the world some of the past.  

Already one can detect a deep feeling of investment and ownership in the Cherokee Cultural
Center on behalf of Hunter, as he claims that each element was *his* idea. He continues,

> Over the years that dream has been often caught up in various problems and
> hidden quarrels and conflicting opinions . . . I think the problems can all be boiled
down to one thing: do we want to tell the history of the Cherokee in Oklahoma, or
do we want to entertain an audience of people who will buy tickets and perpetuate
the play. . . . I propose for you a new play which I have had in my mind a long
time (I have learned the story of the Cherokee in Oklahoma by heart over the
years) . . . . It all ends in tragedy, but the soul of the Cherokee emerges as bright,
overwhelming, brilliant as the whole story of America.  

Here one can see how Hunter’s vision had become discordant with the vision of the Cherokees.
To Hunter, telling the history of the Cherokee is an either/or proposition; either we tell the
history or we entertain, but we cannot do both. In fact, the last line of his letter reads, “You must
decide between history and show business. . . .”  

This sentiment dismisses the Cherokee history as *not* interesting and *not* entertaining. Furthermore, the vision he has for a new play contains
many of the problematic elements of the older play in that it ends in tragedy, although he
suggests that sacrifice of the Cherokee would somehow serve the greater good of America. This

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30 Kermit Hunter, letter to Cherokee National Historical Society, 1996, Cherokee Heritage Center, Tahlequah, OK.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
invocation of tragic style once again harkens the type of cathartic experience many Cherokee wanted to jettison. What Hunter did not understand at this point is that this was not the story or the image the Cherokee wanted. Also troubling is the degree to which Hunter tries to exhibit what he considers his authority over the Other, as he claims to know the story of the Cherokee “by heart.” Finally, he seems to want to invoke the Cherokee as the tragic hero in his new play, once again relying on a cathartic experience for white audience members. Brecht argues that in Aristotelian-style tragedies, “The individual whose innermost being [the hero] is thus driven into the open then of course comes to stand for Man with a capital M. Everyone (including every spectator) is then carried away by the momentum of the events portrayed. . . .”33 By making the Cherokee “emerge as bright, overwhelming, brilliant as the whole story of America,” Hunter appropriates the Cherokee as a stand-in for a particular image of America that he wants to project. This representation of the Cherokee through tragedy could potentially reinscribe themes of the vanishing Indian giving way to American progress. For Hunter, this tragic style was one in which he had previously written. The difference this time around, however, was that strengthened agency on behalf of the Cherokee and the presence of more Cherokee resistance to how he depicted their culture stood in the way of his new ideas.

Later in the letter, Hunter dictated that the organization “must agree to certain things.”34 Included on this list was that the organization would “trust” the playwright, his script, his selection of music, and they would share with him responsibility for finding a choreographer, amongst other stipulations. Once again, Hunter tried to assert control over the entire production,


34 Ibid.
not realizing or accepting that the Cherokee wanted to have control over their own representation and image. At the end of the letter, Hunter concludes, “The national character of the Cherokee has to shine through, so that the Cherokee are honorable, decent, God-loving people who fashioned the state of Oklahoma by their sacrifice. They must be shown to have nobility.”  

One may interpret these lines to mean that Hunter believed in the *image* of the Cherokee he had constructed in his plays more than *actual* Cherokee individuals. The adjectives he used to describe the “national character” of the Cherokee are characteristic of the Noble Savage construction: honorable, decent, sacrificial, and noble. I believe that Hunter sincerely believed in the Noble Indian character he had created for his dramas, and I believe this is the image he pictured when he wrote to the Cherokee National Historical Society and referred to the Cherokee as “a great race of people.” Other letters that he composed at the same time, however, suggest a disconnect between the image of the Indian in his mind and the Cherokee presence he encountered in everyday life. In a letter to Scott Parker around the same time as his letter to the Cherokee National Historical Society, he states,

> I think Harris is perhaps a good guy, with the difficult task of taking everyone’s ideas and sorting them out and trying to please everybody. That works with intelligent, mature, experienced people at times, but never with Indians. They believe (from childhood) that no white man can do anything as well as an Indian—write a play, act a role, conduct an intelligent conversation. . . . The minute they [the drama] decided to close for a year and (1) raise some money, (2) rewrite the script (which to the Great Unwashd [sic] is always the reason for poor

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35 Ibid.
crowds), and (3) assert their independence of the white race, I had a feeling all was lost.36

In another letter to Parker, Hunter referred to the producers of the drama in Tahlequah as “just a bunch of amateur minds who believe, as so many people do, that anyone can write a play, or a poem, or a symphony, or can build a rocket ship. Or at least a Cherokee can.”37 Hunter’s remarks about the Cherokee with whom he interacted were a far cry from the eloquent phrases he used to describe the Cherokee he had crafted for his dramas. Instead of noble and decent and honorable, the Cherokee he describes to Parker cannot be dealt with, are common, and are self-centered.

Furthermore, this disconnect recalls some of the temporal dissonance experienced in other outdoor historical dramas. The Indians Hunter had produced in his dramas were all constructions of the past. Carter Jones Meyer and Diana Royer note that

Thomas Jefferson picked up ideas from Jean-Jacques Rousseau and portrayed the American Indians as a race of noble savages doomed to extinction. This concept neatly served nineteenth-century expansionists who emphasized the Indians as relics of a time past whose very presence on the land hindered a divinely ordained progress of white civilization.38 Hunter’s Indians displayed attributes of the Noble Savage and the vanishing Indian. In the 1997 rewrite of *Trail of Tears*, one of his characters notes the Cherokees died and were reborn to make

36 Kermit Hunter, letter to Scott Parker, 1996, Institute of Outdoor Drama, Greenville, NC.
37 Kermit Hunter, letter to Scott Parker, January 1996, Institute of Outdoor Drama, Greenville, NC.
way for the statehood of Oklahoma. Additionally, Hunter seemed to view the Cherokee with whom he worked as a hindrance to the progress of the outdoor drama he had created. Indians as relics of the past were easier to control and manipulate than the Cherokee present in Hunter’s contemporary life.

I should note that Hunter’s words come at a time of seeming desperation. The drama in which he had invested much of his time and energy was no longer dependent upon him. For a man who insisted on control over most aspects of the original production, the loss of that control in 1996 must have been immensely difficult to experience. I say this not to excuse his words, but rather to consider all sides of the situation. Regardless, by 1997 Hunter was no longer in control of the drama or the representations of the Cherokee therein.

Regarding outdoor dramas, Mark Sumner assessed, “if you’re going to build a kind of community entrance and community support, you have got to pay attention to politics in your community. . . .” Hunter had ceased to pay attention to the political views of the Cherokee, and could no longer produce the type of script desired in Tahlequah. Julie Pearson-Little Thunder contends, “Self-representation for Indians meant revising a symbolic code exclusively centered upon white, male Euro-American values and aesthetics.” The symbolic code Hunter had established was geared toward the values and aesthetics he held dear as a white, American male. This code was no longer considered appropriate or acceptable to the Cherokee and so they chose to revise it. Hunter’s script ran for the last time during the 1996 season. The script was replaced by a new one penned by Joe Sears in 1997. That same year, Robert S. Telford sent an


41 Pearson-Little Thunder 57.
email to Scott Parker saying, “You might also know that a representative from the Cherokee Nation (who is a direct descendent of Sequoyah’s, incidentally) wrote a very nice review which he put on the web. I think the show goes some distance in rectifying feelings that circulated over Kermit’s script.” Hunter believed “all was lost” when the Cherokee decided to put the show on hiatus “to assert their independence of the white race.” All was not lost, but things were not as rosy as they may sound in Telford’s email. Though the Cherokee community had taken steps towards controlling their own representation, conflicts and tension plagued the outdoor drama for the next decade. The script changed almost every year between 1997 and 2007. This inconsistency, coupled with budgetary issues caused the Cherokee Heritage Center to abandon the use of the large Tsa-La-Gi Amphitheatre and explore new formats. These new formats will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter Four.

*Unto These Hills* in Cherokee, North Carolina had a different beginning than *Trail of Tears*. Despite the presence of the Eastern Band of Cherokee, *Unto These Hills* began as a predominantly non-native operation, with relatively little input from the Cherokee there. Many of the issues that the Cherokee in Oklahoma experienced were shared by the Eastern Band, though the Cherokee in North Carolina had even less involvement in the beginning. Some of the concerns included stereotyped depictions of Indians, non-native casts, and inaccurate histories. John Tissue, the current executive director of the Cherokee Historical Association, described some of the problematic images Cherokees previously witnessed when they attended the show, “all the Native Americans were speaking in third person and there were white kids painted in orange, and all the Cherokee folks . . . were in the background with no speaking lines. . . .”

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42 Robert S. Telford, email to Scott Parker, 21 July 1997, Institute of Outdoor Drama, Greenville, NC.

Fred Wilnoty, a Cherokee man who currently works in the Oconoluftee Indian Village and was previously a child actor in the drama, reflected, “when we look back at that, that was more stereotypical, as well as what we like to call around here, ‘Hollywood Indians.”’ As discussed earlier, Matthew D. Thompson attributes what he calls the recent “Cherokee Renaissance” partly to the opening of Harrah’s Casino, which has brought an increase in money to the area. One of the results of this Cherokee Renaissance was the takeover of the Cherokee Historical Association by the tribe. By extension, the tribe also gained control of the drama. Archival materials from the 1990s and into the 2000s exhibit a desire for change on behalf of the Cherokees. In a 2006 newspaper article, the previous executive director of the Cherokee Historical Association, James Bradley, explains that attendance declined because tribal members started questioning the depiction of history in the play. Bradley explains, “And it got the point where local people stopped going, they stopped referring people to the show. . . . They sort of got ashamed of it.”

Tissue similarly explained the catalyst for changing the show:

[L]ocals were embarrassed of the show because it wasn’t telling truths about Cherokee culture. That’s what killed me, you know, the mission is to perpetuate the history and culture of the Cherokee Indian and the drama didn’t do that. At all. You know, it may have in some way helped perpetuate it by bringing some dollars in, but the story being told was patronizing, so they weren’t meeting their mission in my opinion and the locals resented that. Stopped sending people up

44 Fred Wilnoty, personal interview, 16 June 2011.
there, they stopped buying in. They were like, ‘That is not us, we don’t want anybody to see us like that.’

In both Cherokee and Tahlequah, the presence of a Native community allowed for Cherokees to voice their concerns, question the representations of their culture and history, and instigate change. Like Tahlequah, however, the changes in North Carolina did not transpire easily. Creating cohesive casts which included a large number of native actors proved to be a challenging process.

Linda Squirrel, who works for the Cherokee Historical Association and who wrote the script currently in production, recalls the first couple of seasons in which they adopted a new script and hired native actors:

[T]he greatest thing out of all to me is that we are able to have local people in the production. And we, in the beginning, we had a lot of comments of you know, “well, this looks like a school play.” We’ve provided training for our local actors and we make it a point to tell the audience that although these are not trained actors, they are in many instances, direct descendants of the people that they’re portraying in the play, so I think that adds a little extra to the audience being able to watch it. But that’s the greatest thing is just to have so many Native people in that production, because you know, years ago they were just kind of in the crowd. They didn’t have speaking parts and I don’t think there was ever any offer of a training for them or maybe just not an interest in doing it and now we’ve got . . . quite a good base of talent.

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46 John Tissue, personal interview, 15 June 2011.

47 Linda Squirrel, personal interview, 15 June 2011.
Lack of training is not the only issue that the producers faced when trying to cast local, native performers. Larissa Fasthorse, choreographer for the drama, noted a stigma that young locals attached to performing in the drama:

One of my local Cherokee boys that played the lead eagle a few years ago, he’s a guy with no—I mean he’s a street dancer and he has no trained dance experience. But I just really believed in his stage presence and his ability, he has a lot of natural ability to do this, and it was interesting—the hardest part for him was overcoming the stigma from his peers of being the lead modern eagle guy. That’s usually some, to quote him, “faggy white guy.” And so to help him get over [that], when it’s like the biggest part. Everyone else from the outside is so excited to see the lead eagle dancer, but from within the Cherokee, from his generation, as a young kid in his twenties, it was so uncool. And he was the first Cherokee to play that part in who-knows-since-when . . . if ever. And so to have him do that part, it took a lot of work and a lot of helping him. He was fortunately willing to do it for us . . . but it took a lot of work to help him overcome that. Because . . . the Cherokee have a very complicated history with the show. And I think a lot of it is because probably a Cherokee was never allowed to play it. I don’t know, but I’m guessing. And so to defend against that, they made it a negative to play that role.48

The internal conflict described by Fasthorse—internal within the Cherokee community and internal within the young man himself—is an interesting and layered one. I agree with Fasthorse

48 Larissa Fasthorse, personal interview, 4 August 2011.
that stigmatizing the role may have been a mechanism to deal with the fact that only non-natives had been given the opportunity to play the role prior.

The lack of training and the stigma previously attached to the show by young locals translated into tensions within the cast once it had been assembled. Fasthorse explained to me that it has been an issue to create a cohesive cast because the native and non-native actors come from very different cultural backgrounds. Most of the non-native actors are college students who are training as musical theatre actors, which shapes a particular set of expectations and rules of conduct in the theatrical setting, whereas the local actors do not approach the production with those same expectations. Fasthorse described the situation, noting that the non-native actors need to adjust their expectations since they are entering a culture different from their own.

Regarding the misconceptions with which many of the non-native performers arrive in Cherokee, Fasthorse replies,

> It’s often a cultural issue, and not just a laziness issue or an ignorance issue. It’s actually they’re ignorance that you know, there’s certain things that you can and can’t do in their culture that take different priority. And it’s a misunderstanding of what is important to their culture.49

Fasthorse illustrates her point by providing an example of family obligation. She explains that in Cherokee and Lakota cultures, if a person’s grandmother asks him to take her to the store, he must respect his elder and oblige. As a result, if an actor takes his grandmother to the store and is late or misses a rehearsal, many of the non-native cast members interpret that to be laziness or a lack of professionalism, when it is actually a fulfillment of duty. In an attempt to combat this problem, Fasthorse encourages the native actors to talk with her so that they can figure out how

49 Ibid.
to address the issue, perhaps by changing a call time. Fasthorse explains that these misunderstandings make it difficult for the non-native participants to assimilate to the Cherokee community in which they find themselves immersed. The result, according to Fasthorse, is that the native cast members tend to segregate from the non-native cast.

In an attempt to create a more cohesive cast, Fasthorse and the fight choreographer forced them to bond through “boot camp” in recent seasons. Fasthorse laughs as she explains the reason for her method, “I push them really hard so it’s very much a group mentality of getting them to depend on each other and work together as a group.” She goes on to break down the process, which depends on team building exercises, grueling dance and fight rehearsals, and early morning calls. The result, according to Fasthorse, is that after three weeks they’re “one company, one unit.”

The Cherokee Historical Association and local Cherokees have worked hard to bring a presence of Cherokee and other natives onstage during Unto These Hills. While this is the case in Tahlequah as well, it is particularly impressive in Cherokee where the drama still employs a large cast, whereas in Tahlequah the current cast is much smaller. In addition to addressing issues of casting and stage presence, the people of Cherokee have labored to erase from the minds of visitors, the image of the Indian as only an entity from the past. Fasthorse contends that

These very historical-based shows, these historical dramas have their place and I get it, but I think it has to bring them into, ‘we’re contemporary people today.’ And make them aware, because I think that’s what most people want is the

50 Ibid.
51 Ibid.
fantasy. It’s worse than just “oh, I want to go see it,” it’s like they want to believe it. And I don’t think that’s helping our people at all.\textsuperscript{52}

This perceived yearning for fantasy Indians of yore seemed to be present during my own visit to Cherokee, especially in the Oconoluftee Village in Cherokee. I overheard one woman get upset that the natives weren’t in full traditional attire. The Village employee to whom she was complaining tried to explain to her that the cotton garments were accurate to the time period depicted. For the woman, the depiction presented to her did not match the fantastical image she had in mind. To counteract these fantasized constructions, the producers of \textit{Unto These Hills} are trying to introduce visitors to contemporary Cherokee culture in several ways. A 2011 brochure from the Cherokee Historical Association calls attention to the inclusion of contemporary culture:

\begin{quote}
The new play traces the Cherokee people from the years before the heartbreak of the Trail of Tears, to present day, where the Cherokee people, much like their newly scripted drama, continue to rewrite their place in the world. A place based on traditional Cherokee values and modern sensibilities.\textsuperscript{53}
\end{quote}

The idea that the Cherokee “rewrite their place in the world” is one that Randall T.G. Hill alludes to when he argues that “performance inquiry tells us \textit{how} Native peoples redefine and remake their cultures rather than \textit{what} Native cultures are.”\textsuperscript{54} Neither native cultures, nor any cultures, remain static, so to try and contain a native culture in its past expressions is to disservice the people of that culture.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{52} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{53} Cherokee Historical Association, 2011 Brochure.
\item \textsuperscript{54} Hill 112.
\end{itemize}
A new development which also presents audiences with contemporary Cherokee culture and which I find particularly exciting is the addition of a new show for the summer of 2012. Written by Fasthorse, the play concerns a contemporary Cherokee family. Fasthorse synopsized the script for me in an email exchange:

The show is *Cherokee Family Reunion*. It is a story about a contemporary, nearly grown, newly blended family, one side Cherokee and the other white. The parents want their kids to spend the summer together in Cherokee before most of them go back to college and a few stay to finish high school. The family discovers that it is their year to host the annual Cherokee Family Reunion, which includes a large "presentation" that has grown into a full-fledged show, each year bigger than the next. Our family struggles to learn to live with each other while portraying the historic visit of Henry Timberlake to the Cherokees in the 1700's [sic]. Along the way, mistake are made, love blooms and the kids learn some dark truths about themselves.55

Fasthorse informed me that the decision to create a new show was prompted by the east coast’s celebration of Henry Timberlake’s first visit to the Cherokees. She said the show is similar to the traditional outdoor historical drama in that it incorporates history, song, dance, fighting, and a (humorous) narrator, but she wanted to create a piece that “re-frames the traditional outdoor drama in a fun way.”56 Fasthorse weaves the history and the contemporary together by offering families a show in which, “They will also learn some real Cherokee culture, first through the sometimes flawed eyes of Timberlake, then refocused to their living, breathing expressions of

55 Larissa Fasthorse, email to author, 5 March 2012.
56 Ibid.
This type of story not only has the potential to expose audiences to contemporary understandings of Cherokee history through the lens of Cherokee characters, but it can also call attention to the subjectivity of historical accounts by including the “sometimes flawed” lens with which Timberlake recounts his experiences. The concept for the piece is that it will serve as a “companion piece” to Unto These Hills; one will provide audiences with “a historical perspective on the Cherokee, while the other lets you see how those historical elements shaped the contemporary Cherokees and are still honored today.” The addition of this show will hopefully provide a lesson in not only history, but also contemporary culture to its audiences.

To me, the most interesting way in which guests are exposed to contemporary Cherokee culture is in the moments where representations of the past are unintentionally invaded by traces of today’s society. Katie N. Johnson and Tamara Underiner describe experiencing similar moments during their visit to Tillicum Village. They refer to one instance where employees dressed in traditional attire greet guests and direct them to plastic cups of clam broth being served to the visitors. The authors note, “This disjuncture of the nostalgic ‘Native’ clothing and modern pragmatism of plastic cups is just one of the many tensions between the urge to recreate the Native American past within a postmodern tourist moment. . . .” I had a similar moment during my visit to the Oconoluftee Village in Cherokee. At the Village, they stage “mini-dramas” which last for thirty minutes. The 2011 mini-drama was titled “Time of War” and

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57 Ibid.

58 Ibid.

featured a lecture-based component in which an employee explained eighteenth-century weaponry and combat methods of the Cherokee, a demonstration of these methods, and a staged fight between American militia and Cherokee warriors. This staged fight is supposed to be done in full costume, however I attended the first performance and the costumes were not yet ready. In a fascinating collision of past and present, the Cherokee were all in traditional, eighteenth-century garb, while the soldiers remained in their contemporary, all-black stage combat clothing. This juxtaposition of attire kept me, as an audience member, grounded in the present, yet aware that the demonstration dealt with historical subject matter. I later asked one of the actors about this mixing of temporal associations and he reassured me that the soldiers would be in historical gear as soon as the costumes were finished. When I tried to explain that I thought it was a really interesting commentary to have one side in contemporary clothing and the other in traditional, he looked at me quizzically and reiterated that the combination was not intentional. Perhaps I cannot read postmodern intention into the piece, but nonetheless the effect on me as an audience member was one of temporal pastiche resulting in commentary on contemporary culture and the constructedness of such performances.

Johnson and Underiner relay an additional instance of this temporal dissonance in their article. In response to watching employees cook salmon over fire pits, the authors wonder:

Here, as in the woodcarving and beadwork displays, the employees wear street clothes, which again presents an ambiguous code; is this meant to preserve the magic . . . of the costumes these same employees will later don for the show or to subtly intervene in the otherwise relentless message that the world of Tillicum Village is an “ancient” one?\footnote{Johnson and Underiner 49.}
This anecdote recalls a similar experience I had at the Ancient Village in Tahlequah. I noticed that our tour guide, a Cherokee woman dressed in traditional wear, had bright, purple nail polish on her fingers. This minute detail in the attire of our guide served as a glaring reminder that we were not being transported back in time, but rather that we were firmly grounded in our own current moment. Again, I thought perhaps this was a purposeful move on behalf of the Cherokee Heritage Center to remind visitors that the Cherokee standing before us are of this current world and not of the past. When I mentioned to the guide that I liked her nail polish, she giggled and replied that she wasn’t supposed to wear it while in costume. Once again, I found the unintentional appearance to be more profound than the intended illusion.

Both of these instances created an effect for me akin to Brecht’s alienation effect. As mentioned prior, Brecht wanted his audiences to be active thinkers rather than passive consumers of the theatre. Brecht developed what he called the alienation effect or Verfremdungseffekt to shock or startle audience members with something presented in a way that is out of the ordinary. According to Brecht, “The A-effect consists in turning the object of which one is to be made aware, to which one’s attention is to be drawn, from something ordinary, familiar, immediately accessible, into something peculiar, striking and unexpected.”61 For Brecht, making something “peculiar, striking and unexpected” jarred audiences from a passive state and forced them to distance themselves from the action of the play instead of being engrossed. Brecht wanted this distance to allow audiences to critically engage and mull over what they saw. For me, the juxtaposition of period and contemporary costumes, as well as the presence of something as quotidian as nail polish distanced me from the performances I was observing. The presence of

contemporary objects—fight attire and nail polish—in a situation that made them striking forced me to remember the contemporary setting in which I found myself. Thus, they destroyed the illusion that native cultures are of the past and served as reminders of their presence in contemporary society.

For the dramas in both Cherokee and Tahlequah, the presence of a Cherokee community has helped change the ways in which Native Americans are represented in these shows. These shifts include changes in scripts, characterizations of native peoples within those scripts, increased involvement for Native Americans in all capacities of production from actors to designers to administrative staff, and exposure to not just historical but also contemporary native cultures for audiences. I would like to note, however, that not all Cherokees agree with or approve of the changes that have been made. In Tahlequah, I met several Cherokee employees of the Cherokee Heritage Center who wish the bigger, more spectacular show that they remember would return. Squirrel notes of the changes in North Carolina, “anytime you have change you’re going to have people that are just very opposed whether it be any kind of change. . . .”62 Fasthorse relays that they “still have some older Cherokees that really want the old show back. . . . It’s familiar. It’s what they grew up with.”63 For many, change means letting go of a past they may view nostalgically, or at least as a known quantity. This division of opinion has made change more challenging, but it also lends a chorus of voices to the construction of something new in both of these areas.

The processes have been difficult for the dramas of Cherokee and Tahlequah, but each seems to have stabilized in the last couple of years after a decade of turbulent change. For John Tissue, the change, though difficult, has reaped positive benefits. He considers the “best thing”

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63 Larissa Fasthorse, personal interview, 4 August 2011.
about the current show is that it is “told by the people who the story’s actually about”\textsuperscript{64}. This idea of self-representation is one that is often taken for granted by dominant cultures, but is a fairly recent concept for the Cherokee in Cherokee, North Carolina and Tahlequah, Oklahoma. Fasthorse calls attention to the unique opportunity that is predicated on the presence of the Eastern Band, “To have the advantage of \textit{Unto These Hills} is that \textit{they’re there} and there’s so much culture you can absorb in Cherokee, it’s such a rare and incredible gift, not just to Cherokee but to the people who are coming.”\textsuperscript{65}

Both absence and presence of Native American communities and native involvement in outdoor historical dramas affect how Native Americans are represented in these shows. One of the issues that has emerged, especially in dramas distinguished by presence, is that of historical accuracy and cultural authenticity. In both Oklahoma and Cherokee, questions of accuracy and authenticity contributed to the campaigns for change in each production. Many producers in outdoor historical drama argue that priority needs to be placed on entertainment value over historical accuracy in order to sell tickets. Is selling tickets worth perpetuating historical and cultural inaccuracies? What makes a representation onstage “authentic”? Who should dictate authenticity in outdoor dramas and how should it be determined? These questions probe highly contentious debates in outdoor historical drama, which will be explored in Chapter Four.

\textsuperscript{64} John Tissue, personal interview, 15 June 2011.

\textsuperscript{65} Larissa Fasthorse, personal interview, 4 August 2011.
CHAPTER IV: ISSUES IN ACCURACY AND AUTHENTICITY

“Creating history carries with it substantial burdens, among them the need to provide some truth, some authenticity, and some reality. But whose truth, whose authenticity, and whose reality gets created?”

Richard L. Poole\(^1\)

“Who owns history? Everyone and no one—which is why the study of the past is a constantly evolving, never-ending journey of discovery.”

Eric Foner\(^2\)

Since the outdoor historical drama movement began, an identity crisis has surrounded the form regarding whether the plays are meant to be histories or entertainment. Some producers of outdoor historical dramas side with the latter, such as Kermit Hunter who wrote, “Historical material can be best shown in museums, living villages, and lecture tours, because people do not want to pay for a play and be subjected to a history lesson.”\(^3\) Others advocate the historical side of the dramas, including M.A. Hagerstrand who, in a letter to Hunter regarding the original *Trail of Tears* script, suggested, “There is some concern with some of the settings, insofar as the ‘time frame’ is concerned. . . . Unless there is some important reason for the departure from historical accuracy, it would appear relatively easy to bring the events into the proper periods.”\(^4\) In the last

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\(^3\) Kermit Hunter, letter to the Cherokee National Historical Society, n.d., Cherokee Heritage Center, Tahlequah, OK.

\(^4\) M.A. Hagerstrand, letter to Kermit Hunter, 20 September 1966, Cherokee Heritage Center, Tahlequah, OK.
two chapters, I discussed the effects of absence and presence of Native American communities on selected outdoor historical dramas. One of the issues to emerge from these conditions is the question of accuracy. To what degree can or should a historical drama be an accurate representation of the historical past and in its cultural representations, and how does Native American involvement affect this degree? Closely tied to this issue of accuracy are concerns with authenticity. Can a historical drama provide “authentic” depictions for audiences without exoticising the cultural “Other”? How can productions provide “authentic” experiences to their audiences? In this chapter, I explore the ways in which issues of accuracy and authenticity surface in the productions I encountered. To do so, I look at notions of accuracy and authenticity, why they are important to these dramas, and some of the issues in determining each. In examining why accuracy and authenticity are significant, I will explore the debate over outdoor dramas’ purpose and the mixed messages producers often present to audiences. In assessing the accuracy and authenticity of the productions, I consider how Diana Taylor’s ideas on the archive and repertoire play into the performances of native cultures in the dramas. I also explore different perceptions of authenticity and how producers negotiate these divergent views in their productions. Additionally, I consider some of the harmful implications of these issues surrounding accuracy and authenticity, including the “General Indian” figure in many productions. Finally, I consider how shifting views of historical “truth” affect productions, particularly in the case of Blue Jacket.

Richard Poole contends that the differentiating element in historical dramas is the audience’s inquiry, “Is this the way it really happened?” One of the considerations in producing an outdoor historical drama is the level of historical accuracy one wants to infuse in the

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5 Poole 84.
production. By accuracy, I mean the degree to which one stays “true” to the dates, locales, figures, events, etc. depicted. In this sense, accuracy relies heavily on the written archive for support.⁶ One of the challenges to this reliance, however, is the unstable nature of historical “truth.” As Eric Foner points out, “History always has been and always will be regularly rewritten, in response to new questions, new information, new methodologies, and new political, social, and cultural imperatives.”⁷ This idea of instability will be especially important later in the chapter, when I address the closing of Blue Jacket.

The other concern that producers must face is that of “authenticity” in the performances. Deborah Root, in Cannibal Culture: Art, Appropriation, and the Commodification of Difference, refers to this “tricky” term as the “currency at play in the marketplace of cultural difference.”⁸ Root considers the ways in which the notion of authenticity has been manipulated to subjugate the culture that has been deemed “different” by hegemonic forces. Authenticity, she claims, is an outward ideal that provides the sense of a lived experience. Philip J. Deloria, in Playing Indian, reminds readers that the notion of authenticity is socially constructed “in opposition to a perceived state of inauthenticity.”⁹ The authentic, he argues, “serves as a way to imagine and idealize the real, the traditional, and the organic in opposition to the less satisfying qualities of everyday life. . . . Because those seeking authenticity have already defined their own state as

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⁶ I recognize that the idea of staying “true” to historical “fact” is a highly contentious topic itself, and will be addressing some of the issues involved in trying to achieve accuracy later in the chapter.


inauthentic, they easily locate authenticity in the figure of an Other.”10 This search for authenticity is problematic, as Deloria illustrates in his study, when the seeker exoticizes the cultural Other and places unwanted images and associations onto that Other. One example Deloria provides is the white hobbyist who tries to “play Indian” in order to achieve an “authentic” experience. In doing so, the hobbyist may temporally or geographically displace Native Americans. In other words, for some hobbyists, “authentic” Native Americans are only those who fulfill the image of the Indian as a relic of the past (often with headdresses, rituals, etc.) and who live on reservations. Those who dress in contemporary clothing and live in cities do not seem “authentic” to some hobbyists. This example reflects some of the issues also encountered in the representations in outdoor historical dramas. Many audiences go to these productions searching for something “authentic.” Conflict can ensue when an audience member’s notion of “authentic” opposes depictions the producers may view as appropriate to the culture. Root’s thoughts on authenticity are helpful when looking at outdoor dramas, because authenticity becomes a commodified element of the dramas that is often heavily marketed and sells tickets.

For the purposes of this study, I will invoke authenticity in a way that is influenced by both Root and Deloria. Whereas accuracy pertains to the historical “facts” presented in (or omitted from) an outdoor historical drama, authenticity is often read by audience members in regard to the cultural displays at work. Examples of theatrical elements tied to authenticity include native songs and dances, ceremonial rituals, and traditional attire. In this chapter, I will look specifically at how issues of authenticity are played out in the physical appearance of Indian characters. I am concerned with the ways in which audience expectations of authenticity have

10 Ibid.
allowed for erroneous displays of Native American culture, as well as how native producers have attempted to satisfy audiences’ searches for authenticity without compromising their own image. Because authenticity is culturally constructed, different groups perceive it differently. In the case of outdoor historical dramas, audiences, producers, and the native groups being represented have different views of an “authentic” portrayal of Native American culture. In my research, I found that non-native audiences’ considerations of authenticity is based on (often) stereotyped images and is founded in an exoticization and, often, exploitation of the native Other. Many of the producers from dramas where a native community is absent seemed to view authenticity as an effect achieved through consultation of written documents. One of the issues with that process, however, was that the authors of those sources often approached their topic from a place of misunderstanding and exoticization of the Other. In the shows where Native producers, audiences, and community support was present, authenticity seems to be largely rooted in lived experience and embodied knowledge.11 The notion of authenticity is slippery and difficult to evaluate. What is important to this study, however, is not measuring the degree of authenticity a particular production incorporates. Such an endeavor would be impossible. What I do find important, however, is examining the ways productions wrestle with the notion of authenticity and especially how the dramas marked with presence bring forth different considerations of authenticity than traditionally conceived in outdoor dramas.

Some of the challenges in evaluating accuracy and authenticity in relation to outdoor historical dramas include the subjective nature in determining the “facts” of the past, negotiating audience expectations of authenticity and cultural inaccuracies, differences in how knowledge

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11 I recognize that these are, in part, generalizations. Many producers, whether native or non-native, acquire their research through written historical record as well as embodied practice.
(whether about the past or a culture) is disseminated among Western-based and Indigenous societies, and how and by whom authenticity can be infused into a performance. Before looking into these difficulties in evaluating accuracy and authenticity, we must consider how producers view the roles of these concepts in their productions.

Among most producers of outdoor dramas, whether through writings on the topic or interviews I conducted, there seems to be a favoring of entertainment value over commitment to accuracy. In many of the materials I looked at, practitioners attempt to disavow themselves of any obligation to historical accuracy. They do so by claiming that the performance is a “drama” and therefore permitted to have fictionalized elements. In notes from a phone conversation between Scott Parker and Mac Harris, Parker advises, “Recognize it is not true history, but based on historical context.” When I talked with Jenny Male, the choreographer and historian at Tecumseh!, she explained, “They usually try to emphasize this is a historical outdoor drama, it is not a history play. So we try to make it very interesting . . . listen, a fair amount of it actually is true.” Male’s comments are evocative of a bigger argument. She maintains that Tecumseh! is a drama, stressing that term over the notion of a “history play.” Next she seems to acknowledge

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12 One of the reoccurring perceptions I encountered in the correspondences regarding these dramas is that history, as is, is boring. Regarding the production in Tahlequah, Nat Eek noted to Mac Harris, “[W]e need to avoid the historic narrative approach. It is dull, dull, dull, and subjects the audience to a public lecture . . . “ This perception that too much history is boring feeds the notion that decreasing the level of historical accuracy and adding entertainment value will attract audiences. (Nat Eek, letter to Mac Harris, 28 August 1996, Cherokee Heritage Center, Tahlequah, OK.)

13 Mac Harris, “Notes on a Phone Conversation with Scott Parker re: New Script,” 9 July 1996, Cherokee Heritage Center, Tahlequah, OK.

14 Jenny Male, personal interview, 13 July 2011.
that history is boring by assuring me that they make the drama “interesting.” Finally, in the next moment she contends that much of the drama is actually “true,” thus trying to balance both the historical and dramatic sides of the production. Rosemary Hathaway also addresses the distinction many producers make in staking their position. She contends that “[Marion] Waggoner’s admission of the drama’s less than ‘100%’ accuracy thus becomes permission to skew the story in ways that are now known to be inaccurate.”

She goes on to argue that this situation results in “effectively releasing the writer, producers, and performers from accountability for the show’s inaccuracies.”

Though this scenario could potentially result in what may seem to be a disproportionate ratio of drama-to-history for a production that deems itself an outdoor historical drama, many claim that without such inaccuracies tickets would never sell. Kermit Hunter addressed this issue in notes to the Trail of Tears script committee.

Although undated, from the information given I would place this document during the 1996 re-writes. He argues,

Play vs. History. We get a great deal of criticism from an occasional patron who tells us in great gusto about the mistakes, the false history, and so on. We must begin with the premise that we are not writing a history. We are trying to sell tickets. We want to say something that will make the Cherokee nation and the state of Oklahoma proud, not which dots every T and crosses ever [sic] I to

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15 Rosemary Virginia Hathaway, “Reading Tourist Sites, Citing Touristic Readings: Anglo Constructions of Native American Identity and the Case of Tecumseh” (Ph.D. diss., The Ohio State University, 1998) 76.

16 Ibid.
maintain absolute accuracy. Who knows what the fact is from 150 years ago?

From 200 years ago?\textsuperscript{17}

Hunter contends that the intention is not history, but rather the intention is “selling tickets.” For many, this is what the theatrical enterprise boils down to, especially for many of the men and women who initiated outdoor dramas in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. They saw a market that could reap financial benefits for the community and decided to take advantage of it. I say this not in a condemnatory way, for this does not seem to be the exclusive motivation for many of these productions’ founders. Many of them had interest in perpetuating what they viewed as their local history, while others wanted to provide the community with a cultural experience, in addition to other myriad reasons. My point is that with many enterprises, the potential for economic profit trumped other considerations such as cultural growth of the community, educational outreach, or preservation of culture when it came to making decisions.

The problem that arises in many of these dramas, is the mixed messages the audience receives regarding the “factual” nature of the depictions. Do the audiences leave an outdoor drama believing that what they saw onstage was historically and culturally “real”? In the case of \textit{Tecumseh!}, Hathaway argues that audiences often don’t know what parts are fictionalized and which ones aren’t and that many audiences believe the drama to be “factual” because it is labeled a “historical drama.”\textsuperscript{18} Mixed messages are often prevalent in the programs distributed to guests. For instance, on the first page of the 2011 program for \textit{Trumpet in the Land}, the opening sentences proclaim, “You are about to see a dramatic re-creation of American history. The

\textsuperscript{17} Kermit Hunter, “For the Script Committee of ‘Trail of Tears’ – Tentative Study of Act I,” n.d., Cherokee Heritage Center, Tahlequah, OK.

\textsuperscript{18} Hathaway 76-77.
events portrayed are true; many of the characters depicted actually lived and died in this Tuscarawas Valley.”\(^{19}\) While this greeting emphasizes the historical nature of the play, a note regarding the companion piece, *The White Savage* alerts audience members that “[i]n certain instances dramatic license has been utilized to allow the flow of the narrative to proceed as smoothly as possible.”\(^{20}\) The author cites several examples of this license and concludes by saying, “These liberties, and others, have been taken in an attempt to present the audience the most entertaining performance possible.”\(^{21}\) In the note for *The White Savage*, the producers exhibit an openness with the audience regarding the historical and dramatic dynamics of the play. Furthermore, they cite specific examples of the fictionalized elements. In this latter example, audiences are alerted that the portrayal of the past onstage is not completely accurate.

The backstage tours offered at each of these productions may counteract the historical emphasis and make audience members more aware of the theatricality of the approach. In *Performing History* Freddie Rokem addresses productions that combine performance and history. Rokem states,

> In order to cope with this kind of hybridity, performances about history frequently also draw attention to different metatheatrical dimensions of the performance, frequently showing directly on the stage how performances about history are constructed. . . . This metatheatrical awareness with regard to the theatre as well as history enables them to communicate directly to the audience that, even if what

\(^{19}\) *Trumpet in the Land* Show Program (New Philadelphia, OH: Ohio Outdoor Historical Drama Association, 2011).

\(^{20}\) Ibid.

\(^{21}\) Ibid.
is presented on the stage is a theatrical performance, it actually presents or refers to events that have really taken place.\textsuperscript{22}

In other words, many performances that deal with historical subject matter call attention to themselves as constructions. By nodding to the fact that the performance is a constructed depiction of a past event and not an exact replication, audiences are made aware of the subjective and interpretive element involved. With the exception of \textit{Under the Cherokee Moon}, I would not classify the productions I saw as “metatheatrical.”\textsuperscript{23} That is, they did not call attention to the constructedness or mechanics of the theatrical moment. In the backstage tours offered at \textit{Trumpet in the Land} and \textit{Tecumseh!}, however, audience members are exposed to the mechanics of the production, and are reminded that what they are seeing is, in fact, theatre. Weapon demonstrations, explanations of blood bags and violent spectacles (such as the massacre in \textit{Trumpet}), stunt work demonstrations, and explications of the playing areas and backstage areas all signal the theatrical nature of these performances to audiences. These tours may be considered a mechanism which creates a distancing effect for the audience, like Brecht’s alienation effect. During the tour, much of the theatre “magic” that allows for the willing suspension of disbelief on behalf of audience members is replaced by pragmatic explanations of how stage effects are achieved. The audience is then able to watch the show with this awareness and can detach themselves from the emotional attraction of the scene.\textsuperscript{24}


\textsuperscript{23} The metatheatrical nature of \textit{Under the Cherokee Moon} will be discussed further in the next chapter.

\textsuperscript{24} The existence of museums and reconstructed villages at some outdoor dramas can also confuse audiences. Examples of these auxiliary sites include a small museum at the Sugarloaf Mountain Amphitheatre where \textit{Tecumseh!} is produced, as well as the site of the Schoenbrunn Village near \textit{Trumpet in the Land}. In both of these
In addition to the mixed messages delivered to audience members, I received mixed responses from the various producers regarding their perception of audience opinions. I asked each of the people I interviewed whether or not they think their audiences accept what they see as “accurate.” Some felt that the audiences understood that liberties were taken to create the show. When I asked Waggoner if he thought audiences find outdoor historical dramas “accurate,” he offered,

No, I think it’s a mix. . . . Most of the individuals watching the show know it’s theatre. It’s representational. But it’s based on fact, it’s based on history. There are some individuals . . . who look at that and probably think, “well this is exactly what happened.” . . . But the majority of the people I’ve actually talked to and listened to and have encountered over the years are individuals who know that it’s not pure history and that it’s first and foremost entertainment. 

Waggoner concedes that there may be people who buy the accuracy, but for the most part, he believes audiences understand that producers take artistic license when staging these plays.

Having worked on three different outdoor historical dramas, Danny Mangan perceives varied audience responses:

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instances, historical “fact” or “truth” is touted, reinforcing the historical aspect of the accompanying drama audiences attend. In addition to these types of sites, gift shops at the outdoor dramas can produce mixed messages for the audience. Hathaway addresses the mixed messages at the Tecumseh! gift shop, which resulted from the various souvenirs being sold. The merchandise ranged from plastic bow and arrow toy sets, dreamcatchers, and turquoise jewelry to crafts and goods made by Cherokee on the Qualla Reservation (page 96). From my own experience, this conglomeration of authentic and inauthentic persists today, as I was surrounded by many of the same items Hathaway described in my own visit to the Tecumseh! gift shop.

25 Marion Waggoner, personal interview, 29 July 2011.
You kind of get the gambit all the way across. There are some people who, they’ll watch it—and every outdoor drama did, at the end of the show, there’s a meet-and-greet with the actors, so you go back up and the audience comes out and I’ve had people come up and it’s like, “Did it really happen like that?” Because they believe what they’re seeing is an exact replication of historical history. And other people are like, “That was a great [play] but that never happened.” I mean, they don’t believe Blue Jacket was a real person. So it’s a complete spread between “I think it’s history” and “I think it’s not.”26

Mangan points out audience members from Blue Jacket who consider the drama and figures therein to be complete fabrications.

Many of the people I interviewed seem to be under the impression that the majority of audiences believe that what they see onstage is predominantly accurate with a bit of artistic license. Susan Phillips from the Institute of Outdoor Drama responded,

I think they do . . . I think they think that it-this is gospel truth . . . they believe that this is what happened, unless they’re historians or something like that or actually know the history but most of the shows I would say are probably, you know, 75% historically accurate. I mean, it just depends on show to show. Obviously there’s got to be some dramatic license taken because it is a drama and you know, unfortunately history can be pretty dull.27

Once again we return to the notion that history is boring, and therefore dramatic license is necessary. In spite of this necessary license, Phillips believes that most audiences accept the

26 Daniel Mangan, personal interview, 13 September 2011.
figures and events depicted as “gospel truth,” unless they come in with specialized knowledge on
the subject. Maureen Yasko shared,

> We’ve specifically had that question in a tour setting. Someone has said, “How
> historically accurate or whatever is this,” but I think that the majority of the
> audience really do understand that we hold the history pretty close. We take some
> dramatic liberties, but I think from the audience perspective, I definitely think that
> they’re coming in and I think they know that this is a—it’s a historical re-telling
> of something that has happened, you know, with a theatrical twist.28

Yasko seems taps into a perceived trust between the audience and the producers. That is, the
audience believes the drama is accurate because they trust that the producers make (historical)
accuracy a priority. Like Phillips, Yasko also believes that while the production is overall fairly
accurate, there are some liberties taken. Phillips and Yasko both seem to go back and forth to an
extent in their assessments, calling attention to the very difficulty in assessing such issues.

Interestingly, all of the producers at Unto These Hills with whom I spoke believe
audiences understand the old version of the drama as accurate. As discussed in the last chapter,
frustrations over how native histories and cultures were being represented led to changes in both
Cherokee and Tahlequah. Though changes have been made in response to the frustrations, a
belief in the accuracy of the show seems to persist in Cherokee. Linda Squirrel replied to my
question regarding whether or not she believed audiences viewed the drama as accurate by
saying,

> I do, I do. And actually for the people here that grew up seeing the drama and
didn’t really—because a lot of people they don’t have an interest in digging for

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28 Maureen Yasko, personal group interview, 22 June 2011.
history or really finding and a lot of people just took it that whatever was being portrayed up there was really what happened.  

For Squirrel, the old Unto These Hills drama prompted a blind acceptance of accuracy in many of the local audiences. John Tissue noted how audience acceptance of the drama, in terms of both local and out-of-town guests, affected reception of the recent changes. In response to whether audiences view the drama as accurate, he replied “I think they are, and I think what’s killed us in those first years when we kept changing everything, was they were like, ‘That’s not the show, that’s not right.’”

Audiences had become so accustomed to the depictions in the old show that when changes were made to reflect more accuracy, many did not recognize the changes as such. This stringent belief in the accuracy of the play in Cherokee may be due, in part, to an assumption on behalf of audiences that the production is more authentic. The presence of the Cherokee living around and participating in the drama may have lent an authenticity in the eyes of some audience members. This sense of authenticity may not be perceived in the Ohio shows because of the absence of Native American involvement.

I share these conversations in an effort to illustrate the role that accuracy plays (or does not play) in the process of staging an outdoor historical drama. Most of the producers with whom I spoke do not profess to be overly concerned with being historically accurate. A great number of them also expressed that they believe audiences walk away from the show believing “that really happened that way.” One of the actresses from Ohio noted,

Most audiences feel that because the outdoor dramas are presented as a representation of what has happened, that it is pure fact. We hear audiences every

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29 Linda Squirrel, personal interview, 15 June 2011.

night that do not comprehend that our show portrays a singular idea of things that
may have happened to the colonists. . . . People insist that because that’s what we
said happened, therefore, that is indeed the events that occurred.31

This performer corroborates what many other producers claimed, and she also raises a significant point. She emphasizes that some audiences do not allow for multiple views of history. Therefore, they accept the singularly based understanding of history depicted in the dramas without question or second thought. This addresses one of the challenges to assessing accuracy—the subjective nature of historical “fact” makes accuracy difficult to gauge. Rokem stresses that the singular view of history is not helpful when he insists,

Furthermore, we must also accept that the historical past can be told in a number of different ways; that the narrative presented by a historian may be based on a specific point of view and on different vested interests; that is this historians’ individual version of what actually happened. . . . Only when such forms of subjectivity are clarified is it possible to understand that a playwright and, on the basis of his or her script, the directors, scenographers, and actors are also presenting their specific version of what actually happened or what is significant.32

Rokem calls attention to the subjectivity in writing history, as well as producing performances that engage in historical matter. Producers of each cannot divorce themselves from their own beliefs and value systems and therefore infuse those systems into their creations. Objective “fact” is therefore difficult to ascertain. Likewise, the representations presented in outdoor

31 Anonymous, email correspondence with the author, 29 July 2011.

32 Rokem 8.
historical dramas are subjective and based on individual understandings of history, as well as individual interests and priority of those interests. As I noted earlier, for many producers of outdoor drama, entertainment and selling tickets is of utmost importance, and therefore affects how they tell the history depicted in the drama. For some, perpetuating a local history or a sense of national patriotism is a priority, and will therefore affect the shaping of the historical events and figures involved in the play. Each producer brings their individual sets of goals for the production and own understandings of the events and figures depicted when they work on an outdoor historical drama. Rokem reminds us that this results in dramas that are subjective and multi-perspective.

The question then arises, how can an outdoor historical drama be “accurate” with this consideration of a subjective and polyvocal notion of history? The answer is, it can’t. As much as one may want to be “100% accurate,” it is near impossible to accomplish that goal. Productions of outdoor dramas, especially those that represent Native American cultures, not only need to be concerned with historical accuracy, but cultural authenticity as well. Additionally, 100% authenticity is elusive. According to Root, “authenticity does not exist in any absolute, pure form outside the endless debates of academics.”\(^{33}\) Though the topics of accuracy and authenticity can be argued at length (in projects such as this), in practice an “absolute” form of either is not achievable.

The next question becomes, if complete accuracy and absolute authenticity are impossible, then why the need for attention to it (and this chapter)? I argue that while complete accuracy is not possible, inaccuracy can have detrimental effects on audience members’ perceptions of particular cultures and the past. Additionally, I agree with Root when she points

\(^{33}\) Root 78.
out that the “commodification of cultural authenticity raises another problem” in that it also “carries with it a notion of inauthenticity, against which the former is evaluated.”

Many of the tensions surrounding the dramas in Cherokee and Tahlequah, and the subsequent changes to those productions, resulted from an overabundance of historical inaccuracies in the representations of Native American histories, as well as inauthentic portrayals of cultural practices. What’s at stake in these situations is the image of Native Americans. Historical and cultural errors often lead to fantastical constructions of the Indian, such as the harmful stereotypes examined in the previous chapters. As will be argued later in this chapter, these fallacies also create the image of a “General Indian,” or “GI” as they are referred to in outdoor drama vernacular. The GI is an Indian stereotype in which Indians have no individual tribal affiliation and possess a monolithic physical appearance. When I asked Cherokee participants in Unto These Hills if they thought audiences viewed outdoor historical dramas as accurate, they each replied “yes.” They proceeded to describe either the harmful implications of the audience’s belief in the old show’s level of accuracy and they cited that misplaced belief as an impetus for changing the old drama. For many of the people who have to live with and fight against these erroneous representations, the stakes for accuracy and authenticity are high.

The implications of inaccuracy are magnified in many outdoor dramas because of the educational outreach opportunities they offer. In claiming “educational” benefits to viewing the show, producers suggest a high degree of historical accuracy. Many of the productions I looked at team up with local schools in order to supplement the history curriculum. Margaret Bonamico at Trumpet in the Land told me about the “Living History Project,” which is run in conjunction with schools in area counties. Through the program, which began seven years ago, each third

34 Root 79.
grader in the participating counties gets one free ticket plus one complimentary adult ticket to see the show. The program aims to get children more interested in history—Bonamico noted that only 17-20% of the audience is comprised of children and since children start learning Ohio history in the fourth grade, the Living History Project prepares children for that curriculum. Additionally, they have a teen internship program at Trumpet, in which teenagers are given the opportunity to be in the show, thus cultivating exposure to both theatre and history.\footnote{Margaret Bonamico, personal interview, 16 July 2011.} In Chillicothe, area student groups travel to Sugarloaf Mountain Amphitheatre to watch Tecumseh! Despite these efforts, one of my interviewees feels there ought to be more connections between the Ohio dramas and schools. Bonamico notes the twofold benefit in these types of outreach opportunities: “Not only does this educate children on their local history, but it finds the potential audience member who goes home and says to their family that they would like to see the rest of the story. I see it as a win-win.”\footnote{Ibid.} In North Carolina, Squirrel described an idea the Cherokee Historical Association has for educational outreach; they would like to create a small touring production, like “the Sequoyah scene [from Unto These Hills] and just take it to schools so the kids will be—they’ll have a chance to see how the Cherokees developed their alphabet.”\footnote{Linda Squirrel, personal interview, 15 June 2011.}

The impulse for education outreach seems to be one that many outdoor historical dramas are pursuing. As I stated before, however, this raises concern over the perceived accuracy of the shows. In framing these opportunities as “educational,” notably in terms of history, the dramas are suggesting that their depictions are, indeed, accurate. One way that the producers can address this is by having talkback sessions with the students in which they discuss how and why
deviations occur. Regardless, the risk of inaccuracies and the potential perpetuation of negative stereotypes and images amongst youth are concerns with education outreach, therefore increasing the need for ethical representation in the dramas.

An obstacle many producers have found is a tension that emerges from audience desire for authenticity in outdoor dramas. One of the performers I interviewed spoke to the effect of these expectations when she stated that, “Audiences have a bizarre idea of what Native Americans were truly like. They buy into Western movies that all Native Americans lived in teepees and chiefs wore feathered bonnets.” Many producers struggle with whether to give in to some of the audience expectations in order to sell tickets or to step away from such depictions and aim for what they deem as more authentic portrayals. Hathaway considers this issue and suggests that there are two types of authenticity—the “researched authentic” and the “consumable authentic.” For Hathaway, producers engage in the “researched authentic,” in that they try to get as close to “the real thing” as possible. She explains that the depictions onstage are products of producers’ attempts through research to replicate “real cultures and people” in the show. The “consumable authentic,” according to Hathaway, is based on audiences’ stereotyped images of native culture. She contends, “Thus, the audience becomes an active agent in the participatory process of creating an acceptable, hybrid ‘authenticity standard’ at the Tecumseh! site.” In other words, because authenticity is a cultural construction, different

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38 Perhaps this already occurs at some productions, however it was never mentioned in the conversations I had with producers.

39 Anonymous, email correspondence with the author, 29 July 2011.

40 Hathaway 83-84.

41 Ibid.

42 Hathaway 84.
perceptions of “authentic” Indianness in outdoor dramas and the need to sell tickets grants audiences agency in determining the representations on stage. I agree that audience expectations often influence production choices. For instance, the Shawnee traditionally wore turbans. However, this head dressing was not used in either Tecumseh! when I saw it, nor any of the images I have seen from Blue Jacket. It seems that audience expectations have a stronger influence on the shows that are marked by absence, rather than those marked by presence.

Fasthorse shared one of the ways in which Unto These Hills encounters conflict with audience expectations and why the drama’s pursuit of accuracy, as well as authenticity is important to her:

[O]bviously, as a Native American person, it’s just really important to me that they get some—my hope for like Unto These Hills for instance is that they, the people come in and are willing to be open to the truth, I guess. To let go of their expectations and allow the experience to be what it is. That these are actually Cherokee people onstage and yes, they speak with those accents [laughs]. There have actually been people who have complained about that, like “Why are the Indians speaking with those southern accents, that’s not Indian.” It’s like, “Well, they are Cherokee and that’s where they live, they live in Appalachia. And they’ve been there for a long, long time.” But that they let go of their expectations and let the Cherokee be who the Cherokee are.  

Fasthorse’s hope that audience members will experience who the Cherokee “actual[ly]” are suggests that for her, the Cherokee presence onstage provides authenticity, albeit an authenticity that conflicts with audience views. Fasthorse notes multiple times that many of the audience members to Unto These Hills come in with pre-conceived, usually inaccurate, notions of what a

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43 Larissa Fasthorse, personal interview, 4 August 2011.
Native American should be, and more specifically how a Native American should sound. In this example, the audience’s expectations of what Indians sound like was discordant with the Cherokee actors’ actual dialects. In this case, the authenticity of the Cherokee actors did not jibe with audience expectations.

Fasthorse shared another example with me that reinforces the contentious nature of authenticity. She discussed a practice that many locals in Cherokee call “chiefing.” I witnessed this phenomenon during my own visit to Cherokee in the summer of 2011. Along the main roadway through Cherokee, there are many roadside souvenir shops. In the parking lots in front of many of these shops are signs that advertise “Indian Shows” and small stages on which Native Americans perform dances and chants. These performers, however, are not dressed in traditional Cherokee attire, nor do they perform traditional Cherokee dances. Instead, they wear brightly-colored costumes that almost always consist of feathered headdresses, a construction that is more reflective of a Plains Indian than the Cherokee. This Plains-based construct is one that has dominated popular culture. Theatre historian Rosemarie K. Bank attributes this adoption of a Plains style for the General Indian in popular imagination to nineteenth-century images of Edwin Forest in the role of Metamora. During the span of his career, Forest’s depiction of Metamora

44 One may also view this anecdote as an example of the temporal dissonance discussed in the last chapter.

Oftentimes, because of previous stereotyped images of Native Americans encountered by audiences, some construe Native Americans to have particular speech patterns such as peaking in third person, using grunts in place of words, speaking in verse, or speaking in stilted English. These characteristics recall a construction of the Indian as “of the past,” and therefore do not allow for the possibility that contemporary Native Americans may have dialects that reflect the contemporary region in which they live.
shifted from a depiction based on Eastern tribes to a Plains construction. In their adoption of Plains-inspired costumes, the chiefing practices of these “show Indians” fulfill an audience expectation of what an Indian “should” look like. During my trip, I saw many visitors, especially families, not only watching the shows but also posing for photographs with the performers. Fasthorse describes her reaction to this performance practice: “I was so sad, I’d never seen what they call “chiefing,” but the parking lot Indians, I’d never seen that in my life. I was like—it made me cry the first time I saw it, because I’d just never encountered something like that.”

One of the frustrating factors is that these roadside performances are so accessible. Anybody driving by can consume the images displayed by chiefing, whereas to see the portrayals presented by Unto These Hills, one must purchase a ticket and drive up the mountain along a side road, away from the main thoroughfare. The example of the “parking lot Indians,” as Fasthorse refers to them, demonstrates what is at stake when performance promulgates inauthentic representations.

There is, however, another side of the story with this practice. Scholar S. Elizabeth Bird points out an example of how one man used these stereotypes to his advantage:

Cherokee Henry Lambert has “dressed in feathers” for tourists in the Smoky Mountains National Park for over forty years, having his photo taken for money: “I’ve put my six children through school doing this and movies and a little construction. My son Patrick went to law school down at Chapel Hill,” he

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46 Larissa Fasthorse, personal interview, 4 August 2011.
comments. . . . Some American Indians fume over such “selling out” or lack of “authenticity,” whereas others perceive it as taking back power.47 Though I don’t know for sure, I suspect Lambert may have been practicing performances akin to chiefing. If Root is right in her proclamation that “authenticity is the currency at play in the marketplace of cultural difference,” then Lambert has learned how to profit in this marketplace.48 Though he may not be performing what some Cherokee would consider an authentic portrayal of their culture, he is performing an authenticity “consumable” to audiences. Deloria addresses this issue when he states, “Indian play offered often-conflicted forms of empowerment to some native people.”49 I include this anecdote to illustrate the complexities involved in authenticity. Though he may not have been selling what many would consider an authentic Cherokee experience, Lambert found a way to reclaim an Indian stereotype and use it for financial gain. One of the outcomes of his work is his son’s law degree, which may potentially provide privilege and agency to his family and other Cherokee. As illustrated in this example, these issues are sensitive and divisive, and there is rarely consensus, even within the tribal communities they affect.

The notions of accuracy and authenticity, in terms of historical and cultural representations, are further complicated because of the difficulty in determining each. As I stated before, complete accuracy or authenticity is nearly, if not altogether, impossible to achieve. This is due to the various perspectives, ideologies, interests, background, and “baggage” so to speak, of the different producers of the drama, as well as the difficulty in

48 Root 78.
49 Deloria 144.
ascertaining the “facts” of a past event and in balancing authenticity and audience expectations. With regard to representations of Native America cultures, the situation is even more complex because of how the knowledge has been traditionally recorded and disseminated differently than how knowledge has been handled in Western-based cultures.

Diana Taylor points out that, “‘we’—whether in our various disciplines, or languages, or geographic locations throughout the Americas—do not simply or unproblematically understand each other.”50 I find Taylor’s words helpful in approaching issues of determining accuracy and authenticity in outdoor historical dramas in which native cultures are represented because in many ways native and non-native cultures do not unproblematically understand history and cultural practices in the same ways. There are different methods by which natives and non-natives cultivate and disseminate knowledge. In many ways, these differences are based on Western- versus non-Western-based modes of collecting, storing, and transmitting knowledge. For outdoor historical dramas, these differences have led to conflict in many instances because the producers do not always “simply or unproblematically understand” the perspectives of the cultures being depicted.

In The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas, Taylor maintains that writing has replaced embodiment as the privileged formulation of knowledge for the hegemony. She explains how historically this came to be and claims that because written histories could be destroyed and rewritten, “The space of written culture, then, as now, seemed easier to control than embodied culture.”51 In Taylor’s estimation, during the conquest of the

50 Ibid.

Americas by Europeans, writing became favored over many indigenous forms of embodied knowledge “that long served to preserve a sense of communal identity and memory.” Taylor applies the term “archive” to “supposedly enduring materials” such as documents, buildings, etc. and “repertoire” to “embodied practice/knowledge” (spoken word, dance, ritual, etc.). She points out that the privileging of the archive is troubling because it silences those who use the repertoire. Michel de Certeau supports this observation when he notes that in early colonial depictions of indigenous populations, “what is really initiated here is a colonization of the body by the discourse of power. This is writing that conquers.” In many societies, writing and other methods of the archive have conquered the embodied practices that characterize the repertoire.

For outdoor historical dramas, many of the depictions of native cultures and histories produced have traditionally been based on the “archive” rather than the repertoire. As Taylor suggests, the practices of the repertoire have not always been “considered valid forms of knowledge.” Therefore, in the search for historical accuracy, many producers have consulted written histories, often composed from the perspective of white males, to construct the native elements presented onstage. One example of this can be found in *Tecumseh*. Part of the reason Allan Eckert was commissioned to write the script was not because of his experience as a playwright, for he had never written a play, but rather because of his recognized “expertise” in the topic of the Shawnee leader and the history surrounding the Shawnee of the area. Eckert had earned numerous awards, notably Pulitzer Prize nominations for many of his historically-based works, including some of the installments of his *The Winning of America* series, upon which

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52 Taylor 18.
53 Taylor 19.
54 De Certeau xxxv.
55 Taylor 18.
Tecumseh! is based. In the show program for the drama, Eckert’s writing accolades are boasted, which validates him as a writer and expert on the histories depicted in his show. This celebration of the playwright stems from the privilege archive-based knowledge receives in our society.56

Additionally, many producers base their research into native cultural practices (such as dancing, certain ceremonies, symbolic use of objects, and traditional attire) in the written archive. Instead of seeking this knowledge through those who embody the knowledge through lived experience, many producers consult drawings and written descriptions. The result is often inauthentic portrayals of a particular tribe’s traditions and appearance.

I bring this up not to condemn outdoor historical dramas for their dependence upon the archive. I recognize that when these outdoor dramas began, many of the founders operated on the assumption that someone well-versed in the archive, on the written documents, was able to bring a greater degree of accuracy to a script and production. Secondly, I concede that much of my own research is based in the archive. Finally, in the particular instance of Tecumseh!, it seems that producers, specifically some of the actors, are trying to find embodied ways of understanding the cultures they are representing. Although much of the research done by actors are based on written records, the actors I spoke with explained that they also attend such events hosted by the Miami Valley Council, etc. in order to interact with and learn from Native Americans.

I call attention to Taylor’s ideas of the archive and the repertoire because I think they can elucidate some of the conflicts that arise from issues in accuracy and authenticity.57 Certainly,

56 Scott Parker, “Changes in BJ,” email to Lorie Sparrow, 7 April 2006, Institute of Outdoor Drama, Greenville, NC.
57 I would like to note that Taylor recognizes other forms of transmitting knowledge, such as the digital, in addition to the archive and the repertoire. But, as she points out, knowledge “too readily falls into a binary, with the written and archival constituting hegemonic power and the repertoire providing the anti-hegemonic challenge.” Taylor 22.
Taylor’s terms “the archive and the repertoire” were not in circulation when the outdoor drama movement emerged. Other phrases, however, were used to describe what Taylor considers the repertoire including storytelling, oral traditions, folklore, etc. I find Taylor’s adoption and explanation of these terms useful to consider how traditionally Western forms of knowledge transmission (i.e., the archive) have exerted “hegemonic power” by dictating particular notions of historical accuracy in outdoor historical dramas and how native forms of transmitting knowledge (i.e., the repertoire) has “provid[ed] the anti-hegemonic challenge” that can bring authenticity to the portrayals.

One of the challenges for producers in using an archive-based approach is the lack of written materials on native cultures and histories, especially at the time many of these dramas were written. Even so, most of the materials available were written from a Eurocentric (usually male) perspective. Tissue noted that this lack of history was a challenge for Kermit Hunter when writing *Unto These Hills* in the 1940s. He relayed a second-hand account in which “Kermit used to joke that he did more research on *Unto These Hills* than any other show: he spent five hours in the Chapel Hill library. . . . There wasn’t much history is my point.”\(^5^8\) Ironically, there was history, but it was embodied in the Cherokee that lived in the area through storytelling, dance, ceremony, song, etc., but because written texts were the source materials of choice, Hunter found little material upon which to base his play.

Scholar Della Pollock suggests that “The writing of history becomes the ultimate historical performance, making events meaningful by talking about them, by investing them with

\(^5^8\) John Tissue, personal interview, 15 June 2011.
the cultural and political assumptions carried in language itself.”59 In outdoor historical dramas, history is performed by virtue of inclusion in production. The events and figures that are considered “meaningful” by the historians who wrote about them in the first place, and subsequently by the producers who research those materials, are thus the events and figures that are written into the script and replicated onstage. The meaningful elements that are selected from the archive, however, are not always the meaningful elements selected from the repertoire. Increasingly outdoor historical dramas, especially those in Cherokee and Tahlequah, are looking more and more to the repertoire in constructing productions. Certainly, the presence of Cherokee communities, and therefore the presence of that embodied knowledge, helps in elevating the repertoire as a source of authenticity. Fred Wilnoty explained to me,

> Because today much of it’s misleading. That’s why whenever you come here, we tell you in school they learn HIStory, history. And now they come here and they’re learning OURstory. . . . Rather than learn it from a book, a textbook, they can learn it from us and what’s passed down to us from our grandparents.60

Wilnoty went on to assess the current script in production in Cherokee as “more accurate and well thought-through,” both historically and culturally.61 Daniel “Sonny” Leford also emphasized the importance of the repertoire by emphasizing that “everything that we’ve done has come down through oral tradition . . . we’ll take oral tradition over any written. We know through our own people—how we done these things, why we done them, how everything was

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60 Fred Wilnoty, personal interview, 16 June 2011.

61 Ibid.
Leford later reinforces why he prefers the oral tradition of transmitting knowledge:

[T]hey’ll [visitors] say, “Why don’t you write a book?” Why do I need to? I’m standing right here teaching you the way I was taught. If you go out there and look at all these books, every author that’s ever written about us is non-Cherokee. . . . What they’ll do is read five other books written by other authors and then just make their own book and put their name to it. And the thing is, that’s why we don’t write books. We don’t need to, we’ll teach you like we were taught. And like I said, you read a book and you can’t remember that. What we said, all these thing you learned, this is hands-on. And that’s how we were taught, that’s why we remember things . . . we can tell you where a lot of real information, the old stuff, came from . . . and that’s the difference from learning from here and buying a book or a DVD.

Leford’s lived experience with the knowledge allots him both authenticity in the eyes of guests to the Oconoluftee Village, as well as authority. His words stress that embodied practice is favored in many cultures, and is useful in storing and transferring information between generations.

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63 Ibid.

64 Issues regarding incorporating the repertoire in performance have been present in Unto These Hills for some time. In 2006, the Cherokee Historical Association commissioned native playwright Hanay Geiogamah to redo the play, a project that resulted in much controversy. Much of the dispute concerned balancing a repertoire-based approach with selling tickets to mostly-white audience. Tension also arose because some of the tribal leaders did not feel some of the embodied practices staged were appropriate outside of ceremonial purposes. Matthew D. Thompson
Taylor makes an important plea when she insists that “It’s imperative now, however overdue, to pay attention to the repertoire.” I believe that it is imperative for outdoor historical dramas, in determining the accuracy, as well as in striving for authenticity of their depictions and representations, to pay attention to the repertoire, in addition to the archive. The exclusive use of the archive as the basis of accuracy can silence the repertoire, and therefore indigenous means of self-representation. On the other hand, too heavy a reliance on the repertoire may potentially deter non-native audiences. Thus, producers must navigate both realms in order to retain audiences. Though it is challenging and time-consuming to do so, this type of hybrid approach to knowledge can assist these dramas in achieving greater degrees of accuracy and authenticity and greater understandings of Native American cultures on behalf of producers and audiences.

As previously discussed, one of the harmful effects of inaccurate and inauthentic depictions of Native American cultures is the perception of the General Indian. In other words, because many representations offer stereotyped images, individual tribal affiliation is erased despite the existence of over five-hundred tribes in the United States. Another production element that elicits this perception and perpetuates negative stereotypes is the practice of redface.

As I discussed in Chapter Two, because of the absence of large native communities in the Ohio shows, non-native actors usually play native roles. Prior to recent changes in Tahlequah and Cherokee, non-native actors played most of the principle native roles in the outdoor dramas there, while native performers were used as background crowd-fillers. In many of these cases, treats the production in his dissertation, “Staging ‘the Drama’: The Continuing Importance of Cultural Tourism in the Gaming Era.” Apart from that study, little documentation exists describing the production choices, and Geiogamah has not responded to my attempts to contact him. Due to my lack of detailed description of his show, I don’t take up the Geiogamah production in these pages, but it is ripe for further inquiry.

65 Taylor 27.
white actors donned black wigs and red body paint in order to achieve the “Indian” look. This type of “makeover” was used on white actors in several of the productions I saw last summer, including Tecumseh!, Trumpet in the Land, and The White Savage. In the old version of Unto These Hills, as well as Trail of Tears, white actors appeared in red makeup, alongside actual Native Americans (oftentimes also in red makeup) onstage. In addition to being a widespread practice in current outdoor historical dramas, it is one that has been around since the theatrical form began. Phillip G. Hill, in an article published in 1962, addressed “practical” considerations for this convention:

It has become common practice to provide separate dressing rooms for “Indians” when the script calls for them, as their body make-up is easily transferred to other actors’ costumes. All dressing rooms should be provided with adequate rest room facilities, particularly including plenty of showers. It is often necessary to remove body makeup in a quick change to convert “Indian” to a “settler.”

Hathaway takes note of a similar set-up at Tecumseh!, using the term “segregate” to call attention to the fact that the actors playing Indians had separate dressing rooms “where the walls are painted a color similar to that of the body paint.” By invoking the term “segregate,” Hathaway calls attention to the racial tensions and injustices that result from this practice.

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66 I recognize that the term “redface,” like the term “blackface” encompasses much more than just the use of makeup and wigs. In terms of how I use it here, I am focusing on those elements of the practice because I am concerned with how these dramas suggest, through appearance, a homogenous look for all Native Americans.


68 Hathaway 89-90.
The makeup used to paint the actors in these shows is often referred to as “Texas dirt.” In the backstage tour at *Tecumseh!*, the guides were careful to point out that they blend different shades of foundation together to avoid the red tinge associated with Texas dirt. They claimed that this mixing created a tanner effect instead. Each actor experimented with the different shades to choose which looked best on their own skin. As an audience member, I had different reactions to the appearances of the actors. At *Trumpet in the Land* and *The White Savage*, the makeup did not appear to me as “tanner” versions of the actors’ natural skin tones. Rather, the makeup appeared as an unnatural maroon-ish/red color. I was somewhat confused at the start of the show when I saw female Indian characters in maroon tights. It took me a while to realize that, in lieu of painting their legs, the women were wearing maroon tights to match the color of their painted arms, necks, and faces. At *Tecumseh!*, the makeup appeared as a darker skin tone, rather than red, but the use of makeup was still apparent. At both productions, the use of synthetic, long, straight, dark-haired wigs was also unnatural-looking and distracting. In notes from *Blue Jacket*, the costumer suggests that the company purchase new wigs in dark brown rather than jet black, because “the dark brown color will look more realistic on our typically fair skinned actors. Not all Indians have jet black hair.” Nonetheless, jet black wigs still adorn many of the actors portraying Indians in several of the productions I saw. The costumer’s point that “not all Indians have jet black hair” speaks to the argument that the use of makeup and wigs falsely give the impression that Native Americans have a uniform look.

In defending the use of body paint and wigs, most producers stated that it is necessary in distinguishing the Indians from the white characters in the production. During the tour of *Tecumseh!*, the guides explained this rationale: “We have a lot of white people who play Native

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American characters. We need to make them look more Native American than the white guys onstage.” In *Trumpet in the Land*, the distinction between races is especially difficult to make because there are Delaware Indians, white Moravian missionaries, and Indian converts. When some of the Delaware Indians convert to Christianity, they adopt the clothing style of the white missionaries. When played by white actors, it thus becomes hard to decipher who is a convert and who is a white missionary. At *Tecumseh!*; Jenny Male explained how the practice is used to distinguish the Indians from the frontiersmen:

I understand why it’s used because people, they don’t look enough like Indians in outdoor drama. I think it’s one thing if it were a blackbox theatre, that you can do enough with lights, that you can do enough with your costumes, that you don’t need to all look the same. But to really help distinguish the Indians from the frontiersmen, because sometimes they wear the same clothes. If you look at the clothes, I mean they might not be wearing a loincloth, but they’re wearing the same kind of shirts, the same kind of chokers, cause you look at how much the whites adopted from the Indians and they didn’t even think about it . . . so it’s just their way of distinguishing. They’re trying to make it not so red, you know, they’re trying to make it just more of that tannish color so it’s not so stark. Um, but they’ve been working on that.71

Male’s initial statement that the actors don’t look “Indian enough” suggests a lack of authenticity in the appearance of the performers. I found that many producers seemed to believe that by using paint to cover white skin, the actor is given a more authentic “look.” Furthermore, there

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71 Jenny Male, personal interview, 13 July 2011.
seems to be a subscription to “degrees” of authenticity depending on how red the paint is. Many producers share a notion that “tan” is more authentic and less offensive than a “red” shade of makeup. Male’s comments, as well as the mention of the blending of shades during the backstage tour suggest this. If race is the ultimate marker of “Otherness” and, thus, authenticity, the “appearance” of race, for some, may approximate authenticity (with varying degrees, according to the blend of makeup). This perception of authenticity through the appearance of race, is supported by the lament of one producer from *Trail of Tears*, who bemoaned the loss of the “Indian look,” when he dismissed one of his Cherokee actors from the show. Though the productions in Oklahoma and Cherokee were surrounded by the Cherokee Nation, they continued to cast whites in native roles. By casting natives in background roles, they felt they were able to lend more “authenticity” to the production. This suggests that they were not casting Cherokee actors in lead roles because they did not believe in their talent, or they did not believe in their professionalism. Based on Hunter’s comments revealed in the previous chapter, it would seem both reasons may have dictated casting choices.

Of her own experience working on *Tecumseh!*, Hathaway feels that the use of makeup seems “uncontested” by actors as a way to create “a credible ‘ethnicity.’” Interestingly, in some of the Ohio productions I saw, black actors did not wear body paint. This may be due to a perception of authenticity regardless of specific race. In other words, by virtue of being an “Other” to white, and therefore categorized similarly to Native Americans, black performers lend a degree of authenticity to the production. Deloria, on the other hand, proposes that Indianness was the province of whites, but not blacks. He supports this claim by citing the philosophies of

72 Deloria 146.
many hobbyist groups in the mid-twentieth century who believed that races other than whites looked “strange” playing Indian.\footnote{Ibid.} Regardless, it seems that for many of the actors, donning wigs and makeup is seen as a tool with which to create a more authentic character and performance.

While many of the producers seem to believe that painting up is a way to establish the appearance of the “Other,” some seem to be unsure of how to address it. During the backstage tour at Tecumseh!, the guides chose to approach the topic with humor. While explaining the importance of having a good foundation of makeup because of sweating and wading through the onstage pond, one guide joked, “So hopefully you won’t see anybody fading to white throughout the course of the show tonight.”\footnote{Backstage tour, Tecumseh!, The Scioto Society, Inc., 22 June 2011.} This comment elicited a laugh from herself as well as from the visitors on the tour. I think the guide may have been trying to diffuse some of the tension surrounding the topic using humor, but the approach downplays the fact that painting up is a sensitive subject. Maureen Yasko spoke of this approach, noting,

I even sometimes worry about it when I talk about it on tour. Because we’ll make a joke about it, like . . . my tour partner Rachael, she’s very Irish, but she just played a Native American in a certain part of the show, so we’ll make a joke about it and I do sometimes worry about whether or not even that’s offensive.\footnote{Maureen Yasko, personal group interview, 22 June 2011.}

Instead of trying to decrease any tension regarding the practice through humor, perhaps the backstage tour guides could address the issue head-on. For instance, the guide could plant a “nay-sayer” by pointing out that it is a contentious issue and why, and then explain their
rationale for using the practice. This approach could at least call attention to differing views on the subject, instead of hiding them behind humor, and it could also create a dialogic space for visitors and producers to grapple with the issue.

Yasko shared with me her own conflicted views on the practice of painting up:

I do worry sometimes about whether or not it’s “offensive.” Um, we just don’t treat it that way here, you know because there’s some people who believe, “Oh, well why don’t you just hire Native American actors?” Well, Native American actors, not all of them even quote-unquote look like the Native Americans would have looked back then. There’s not enough of them. But also, you know, because there is such a view of honoring the Shawnee here, I don’t feel as if we are being offensive.77

In working through the articulation of her views, some of Yasko’s conflicting thoughts emerge. She admits that she is concerned with how the practice is perceived. Furthermore she claims that not all Native Americans look like early nineteenth-century Native Americans, suggesting some sort of uniformity in how Native Americans looked in the past, thus validating the use of makeup. For Yasko, it comes down to a matter of intention; the approach to the drama is characterized by the goal of honoring the Shawnee. She goes on to address the comparison of using makeup to blackface:

[B]lackface was specifically used as a derogatory thing, you know, in vaudeville and all of that. And that is not what we’re doing here. We are simply portraying these people how they were, you know . . . but we just treat it as, “This is the

77 Maureen Yasko, personal group interview, 22 June 2011.
character I’m playing and so I have to paint up,” you know, we very much honor it. So I don’t look at it as being blackface at all.\textsuperscript{78}

Again, Yasko considers intention to be the marker of what is offensive and what is not. In our discussion I mentioned that there are questions as to whether or not painting up is necessary, to which Yasko responded,

I’ve wondered about that, too. But then it’s like to the audience’s perspective, you know. I guess that in that, there is a little bit of—we have to play into a little bit of what they think. This is something I’ve actually, particularly this year, I’ve been mulling around in my head, like if this is even necessary anymore. But . . . I do have a little Native American in me, but [dismissive sound], but you can’t—I mean, whatever, you know, and there are several actors here who have, but not all of us are full-blown Native American and like I said, you can’t really pick out people that are Native American that easily anymore anyway. And how do we separate them onstage from, you know, from just clothing, sure, but I mean like I had to dye my hair black, and we have wigs and that sort of thing.\textsuperscript{79}

Once again, as Yasko works through her thoughts on the matter, she has trouble directly stating her views on painting up. Yasko refers to audience expectations and what sort of appearance they will not only believe, but comprehend. She also acknowledges that contemporary Native Americans do not have a monolithic appearance. She hinges that, however, on the perception that in the past, Native Americans had a more homogenous look.

\textsuperscript{78} Maureen Yasko, personal group interview, 22 June 2011.

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid.
For some, regardless of intention, painting up is considered an offensive practice. Larissa Fasthorse shared her thoughts on the matter:

Oh, I think it’s horrible. I mean, it’s just perpetuating the stereotype that we all look the same. That there’s one way that Indians look, when in fact we’re five hundred separate cultures, separate nations. It’s just, it’s horrible, it’s so offensive, it is so—it’s just perpetuating the stereotypical Indians. Honestly, here in LA when I—when I used to act and go to auditions—they’d want me to straighten out my curly hair. My curly hair is Lakota . . . It’s developed in our gene . . . But to them, I should have black, straight hair. The red in my hair is pretty much Lakota also, and you know to them black, straight hair is Indian. And they want that look again. And it’s so, so wrong. I just have, yeah, I have a really horrible time with that because it’s just perpetuating that whole single Indigenous person. As opposed to individuals, we’re just one stereotype. It’s so dangerous on so many levels. And that’s something, too, that actually Eddie’s really for in Unto These Hills, that took some time, is unwigging people, taking the wigs off. Just making everybody be who they are, especially when we have several people from various indigenous nations that do look very, very different. And he just lets them be different . . . and I think it’s, I think painting is one of the worst, I think it’s one of the most dangerous things being done to native people, because it’s taking away the individual completely—individual human. It’s dehumanizing. Completely. No one paints white people all white. If you’re going to do that, then paint all your people white and put the same blonde wig on them. And if you do that, then ok, then maybe we can talk about it. And no one would
do that because they’re like, “Well, then they’re not individuals, they’re not people,” and it’s like, “Yeah, exactly. They quit being people.”

Fasthorse’s comments refer to the particular practice, mentioned before, of having native actors paint up and wear wigs despite their indigenous identity. This is similar to blackface when black performers had to paint up to fulfill white constructions of what African-Americans look like. As Fasthorse points out, no one ever expects white actors to paint themselves white and wear blonde wigs to satisfy an expectation of what “white” should look like. This speaks to the notion that “passing” is a one-way street. While whites have historically been able to pass as Others, the cultural Other has not been allowed to pass as white. The backstage tour guide at Trumpet in the Land explained that the actors there use baby wipes to erase the color and “make you white again.” These words communicate much more than I suspect the guide realized or intended. Her words reiterate the idea of whites as carte blanche in that they have the agency and authority to pass as whatever cultural “Other” they want, but at the end of the day, they can easily erase that Other.

Debra L. Merskin shares Fasthorse’s frustrations with the idea of a homogenous Indian look. Merskin, whose father was Polish and mother was Cherokee, describes her own deviation from the expected physical appearance of Indians:

I have her face and his hair. It’s the hair that does it, you see. You can’t be fair-haired and be an Indian. It’s not allowed, at least according to white standards. It’s too confusing. “Passing” is threatening. Definitions of appropriate physical appearance form a specific function in American society, created to service the

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80 Larissa Fasthorse, personal interview, 4 August 2011.

81 Backstage tour, Trumpet in the Land, 16 July 2011.
status quo by keeping things orderly. If a person varies from what’s considered to be the standard, it confuses things.82

Merksin taps into the rationale used by the producers of some outdoor dramas; it is confusing if the Indians don’t look like what American society has deemed appropriate. The fear is that if Indian characters appeared with curly hair, or paler skin, or red hair, things could get “disorderly.” Audience expectations of what an Indian looks like—long, straight, black hair, dark eyes, tan skin, high cheekbones—reinscribe stereotyped images in many outdoor historical dramas. While the use of makeup may help audience members recognize who is Indian and who is not, it designates particular features to the image of the General Indian. In perpetuating this monolithic appearance, producers sustain the idea of a generic Indian, rather than individual humans who come from numerous individual nations. Unto These Hills is trying to disrupt the notion of the General Indian by not asking cast members to paint up or use wigs to create a construction of “Indianness.” The result is a heterogeneous collection of characters onstage that reflects a collection of individuals, rather than a homogenous group and a more authentic depiction of “Indianness” for the audience.

Accuracy and authenticity are both complex enterprises for outdoor historical dramas. Audience expectations, financial resources, differing priorities, opposing views of history, issues regarding authority, and negotiation of the archive and repertoire all make complete accuracy and absolute authenticity impossible to achieve. Although they are impossible to achieve, I believe that issues of accuracy cannot be ignored because inaccuracies can produce or reinforce

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negative and harmful stereotypes of Native American cultures. Additionally, inauthentic representations are often offensive to the cultures being depicted.

 Furthermore, issues of accuracy and authenticity in performance cannot be ignored because they can also change cultural practices and perceptions of history. Playwright Suzan-Lori Parks endorses performance as a space for creating and shifting perceptions of history:

A play is a blueprint of an event: a way of creating and rewriting history through the medium of literature. Since history is a recorded or remembered event, theatre, for me, is the perfect place to ‘make’ history—that is, because so much of African-American history has been unrecorded, dismembered, washed out, one of my tasks as a playwright is to—through literature and the special strange relationship between theatre and real-life—locate the ancestral burial ground, dig for bones, hear the bones sing, write it down.83

Parks claims that she can fill the empty space left by the “unrecorded, dismembered, washed-out” history of African Americans through performance. In many ways, Native American histories have been unrecorded, dismembered, and wash out as well, especially since many relied much more on embodiment, such as oral traditions, for the transmission of knowledge rather than the written word.

Sometimes histories are re-written in ways considered harmful by some because of the inaccuracies they disseminate. John Tissue, Linda Squirrel, and Larissa Fasthorse each pointed out that many of the local Cherokee had accepted the old Unto These Hills script as their history. Tissue stated that after they changed from the old version many people responded, “‘That’s not

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the show, that’s not right.” He continues, “Kermit wasn’t right, but they had seen forty years, or fifty-five years of Kermit and that became the history.”84 The inaccuracies had to do with the storyline of Tsali, the savior figure who has been credited with sacrificing himself in order for some Cherokees to retain their homes in the Smoky Mountains, as well as a scene in which Chief Junaluska was wrongly portrayed as having saved Andrew Jackson. Squirrel researched and “did a lot of digging to get that story to be as accurate as it possibly could be” when writing the new script.85 Tissue recalls that this “re-written” sense of history based on Hunter’s old script resulted in uncertainty over whether or not the new drama had local support. Historian Eric Foner articulates this resistance to change when he argues, “Outside the academy, however, the act of reinterpretation is often viewed with suspicion, and ‘revisionist’ is invoked as a term of abuse.”86 According to many of the people I spoke with in Cherokee, the changes to the drama were initially met with much suspicion. Though the last few years have not been easy, Tissue believes that overall, the community is once again supporting the drama.

Foner states, “History always has been and always will be regularly rewritten, in response to new questions, new information, new methodologies, and new political, social, and cultural imperatives.”87 In the case of Unto These Hills, history was first re-written by Hunter in response to cultural imperatives he regarded as part of theatricalizing history, and history was re-written again by the Cherokee Historical Association, in response to new political, social, and cultural imperatives that accompanied what Thompson calls the “Cherokee Renaissance.” For other outdoor dramas, the rewriting of history due to new information can have significant

84 John Tissue, personal interview, 15 June 2011.
85 Linda Squirrel, personal interview, 15 June 2011.
86 Foner xvi.
87 Foner xvii.
impact on the production. In these cases, issues of accuracy are important because they have the power to shut down a production completely, as exemplified by *Blue Jacket*.

*Blue Jacket* focuses on the title character, the Shawnee war chief who was thought to be (and portrayed in the drama as) a white man. At the end of the show, Blue Jacket kills his white brother during the Battle of St. Clair. Skepticism over particular points in the show’s plot, as well as Blue Jacket’s true racial background began surfacing in the late 1990s. A series of newspaper articles from 1998-2008 chronicles the debates in accuracy that played out through *Blue Jacket*. A 1998 newspaper article announced that researcher Charles Van Trees’ claim that Blue Jacket did not kill his own brother was proven. The article states that, “Jan Abel, the executive producer, has grudgingly come to agree with researcher Charles Van Trees of Fairborn and other defenders of fact over theater who have long complained about the script’s—how to put this delicately?—incomplete veracity.” At the time of the article, Van Trees could not prove his other suspicion that Blue Jacket was not white, but rather Native American. In the article, W.L. Mundell, who wrote the script, claims that members of the Bluejacket tribe of Shawnee and descendants of Bluejacket with whom he spoke all support his storyline. In another quote from Abel, which illustrates the issue of history versus entertainment, she states that the production “has no wish to make a mockery of history. But we’re trying to provide entertainment, as well. We know more than we did when the show was written, Some things have come to light. But we still aren’t telling any big lies out there.” Abel’s comments seem to suggest that although inaccuracies had been proven, the show, overall, was still fairly accurate.

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89 Ibid.
Van Trees, who was “driven by the desire for historical accuracy,” however, continued to search for answers regarding Blue Jacket’s race.\footnote{Margo Rutledge Kissell, “Legend Doesn’t Hold Up-DNA Probe Tests Blue Jacket Links,” \textit{Dayton Daily News}, 12 June 2000: 1A.} A \textit{Dayton Daily News} article from 2000 revisited the subject and noted that Van Trees was using forensic evidence to research Blue Jacket’s ancestry. It wasn’t until 2006, however, when the scientific evidence was published, proving through DNA testing that Blue Jacket was, in fact, native and not white. In a 2006 newspaper article, Lorrie Sparrow, executive director of First Frontier, Inc. (Blue Jacket’s producing organization) is quoted as querying, “Do we have to be historically accurate? Or is it our job to present good theater?”\footnote{Bill Sloat, “DNA study challenges long-loved Indian tale: Legend surrounding Blue Jacket’s history ‘not based on reality,’” \textit{The Plain Dealer}, 13 April 2006.} Around the same time as the newspaper article went to print, Scott Parker sent Sparrow an email from the Institute of Outdoor Drama suggesting that she “get in touch with some authorities who have long claimed BJ was a white man. Maybe there are two sides to this story.”\footnote{Scott Parker, “Changes in BJ,” Email to Lorrie Sparrow, 7 April 2006, Institute of Outdoor Drama, Greenville, NC.} After encouraging Sparrow to remind audiences that this is one version of the story, possibly through a note in the show program, Parker reminds her that they can’t change anything in the script without the playwright’s approval. Thus, Parker points out one of the obstacles that often stands in the way of change in outdoor drama – script copyright. Parker also warns Sparrow that even when they acknowledge validity in the DNA findings, they will “be subject to cries [sic] of ingenuous [sic] behavior at the least, and hypocrisy at the worst. A note in the program will probably not satisfy some people.”\footnote{Ibid.}
Some of the producers of *Blue Jacket* believed that the findings would be detrimental to the show, while others thought it may help boost ticket sales. The new board president at First Frontier, Inc. acknowledged that “The staff believe this may seriously affect our show,” but predicted that “it may actually help. It may spark an interest in seeing the show.”94 In another email, the board president noted that he had been reassured that this was not the first time an outcry of inaccuracy had been launched against an outdoor drama:

I’m told this subject has come up on a number of other occasions . . . that it’s a controversy that’s been around for years. *Tecumseh!* has a similar set of circumstances: that play dramatizes events that some people swear never happened . . . and Allan finally agreed that they indeed did not happen, that some of the characters in the play never existed . . . or at least that some of the relationships in the play never existed. But, they haven’t changed the play, and all hell has not broken lose [sic].95

He continues by stating, “You know, these outdoor historical dramas are not documentaries. They are plays based on history.”96 This outlook is increasingly repeated in the exchanges regarding the production. As tensions over the issues mounted, Sparrow emailed Parker regarding communicating with the press and setting up a meeting with those who had done the research to discuss the findings. At the end of the email, she noted that “The good news is I’ve got the continued support of the Miami Valley Council for Native Americans behind me, even in light of the paper…That’s a big plus for us in dealing with potentially hostile groups.”97 This

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94 Timothy Haney, email to Scott Parker, 12 April 2006, Institute of Outdoor Drama, Greenville, NC.

95 Timothy Haney, email to Scott Parker, 13 April, 2006, Institute of Outdoor Drama, Greenville, NC.

96 Ibid.

97 Lorrie Sparrow, email to Scott Parker, 7 April 2006, Institute of Outdoor Drama, Greenville, NC.
last remark is important in that it demonstrates that in addition to non-natives, natives have differing views of the history versus entertainment debate and the role of accuracy in these dramas.

By the time *Blue Jacket* opened that summer, the forensic evidence supporting that Blue Jacket was actually Native American and not white had been presented at the American Academy of Forensic Sciences meeting in Seattle, as well as the Ohio Academy of Sciences meeting at the University of Dayton. The information had also already been accepted for publication in the *Ohio Journal of Science*. Of greater concern to the drama was that the information had been delivered to the public via numerous newspapers. In an article from *The Columbus Dispatch*, the producers’ stance was that “[art and controversy] often go together.” Lorrie Sparrow commented, “We show history as it was reported 25 years ago . . . so come out and see the story of Blue Jacket.”98 In the program that summer, the producers addressed the issue by noting that the legend portrayed in the drama “took root and became ‘accepted history’” after the title figure’s death. The program note goes on to proclaim the play as “historical drama, not historical fact,” and explicated Mundell’s research into the subject. This research included interviews with Blue Jacket’s direct descendants. The producers also provide a brief synopsis of the recent forensic research and respond to the findings by stating, “Without a DNA test on Chief Blue Jacket himself, there is no way to 100% ascertain whether he was white or Shawnee, yet it is possible to conclude from Fr. Krane’s and Ms. Rowland’s test efforts that there is little chance Blue Jacket ever answered to the name ‘Duke’” (his purported white name).99 Once again,

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98 Mike Lafferty, “Chief Blue Jacket’s DNA all Indian, tests indicate – Report he was captured white boy is debunked,” *The Columbus Dispatch*, 14 April 2006.

however, the show program seems to send mixed messages to the audience because later in the document producers claim that, “By bringing historical characters to life on the stage, we allow our audience to not only witness historical events, but also to experience the sadness, joy, rage, regret, agony and despair of those who lived through it.” By claiming the portrayal of historical characters and historical events, as well as the emotions those characters lived through, the program contradicts the earlier claim of not being “historical fact” to some audience members.

As the result of an emergency fundraising campaign, the show was able to return in 2007. In the language of the 2007 show program, the producers leave room for multiple understandings of Blue Jacket’s story. In one instance, the program notes read, “In our show, as we depict it, you will discover that Blue Jacket was born a white man…” (emphasis mine). Later in the program the producers address the issues of accuracy and purport the drama is not about one man, but rather about the Shawnee culture. The program reads, “It is the hallmark of American studies to question accepted history and it is this constant inquiry that keeps our nation’s scholars at the forefront of world historical research. It is also what has kept our theatre from becoming dated despite being in its 26th year of production.” There is a shift in tone from the 2006 program to the 2007 program. In the 2006 program, as pointed to prior, the producers acknowledge the presence of forensic evidence nullifying the accuracy of the drama, but they only concede that it may possibly be true. Furthermore, they stress that the play is not “historical fact.” The 2007 program celebrates historical inquiry as a “hallmark of American studies,” and

100 First Frontier, Inc., *Blue Jacket* Show Program, 2006, 47.
claims that participation in this inquiry has prevented the drama from becoming dated. This choice of words makes it sound as though the producers of *Blue Jacket* embraced, if not sought, historical re-writes. Instead of focusing on the history versus entertainment argument in the 2007 program, the producers opt for the claim that the play is about bigger ideas than a single man, thus excusing any inaccuracies regarding the single man as unimportant. Later the Director’s Notes invite the audience to take part in the ongoing debate over the accuracy of the drama’s depictions, saying, “You are now engaged in that debate. Accept your role in this endeavor and tonight, under the stars of Greene County, help us celebrate twenty-six years in the industry!”

By implicating the audience in the debate, the director displaces the task of establishing and determining accuracy from the producers to the audience, as if it were a mission for them to accomplish.

In switching their argument to one that emphasizes the mythical qualities of *Blue Jacket*, the producers tap into a reason the drama is worth fighting for in this scientific debate. This drama allows non-natives to “play Indian” and live out fantasies of the cultural Other. Of course, as I pointed out in the Introduction, the argument can be made that all of these productions allow for that type of fantastical play. *Blue Jacket*, however, is an especially strong example because it is about a white man who plays Indian. As discussed in the Introduction, Deloria, in his book, *Playing Indian*, explores the ways in which and reasons why American white (males in particular) have, for centuries, dressed up and performed Indianness. Deloria attributes this practice to the search for a distinct “American” identity, and argues that adopting Indianness has allowed individuals to fulfill desires for identity-formation and meaning-making in the face of uncertainty. *Blue Jacket*, I believe, was integral to the identity of the Xenia, Ohio community in

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103 First Frontier, Inc., *Blue Jacket* Show Program, 2007, 34.
which the play took place. There was more at stake than merely the accuracy of the play when the DNA evidence suggesting Blue Jacket was actually born Shawnee was revealed.

Bergman and Mangan both stressed to me that the Xenia community strongly supported the outdoor drama and their own shock when they found out the production had closed down. They each also alluded to the popularity that verged on hero-worship which the cast and crew received when they left the production grounds to go into town. This type of reception suggests that the local community was strongly invested in the drama. For the small town near Dayton, the drama brought the area a sense of notoriety. Additionally, it provided a sense of local history and pride for the residents of the area—important values for a town whose tagline is “Vivid History. Vibrant Future.” Furthermore, because the narrative focused on a white man who led and fought for the Shawnee, local audiences were able to displace themselves onto the figure. In other words, residents of the local community who felt attached to the local history of their home, could view Blue Jacket as a stand-in for how they would have acted in the same situation. For a town that prides itself in being named after the Greek word for “hospitality,” local audience members would like to imagine themselves as the one who stood up for the Other, not the one who annihilated the Other. By playing Indian through Blue Jacket, local non-native audiences are able to imagine and define their community and themselves as advocates of justice and harmony among different cultures. Both the figure and the drama provided the local community with a source of pride with which they identified. The jeopardizing of the drama meant the jeopardizing of the community’s identity. The discovery that Blue Jacket was not white called into question the way non-native audiences viewed themselves and their ability to control and shift their own identities.

The 2007 season was the last for *Blue Jacket*. A newspaper article ran in April of 2008 announced, “The producers of the financially struggling show have postponed performances until 2009 to allow time for an organizational restructuring and for a new script to be written and staged. . . . The new work will probably recognize Blue Jacket as an Indian.”\(^{105}\) Another article connects the hiatus to the need for accuracy in light of the forensics research by claiming that “First Frontier’s Xenia production has been postponed to 2009 so a more-historically [sic] accurate script can be prepared.”\(^{106}\) By the summer of 2009, however, First Frontier had declared bankruptcy. A newspaper article covering the story cited competing attractions, increasing gas costs, and the “controversy about the veracity of the play,” as causes for the decrease in attendance.\(^{107}\) The article posits that “When DNA testing of descendants seemingly proved that Blue Jacket could not have been white, the two-act production that ran all summer on an outdoor stage increasingly came to be seen as fiction.”\(^{108}\) Plans to revise the script were abandoned, as evidenced by First Frontier President Jim Haworth’s comment that “‘Blue Jacket’ has ridden into the sunset.”\(^{109}\) Haworth and other community members expressed hope that they

\(^{105}\) Staff reports, “Producers postpone ‘Blue Jacket,’” *The Columbus Dispatch*, 23 April 2008.


\(^{107}\) Terry Morris, “Bankruptcy dooms ‘Blue Jacket’; Outdoor drama about Shawnee war chief has ‘ridden into the sunset,’ one creditor says, but plans for new show are on horizon,” *Dayton Daily News*, 2 June 2009, A5.

\(^{108}\) Ibid.

\(^{109}\) Ibid. Once again, the image of the vanishing Indian is invoked in Haworth’s statement.
may create a new outdoor historical drama, focusing on Simon Kenton instead. I have found no evidence that suggests plans for a new drama are in progress.\textsuperscript{110}

_Blue Jacket_ provides a fascinating example of how issues of accuracy can affect an outdoor historical drama. Newspaper articles, show programs, and email exchanges regarding the controversy provided me with a broader view of the events than if I had access to just one of those source materials. I realize there is a much bigger picture beyond the frame of what I have been able to look at, but based on the archival materials I have consulted, it seems that the controversy over Blue Jacket’s race was a significant factor in the production’s eventual closing. The main cause, it seems, was financial problems, but based on newspaper articles and supported by the apprehension expressed in the email correspondences, the controversy also contributed to the decline in attendance. Furthermore, First Frontier’s statement that they would pursue a script about a different historical figure in the future supports this notion. Tracking the moves made by First Frontier in trying to navigate through this controversy is revealing. When accusations of inaccuracy first began, the organization stood by the story they had been telling for years. As the accusations gained credibility, they claimed the entertainment side of the history versus entertainment debate; that is, they claimed to be historical “drama,” rather than historical “fact.” As it became increasingly clear that the story they had been perpetuating was not in line with the forensic evidence, First Frontier adopted the “multiple views of history” outlook and claimed that this type of historical inquiry and investigation was healthy, to both the academia and

\textsuperscript{110} When I doing research on _Blue Jacket_ a year ago, I found First Frontier’s website, however, I found no contact information, nor any information regarding a new drama. When I tried to return to the website in August of 2012, it was gone and I could find no other website for the organization.
theatre. In the end, however, none of their moves were able to withstand the scrutiny they endured over the issue of accuracy.

In the case of *Blue Jacket* it seems that history trumped entertainment. Furthermore, it seems that embodiment trumped the archive, although this sense of embodiment is not the way in which Taylor speaks of the repertoire. In *Blue Jacket*, the embodiment that won out was based on the hard science of DNA research. That embodiment rewrote the written history on Blue Jacket. For me, this case also raises questions about other outdoor historical dramas. If other dramas were faced with the same kind of inquiry, and inaccuracies were exposed, would they, too, fold? It seems that the idea of accuracy lies on a spectrum, resulting in the consideration of “degrees” of accuracy. Therefore, I suppose a production’s outcome would depend on the “degree” of inaccuracy exposed. In the case of *Unto These Hills... A Retelling*, cultural and historical inaccuracies have been exposed, and “remedied.” If productions which heavily rely on the archive incorporated the repertoire more, would that create a stronger foundation for when these issues arise?

Accuracy is a slippery concept that is difficult to ascertain and even more difficult to accomplish. Yet, a degree of accuracy seems to be expected from outdoor historical dramas. Exactly how to measure that degree is unclear. Issues of accuracy emerge because producers have differing priorities in creating productions: is it about making money? Portraying a culture? Both? Issues also arise when trying to determine who has the authority to proclaim something as accurate or inaccurate. Additionally, conflicts occur when different forms of storing and transmitting knowledge emerge, such as the archive and the repertoire. Taylor advocates the use of both, but sometimes that is not so easy to do. What happens when a production wants to change a dance to reflect a more traditional tribal dance, but has no tribal members to consult or
to learn from? In this case, issues of absence and presence once again enter the picture. Other practical considerations affect the degree of accuracy depicted in an outdoor drama. What happens if a production wants to replace costumes, or music, but does not have the financial means to do so? Issues of accuracy come about when audience expectations conflict with what is considered accurate. What happens when a production wants to become more culturally and historically accurate, but because their predominantly non-native audience has certain audience expectations, the producers feel beholden to them in order to sell tickets? Does one give in to those expectations, however inaccurate they may be? Or do they risk declines in ticket sales to accurately present the culture and history?

If 100% accuracy is not possible, then why is it important? Bettye Choate Kash asserts that “Outdoor historical drama is also educational theatre, teaching something of the history of the area and sometimes seeking to clear up mistaken conceptions held by the general public.”

What happens, though, when the drama creates the “mistaken conceptions held by the general public,” whether those be in regards to the history depicted or the Native American cultures represented? Concern with accuracy is important because the alternative—inaccuracy—is important. Inaccuracy is significant because of the misguided and harmful perceptions it can have on both the producers and audiences. These perceptions may create negative stereotypes or they may reinforce already existing stereotypes of Native Americans.

I’ve brought up a lot of questions, probably more questions than answers. I believe that this topic eludes easy answers, however. My aim was to explore some of the issues in accuracy and authenticity that outdoor historical dramas have faced, and to provide examples of how

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producers have handled those issues. I want to consider one final quote regarding these issues.

American Indian Studies scholar Peter Nabokov posits,

> [A]ny accounts of Indian-white relations deserve multiple representations. If we were to truly tell these stories “in the round,” how could they not reflect contrasting or overlapping vested interests, differing modalities of accounting and interpreting, and culturally divergent senses of what it all meant?\footnote{Peter Nabakov, \textit{A Forest of Time: American Indian Ways of History} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 5-6.}

Perhaps approaching accuracy and authenticity not just knowing, but also considering and incorporating, different approaches and perspectives will help in achieving greater degrees of both.
CHAPTER V: NEW DIRECTIONS

“I don’t have the solutions, but I do believe that we need to be asking new questions. Not the same old questions that we’ve been asking for fifty years.”

Rob Franklin Fox

“Change is inevitable. Without change, we die.”

Marion Waggoner

“But the beauty of theater is that it doesn’t need much resource beyond the imagination, the strength of which, well exercised, outdoes anything the makers of those huge mechanized spectacles . . . can do.”

Michael Feingold

In talking to numerous people involved with the production of outdoor historical dramas, the most ubiquitous comment I heard was that in order to survive, productions need to seek and embrace change. For some this meant changes at the administrative level, for others it meant change at the production level or in the organization’s mission. Interestingly, even though I heard most people say that change is necessary to survive the low attendance numbers and difficult economic climate outdoor dramas are now facing, many people also articulated a perceived resistance to change in the field. While addressing some of the ways in which the Cherokee Historical Association has considered change, John Tissue noted, “I think too often people in our industry are too quick to say no. You know, and I think that a lot of those old

1 Rob Franklin Fox, Theatre Symposium Keynote Roundtable, 12 April 2008.
2 Marion Waggoner, personal interview, 29 July 2011.
school folks are moving on so there may be life in it yet.” Marion Waggoner expresses the same desire for fresh, new ways to go about producing these dramas, and he posits that many of the founders of outdoor historical drama would advocate the same:

[T]hey [the founders of the movement] would be saying, “You change, for Christ’s sake. Why are you stuck in a rut?” So I think that sometimes we tend to idolize these folks, when in fact, we forget that they brought this movement about by changing the furniture around.5

Both Tissue and Waggoner seem to sense hesitancy in the field toward the prospect of change. Perhaps this opposition results from a lack of ideas for change. Perhaps some people may attribute the decreasing attendance records to factors beyond their control and take the “if it ain’t broke” stance. Or perhaps some producers don’t believe they have the financial means or resources necessary to make changes. Perhaps some producers share the view that Jeffrey Jones describes when he says,

[T]heater has become uniquely convention-bound and resistant to innovation. It is convention-bound because it relies on familiar and well-understood forms, structures, and dramaturgical principles in order to make it as easy as possible to figure out what’s going on, pay attention, and not feel bored.6

Perhaps outdoor historical drama has become so institutionalized that it is bound to its conventions and thus “resistant to innovation.” Perhaps, because of the many complex issues

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4 Jon Tissue, personal interview, 15 June 2011.
5 Marion Waggoner, personal interview, 29 July 2011.
with which producers deal and the effects of those issues on the dramas within the last two decades, many producers would rather the audience witness easily-consumable, traditional formats and stories that are simultaneously charged with enough spectacle to keep audiences from being bored.

Outdoor historical dramas currently face many challenges. These include declining audiences, shrinking budgets, and competing forms of entertainment. Of even greater concern to this study, however, are the issues outdoor dramas face in representing Native American cultures. These challenges include issues in harmful stereotypes, cultural and historical accuracy, authenticity, and how absence, as well as presence, of tribal communities can affect a production. The challenges facing these dramas are complex, and rarely are there simple answers. Furthermore, change is difficult, as many outdoor dramas have come to learn. And, while most of the dramas I researched have experienced at least some degree of change, (particularly Unto These Hills) they all, for the most part, retain a traditional narrative structure presented through the theatrical mode of realism, in large outdoor amphitheaters, with large amounts of spectacle delivered through song, dance, and, most notably, battle scenes. One production I attended, however, breaks the outdoor drama mold. The show I saw in Tahlequah, Oklahoma deviates from the other outdoor historical dramas I visited. In this chapter, I look at ways in which the Cherokee Heritage Center has changed its programming and how the outcomes of those alterations address some of the issues I discussed in previous chapters. Specifically, I examine the production of Under the Cherokee Moon and will consider, through
close reading analysis and my interviews with the producers of that drama, the ways in which that show proposes new directions for outdoor historical dramas.⁷

Susan Phillips at the Institute of Outdoor Drama stressed to me the need for additional programming at outdoor historical drama sites; “Being able to offer something more you know, offering a children’s show, offering little workshops . . . it’s just interesting things so that when you come here it’s a whole experience for the audience. It’s not just going to see that show and you leave. There’s so much more to offer.”⁸ New programming is not just important for bringing in new audiences, but also in rectifying some of the harmful images presented by the old programs. The Cherokee Heritage Center in Oklahoma has begun to incorporate new programs, emphasizing audience interaction and Cherokee methods of storytelling. In 2010, the Center produced *Under the Cherokee Moon—Journey to Chota*, which played on Friday nights. Set in the 1700s, the production had audience members travel to different stations within the Ancient Village and speak with performers portraying the Cherokee women (including Nancy Ward, the Beloved Woman), the Cherokee Warriors, and the English (including Lieutenant Henry Timberlake) in order to gather multiple perspectives of Timberlake’s visit to the Cherokees in 1760.⁹ During the second act, the action jumps ahead sixteen years to 1776, and

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⁷ Though I am focusing on the programming at the Cherokee Heritage Center, there are other programming changes many outdoor dramas are trying to adopt. The Cherokee Historical Association has added a “mini-drama,” which offers audiences shorter, scaled-down performance pieces that provide glimpses of history and Cherokee culture. Many producers also talked about the desire to incorporate technology and social media more, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, texting, etc.

⁸ Susan Phillips, personal interview, 14 June 2011.

⁹ It is interesting that the Cherokee Heritage Center refers to their site as the “Ancient Village.” Oftentimes, North American indigenous peoples’ pasts are referred to as “precontact” or “prehistoric,” thereby suggesting that there
the audience members gather around the council fires to help decide whether the Cherokee should go to war with the Americans, the English, or remain neutral. I asked Laurette Willis, the playwright, about the logistics of this interactive performance, she explained that “They vote at the end, but the decision’s already been made. We [the audience] know what happened.”

During the course of the vote, Nancy Ward interrupts and advocates for peace. At this point, another character breaks from the action and approaches the audience. He then recounts what actually happened while the other performers freeze in tableau. Unfortunately, Under the Cherokee Moon – Journey to Chota did not run the summer of my visit due to budget cuts. This drama, however, introduced to audiences theatrical conventions that are not widely used in outdoor dramas, such as traveling audience members, breaking of the fourth wall, and elicitation of audience input into the action of the show. Some of these differences in format are also found in the show I witnessed in 2011, and will be discussed in further detail later in this chapter.

The Cherokee Heritage Center introduced a family-oriented piece in 2011, called Legends at Dusk, which focused on oral storytelling. Tonia Hogner Weavel, who compiled the traditional Cherokee stories for the piece, explains her realization that “you have to squeeze in little things of history without people even realizing it” is what sparked the idea for the show. The show took place in the Ancient Village and began with an introduction to the Village and what Cherokee life was like in the eighteenth century, in an attempt to integrate history into the

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10 Laurette Willis, personal interview, 22 September 2011.

11 The Cherokee Historical Association in North Carolina has also implemented a similar family-centered show that focuses on Cherokee storytelling and includes audience participation.

12 Tonia Hogner Weavel, personal interview, 24 September 2011.
production. After the introduction, the piece shifted to storytelling. Weavel described to me the appeal of the storytelling aspect:

[W]e do mostly animal tales, but in that it was [that] every story has a lesson and those Cherokee stories have lessons like onions. Like you’ll learn a lesson at age twenty-eight and your eight-year-old daughter will learn a lesson from the same story. Your lesson’s a little more fancy than her lesson. But it still is a lesson.

And so that’s the magic of those stories is that they’re multi-faceted and can mean different things to different people.13

Several storytellers, who are also employees from the Ancient Village, tell different stories, and pull audience members onto the playing space to help enact the tales. For instance, a child may be asked to act like the turtle in the “Why Turtle’s Shell is Cracked” story. Weavel remarked of this interactive component, “people ate it up!”14 Weavel also pointed out that this show teaches audiences about Cherokee culture, explaining that the producers wanted to insert a “cultural hook” into the show. One reason for this, she asserted, was to counteract existing negative images of Native Americans, some of which have been perpetuated by outdoor dramas. She cited an incident in which one of the performers wore face paint that included a white arrow pointing to his eye. She described her reaction thusly:

I was like, “Why would you do that?” . . . Well, that’s just nothing I’d ever heard of before. And I was like—what I wanted to say is, “You’re Cherokee, you don’t have to put that on, just being us is enough.” We don’t have to be over—and I think that’s what a lot of dramas do. They miss the simplicity and the nature-istic,

13 Ibid.
14 Ibid.
if that’s a word, humble-base of Indian people. It’s we’re greedy or we want to
kill everybody on the prairie . . . that wasn’t it at all. And I think a lot of people
miss this real soft, subtle, calmness about Indian people.¹⁵

For Weavel, tapping into the repertoire by pulling traditional Cherokee stories from the oral
tradition and using that format to transfer knowledge about Cherokee culture to audience
members helps to combat misunderstandings of Native Americans. The show helps to
counteract stereotypes such as the Savage Indian. Also, in Weavel’s response to the face paint
incident, she touches on the idea of authenticity. The storyteller did not need to subscribe to a
white perception of what a “real Indian” looked like by putting on face paint. To Weavel, being
himself was all the authenticity he needed.

The storytelling approach not only allows the producers in Tahlequah to teach audiences
about Cherokee culture in embodied ways, but it also provides an opportunity to expand
audience bases. As mentioned before, some of the past and current outdoor historical dramas
prominently feature violence, which can deter people from bringing young children. The
storytelling-based shows provide a family-friendly alternative. Furthermore, these shows cost
less to produce. For instance, Legends at Dusk was staged in the Ancient Village, which
involved no special lighting, sound equipment, or set pieces, thus eliminating the expenses
involved in staging a production in a larger performance venue. Additionally, the performers
wore the same costumes they used as guides in the Ancient Village, eliminating the need for new
costumes. Supplemental programs, such as family-oriented pieces like Legends at Dusk, can
assist in an organization’s outreach at a lower cost to producers.

¹⁵ Ibid.
The Cherokee Heritage Center adopted a new version of *Under the Cherokee Moon* in September 2011. The drama ran for one month and was the organization’s most recent attempt at staging a trimmed-down outdoor historical drama. Various incarnations of the play have been staged since 2007, including *Under the Cherokee Moon—Chota*, which I mentioned earlier. Written, directed, and featuring Laurette Willis, the 2011 drama, I believe, offers alternatives to the traditional outdoor drama format, which other productions may find beneficial. Although some of the outdoor dramas I saw had experienced changes over the years, most notably *Unto These Hills*, they all followed a similar formula. In other words, they all followed a fairly traditional narrative structure which included an exposition, rising action, climax, and denouement and featured a protagonist versus antagonist conflict.\(^{16}\) Furthermore, with the exception of a narrator in some productions, the fourth wall convention is maintained by the characters. The productions are representational and feature material spectacle, rather than abstract and avant-garde in staging practices.\(^{17}\) After seeing four different productions and researching others that all followed this format, I expected the same thing when I attended *Under the Cherokee Moon*. What I witnessed, however, discarded the traditional format and style of

\(^{16}\) I say “fairly” because some may consider *Unto These Hills* to have a hybrid pageant/narrative plot structure. During the first act, audiences are privy to a series of scenes that present dramatizations of Cherokee history and events since contact with Europeans. Once these series of scenes reaches the nineteenth-century, however, the structure shifts and begins to follow a structure akin to Freytag’s pyramid.

\(^{17}\) The naturalistic elements of the dramas can lead to unexpected incidents during the show. For instance, when I saw *Tecumseh!*, one of the horses relieved itself while onstage, during a particularly intense scene. The actors did not break, however, and in the subsequent battle scene, one of the actors did not hesitate to fall dead in the spot that the horse had been standing. The presence of the live horses, the dirt, the pond, etc. onstage infuse this and other productions traits of naturalism.
outdoor historical dramas that I had become accustomed to seeing. By so doing, *Under the Cherokee Moon* offers new considerations of how to present Native American histories and cultures in ways that address both the practical and theoretical issues at stake.

I pulled into the parking lot of the Cherokee Heritage Center after a solo, twelve-hour drive. I was tired, hungry, and quite frankly, not necessarily in the mood for another show. The large parking lot reminded me of the lots I had seen at the other dramas; the vast number of spaces was a testament to the large crowds that poured in during the drama’s heyday, and the disproportionately small number of vehicles actually occupying spaces testified to the present-day struggles of many dramas. I entered the Center, picked up my ticket, purchased a cup of coffee from some vending machines, and followed other audience members to the show. I expected to walk into the large Tsa-La-Gi Amphitheatre, partly because every other show I had seen was staged in a similar space. Instead, the production was staged in the Adams Corner Rural Village, a replica of a late nineteenth-century Cherokee community before Oklahoma became a state. The Village consists of several buildings, including a church, a schoolhouse, a general store, and residences. Chairs were set up for approximately seventy-five audience members in the grass in front of the general store. I was surprised not only at the intimate space established, but also at the small number of audience members expected. As I sat down, I was handed a program. Unlike the glossy-paged booklets sold at the other dramas, this program was a double-sided single sheet of paper, with one side offering actor bios and pictures, and the other side (fashioned after the “Cherokee Rose Buds,” a nineteenth-century Cherokee Female Seminary Publication), providing context for the show. This context included not only actual articles from the historical publication, including poetry, a Secretary’s report, a segment in Cherokee language, and information about the publication, but also the song “Amazing Grace,”
with lyrics in English and Cherokee. Additionally, this side of the program provided a brief introduction to the drama itself:

Welcome to the Cherokee Female Seminary in the late 1800s. You are a resident of Cherokee Nation, Indian Territory, out to enjoy a pleasant evening’s entertainment of music and storytelling on the grounds of the Seminary—the first school of higher learning for women west of the Mississippi River.18

Following this introduction is a description of each act and the characters therein. Concluding the description is the warning, “If you thought you were just an ordinary citizen, think again (you look an awful lot of like a member of the Doolin gang escaping from U.S. Marshalls!).”19 In a move that follows Brecht’s discouragement of passive audience members, this production broke representational conventions and involved the audience from the start.20 This direct implication of the audience as active participants in the evening’s fare, and not just detached observers, differentiated this production from the others I had witnessed.

This implication extended beyond the program as actors, costumed in period attire, began to appear on each side of the audience before the show began and engaged in conversation with the audience members, asking questions (in character) about where they had traveled from, why they came to the Cherokee Heritage Center, what they do for a living, etc. At this point it was clear to me that this outdoor historical drama was unlike any of the others I had encountered.


19 Ibid.

20 For more on Brecht’s call for critically engaged audience members, please see his piece, “Emphasis on Sport” where he suggests the smoking of cigars in the theatre as a means to detaching the audience (Brecht on Theatre, edited and translated By John Willet, 8). Brecht cites the “smoker’s theatre” and other methods of detachment in “The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre” as well (Willett 33-41).
After mingling with the audience for several minutes, the actors disappeared and a man dressed in contemporary clothing appeared on the porch of the general store directly in front of us. The Emcee began by addressing the audience in Cherokee. After a few bewildered looks amongst audience members, the Emcee taught the audience some words of greeting in Cherokee, such as “hello” and “how are you.” The Emcee then took several minutes to work with the audience in refining their new vocabulary, teasing some on their pronunciations. At this point, he proceeded to welcome us in both Cherokee and English and turned to humor in the form of contemporary Cherokee jokes (most of them at the expense of whites). S. Elizabeth Bird regards this type of humor as an enactment of increased agency on behalf of Native Americans, with which “they can wield that power to fight back.” Bird explains that “At the informal, interpersonal level, Indians have been doing that for years, creating a rich humor that plays on and subverts dominant stereotypes, mocking White attitudes, federal agencies, and so on.” As I looked around I saw most of the audience, which appeared to be a diverse mix of native and non-native members, laughing at the Emcee’s jokes, and I found myself laughing as well. The Emcee, Charles Foster, a Keetoowah Cherokee man, provided some background information and history to prepare the audience for the show. This use of a contemporary Cherokee man, dressed in contemporary attire, speaking in contemporary vernacular, and discussing both contemporary and historical culture, events, and figures addressed the issues of temporal dissonance I have discussed in earlier chapters. Audiences are reminded from the beginning of this performance that Native American cultures, in this particular case Cherokee, are not relics of the past now vanished, nor are they present-day people living in the ways of the past. The Emcee presented

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viewers with an example of a contemporary native man. Furthermore, the Emcee, along with the mingling instigated by the actors before the show, set the tone for the interactive, non-traditional performance that followed. Fourth-wall expectations were dispelled from the start, allowing audiences to open themselves to a new form of outdoor drama.

Following the Emcee’s introduction, Laurette Willis appeared onstage as Carrie Bushyhead, a graduate of and teacher at the Female Seminary. The entire first act revolved around Bushyhead’s recollections of the Trail of Tears, the establishment of the Female Seminary, and Stand Watie and his men’s involvement in the Civil War. Instead of approaching the history of the area and the figures therein through a traditional narrative arch, with events being depicted onstage, *Under the Cherokee Moon* takes a solo performance approach, in which the onstage figure recounts events and people from his or her own point of view. One of the first things Willis says as Bushyhead is that she is “escorting” the audience “back in time . . . a responsibility I do not take lightly.” In this moment, Willis acknowledges several things to the audience. First, she grounds the audience in the present (a notion reinforced by the inclusion of the Emcee at the beginning of each act), and acknowledges that through this production they would be re-visiting past events and figures through the eyes of the characters portrayed. Instead of becoming enraptured in the replication of past events, the audience remains aware of their place in the present, thus discouraging an Aristotelian-style of imitation and catharsis. Secondly, Willis, as Bushyhead, emphasizes that this is an act that has stakes and carries “responsibility,” communicating that the stories of the past are important. I interviewed Willis after seeing the show and she explained why she views this relaying of the past as a “responsibility”:

22 Laurette Willis, actor, *Under the Cherokee Moon*, by Laurette Willis, dir. Laurette Willis, Cherokee Heritage Center, 24 September 2011.
[W]e’re focused on something greater than ourselves. And that’s what this show is about. It’s relating that it’s not just entertainment. People think maybe they come out for, oh some fun, something a little different, but its edu-tainment, I guess you could say. It’s education, but like I said, the show was just the beginning of the matter, not the end of it.23

Willis hopes that through their portrayal of historical figures and relaying of history through their stories, audience members will feel compelled to investigate the histories further, which is why she sees the show as “just the beginning.”

During the course of the first act, Willis not only orally relays Bushyhead’s account of Cherokee history and culture, but she also embodies it through demonstrations, much like one would find at a living history museum. In this case, Willis cards wool, explaining the process and purpose, and shows how the wool is then spun on a wheel. This demonstration helps keep the audience engaged visually, in addition to listening to the stories told by Bushyhead.

Part way through the act, Willis switches characters from Bushyhead to Sarah Worcester, another instructor at the Female Seminary. This process of change is not, however, hidden from the audience through a backstage costume change. Instead, Willis removes Bushyhead’s glasses and dons some of Worcester’s accoutrement while singing “Amazing Grace.” This musical refrain is used repeatedly throughout the show, as a theatrical transporting device which allows the characters, and at times the audience, to transfer to different times and transform into different identities. At the end of her musical refrain, Willis’ physicality and vocality have changed before the audience’s eyes. By exposing the audience to this transformation, Willis allows for a meta-theatricality, calling attention to the mechanics of theatre and acting, and

23 Laurette Willis, personal interview, 22 September 2011.
reminding audiences that they are viewing constructions that approximate these historical figures, but that aren’t 100% replications. I asked Willis about her process in developing her characters and how she made decisions about the differences in Bushyhead and Worcester. Willis replied that she establishes a sense of the “weight” of the person through the research she conducts on the figures. On any of the characters she creates, Willis goes through rigorous research to find pieces written by or about the person, as well as photographs. She fills in the gaps with her own sense of the figure, which is partly based on her extensive research into other accounts of events and people. For instance, in the case of Bushyhead and Worcester, there are no remnants of things they had written. Willis had to rely on other written accounts of the women, but in order to create the character she depended on “other journal entries of people who were Trail of Tears survivors and piecing things together of what life was like at the Cherokee Female Seminary.”\(^\text{24}\) In terms of her performance choices for each character, Willis gets a sense of the weight of the character based on what she knows of their experiences and relationships, and begins to construct the physical and vocal presence of the character. She views Bushyhead as having a “weight to her,” due in part to her father’s role as a judge and her brother’s role as a chief. Willis describes Bushyhead as “someone who by her ancestry and by her bearing held a lot of weight both physically . . . and metaphorically . . . so when I walk as her I feel this bearing, I feel this certain way that she carries herself.”\(^\text{25}\) In contrast, Willis sees a vulnerability and idealism to Worcester, and thus decided on a lighter physicality and airier voice for the character. In performing these different characters, Willis creates a palimpsest effect. Willis layers these two characters on top of each other, as well as on top of herself, in such a way that vestiges of

\(^{24}\) Laurette Willis, personal interview, 22 September 2011.

\(^{25}\) Ibid.
each persona show through in the performance. This effect is exemplified when Willis, as Bushyhead, says “Let me show you what I mean” as she is telling the audience about Worcester, thus signaling her transformation into the other character. The audience thereby understands the layering of Worcester as an interpretation by Bushyhead, all while recognizing that both are constructs by Willis. The exposed constructedness of this production, in my estimation, does not make it questionable as a history lesson. Instead, it suggests that history itself is a construct and opens a space from which multiple perspectives and interpretations of the past can emerge.

Whether intentional or not, this approach may be read as postmodern in its view of history. Linda Hutcheon, in her own study on postmodernism, claims that many postmodern works “openly assert that there are only truths in the plural, and never one Truth; and there is rarely a falseness per se, just others’ truths. Fiction and history are narratives distinguished by their frames.”

26 Unlike other outdoor dramas, which suggest an objective view of past events as they happened and figures as they were, Under the Cherokee Moon through its meta-theatrical awareness and digression from realistic convention suggest that there are multiple perspectives to history and thus multiple “truths.” In many ways, this frees the producers of Under the Cherokee Moon from the impossible onus of being 100% accurate, whereas other producers are unable to escape debates over accuracy because of their representational style. This freedom does not mean that Willis creates her material without any sort of support. Willis explained that when she pieces together the puzzles of the past to make a show, she conducts a significant amount of research on which she bases the stories her characters are telling. The scripts she has produced for the Cherokee Heritage Center must be submitted to historians and Board members before being approved. Willis noted that when she submits her scripts “they go over them with a fine-
tooth comb and they’re submitted to historians.” Furthermore, she sometimes has to obtain permission from the Principal Chief or Tribal Elders in order to depict certain aspects of Cherokee culture. Such was the case during Under the Cherokee Moon—Chota when she wanted to incorporate a war dance. After gaining permission, Willis was able to consult local Cherokee in staging the dance, thus tapping into repertoire-based knowledge in addition to the archive. Willis also explained that she tries to use a historical figure’s own words as much as possible and in the scripts she gives her actors any words actually attributed to the character are written in blue. Furthermore, she includes a bibliography of the sources she consulted along with the script. So, although the script recognizes the constructed nature of history, Willis holds herself accountable for creating productions that are supported by archival accounts of the past. As she puts it, “I look for the hook. I take what is the history that we know and what is it that we don’t know. How can we make what we don’t know come to life by what we do know?”

Willis’ approach also allows for the audience to have an active role in re-living and portraying the past. In addition to the breaking of the fourth wall by the actors’ pre-show interaction with the audience and the Emcee’s dialogue with the audience, actors ask for audience volunteers during the performances. The first time this occurs is after Worcester has transformed back into Bushyhead during “Amazing Grace.” Once the transformation is complete, Bushyhead asks for volunteers to try walking with a book on their heads in order to instruct them on good posture. In this case, not only do the actors get to break the fourth wall, but so do audience members who approach the stage. This type of audience participation is invoked later in the play when the actor playing Will Rogers asks for volunteers to try twirling a

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27 Laurette Willis, personal interview, 22 September 2011.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid.
rope. In these cases, audiences become physically active in creating the performance instead of passively consuming it. Thus, the play does not become about a white audience experiencing an Aristotelian sense of catharsis. Furthermore, by relaying history and culture not just through words and demonstrations, but also through audience participation, that knowledge becomes embodied in the audience, as in the cases of the book balancing and the rope twirling.

The second act is similar to the first in that it features actors portraying characters who discuss their own histories, as well as the history of the area, in addition to audience interaction and demonstrations. In the case of the second act, however, there are more characters, including Ned Christie, Will Rogers, Zeke Proctor, Captain John C. West, and Belle Starr. While Willis portrays Starr, four additional actors perform the other roles. The characters do not merely approach the stage, perform their monologue, and exit while another actor enters. Rather, Willis has woven these characters together in such a way that they both monologue and dialogue. She has found and created connections between the characters by looking for links between their lives. For instance, in her research she came across Captain John C. West, who was a member of the Cherokee Light Horse (U.S. Indian Police). As she continued to dig for information about him, she found WPA narratives from the 1930s, in which West’s son was interviewed. It was through that source that she discovered Captain West’s brother, Deputy Marshall Franklin West, died at the hand of Sam Starr, Belle Starr’s second husband. Through this connection she was able to piece the characters of Captain West and Belle Starr together and allowed them to dialogue together onstage. These types of connections allow Willis to bring a plurality of voices together in interesting ways—not just through the characters’ interactions, but through the actor’s interactions as well. Willis explained that the actor who played Captain West, Joe Weavel, was raised by his grandparents whose siblings were born in the 1880s. Willis noted that
“he has this tie to the 1800s or a feel for it, like no one I’ve ever personally met before,” in describing Weavel’s connection to the time period being portrayed in the show. The plurality of voices in this production once again allows for a multitude of historical “truths.” Taking up again Hutcheon’s views on postmodern works, Hutcheon avers that they can “also challenge narrative singularity and unity in the name of multiplicity and disparity.”

The tapestry of voices that Willis presents the audience challenges “narrative singularity” by presenting native and non-native voices from various backgrounds. In addition, by making these figures individuals and using a character-driven rather than a plot-driven format, there are no stereotyped characters such as the Noble Savage or General Indian in this production. Each Cherokee character has his own individual story to tell.

Disparity between the voices performed onstage is not something that is emphasized, but the script does call attention to disparity between the different historical accounts of each of these historical figures. For instance, Belle Starr tells the audience an anecdote and follows it by saying “and that’s just one of the things they say about me.” Other characters declare similar statements, such as “if you like that story, you should hear what else they say.” These lines highlight not only a postmodern view of multiple perceptions of history, but also particularities of native perceptions of history as articulated by Peter Nabakov. He contends that

When a Navajo storyteller starts his account with “The way I heard it was…,” as Luci Tapahonso explains, his variant “doesn’t discount other versions, but rather adds to the body of knowledge being exchanged.” It is the innately democratic virtue of much oral tradition that its multiple versions “enrich the listener’s experience,” in Tapahonso’s words, and do so by providing cross-referencing

30 Hutcheon 90.
native glosses and commentaries that are themselves underlain with
complementary fragments or competing claims.\textsuperscript{31}

The voices that Willis incorporates into \textit{Under the Cherokee Moon} don’t discount each other, but
rather they build upon the history and culture being depicted in the show. They cross-reference
each other in the ways that the characters dialogue with each other and reference back to each
other in their individual monologues. This intertextuality of voices both complement and
contradict each other and what other histories and legends have proclaimed as “Truth.” The
result is a pluralistic account of the history of the area, the experiences of the individuals therein,
and the culture of the Cherokees that “enriches the listener’s experience.” An authenticity
emerges in this case that is based in the lived experience of the characters portrayed and the
actors who grew up in the area and within Cherokee culture.

The audience also experiences this authenticity in the ways they experience the show.
The cast of \textit{Under the Cherokee Moon} enriches the audience’s experiences further by implicating
them in the histories about which they tell. As in the case of the program, individuals in the
audience become members of outlaw gangs, such as Bill Doolin, Rose of Cimmaron, and Cattle
Annie, when they are pointed out by Belle Starr. Zeke Proctor treats the audience as fellow
members of the Cherokee tribe. Willis revealed to me that she has the actors stand in the back
and take note of which audience members are being referenced as historical figures, such as one
of the Daltons, so that another actor can reference the same audience member as such in his own
monologue. In this way, the audience is not treated as an observer invisible to the characters
onstage, but rather they are treated as a member of the characters’ communities. They are thus

\textsuperscript{31} Peter Nabakov, \textit{A Forest of Time: American Indian Ways of History} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
engaged in the history being presented. Willis explains why this implication of the audience is important to her:

> By seeing the history brought to life in this way, the audience is connected to it, they’re not divorced from it. Also it *forces* them, and force is almost too hard a word, it *challenges* them, I’d say it challenges them to think. And to feel and to be a part and to ask what would I have done in this situation? We’re so used to the techno-sphere and seeing things on television or on the internet where we’re divorced from it. But *here*, you’re a part of it.\(^{32}\)

Once again, we hear echoes of Brecht in Willis’ desire to challenge the audience to think and consider their own actions. For Willis, involving the audience in this way encourages empathy on behalf of audience members without resorting to catharsis. And because she believes that “history repeats itself and certain patterns throughout history have been played out,” this empathy is a valuable trait for people to have.\(^{33}\)

Assigning roles to audience members in this historical drama has another interesting effect on the production. The act of displacing different identities onto the audience members absolves the producers from having to worry about differentiating cast members as “white” and “Indian.” Because of the non-realistic style of the show already established, audience members understand and “buy” who they are portraying at any given moment because of the designation articulated by the characters in their lines. When Zeke Proctor addresses the audience as “fellow Cherokee,” we buy it because we understand identity transformation to be a convention of this production, in large part because of the transformation we see between Bushyhead and Worcester in the first act. The audience has been prepared for the identity transformations

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\(^{32}\) Laurette Willis, personal interview, 22 September 2011.

\(^{33}\) Ibid.
placed on them in the second act. The acceptance and fluidity of this identity transformation convention eradicates the need for anyone to appear in red makeup and black wigs. Actors and audience members try on different identities without having to manifest any stereotyped physical attributes. Willis also discourages the assumption of certain physical appearances for Native Americans in her script by subtly revealing details about her characters’ backgrounds, specifically Carrie Bushyhead. As Bushyhead, Willis, who appears white, talks about both her Cherokee and Scottish ancestry. Willis admits that she includes this “in case people say, ‘she didn’t look Cherokee.’”

The actors who play Ned Christie, Zeke Proctor, and Captain John C. West are all of various tribal lineages including Cherokee, Osage/Choctaw, and Creek, and all subvert the notion that Native Americans have a uniform look with their various physical traits. Willis points out that one of the actors, Joe Weavel is five-eighths Cherokee, and yet has blond hair and blue eyes, citing his looks as a testament to the variety of physical traits in native cultures. By focusing on individuals’ stories in this drama, and through the device of identity transformation, the need for a uniform “General Indian” look is eliminated. The script speaks to the idiosyncrasies of individuals and undermines the stereotyped, stock image of the Indian that is presented in many other outdoor dramas. The agency of audience expectations in many ways dictates the GI in other historical dramas, but the smaller scale and audience relieves Under the Cherokee Moon of some of that pressure.

At the end of the show, Carrie Bushyhead returns to the general store porch and invites the audience to “journey back to the modern world.” Once again, “Amazing Grace” is used as a teleportation device, and this time the audience is asked to join in the singing as they, and the lessons they learned travel back to 2011. Willis chose Carrie Bushyhead as the character that accompanies the audience as they travel back and forth through time because she is the teacher.

34 Ibid.
As a result, in Willis’ conception, it is fitting that Bushyhead leads the audience through this journey of “edu-tainment.”

In addition to the theoretical issues this production addresses, there are many practical considerations of *Under the Cherokee Moon* that can be potentially beneficial to other outdoor dramas. First, the use of a smaller location can significantly lower operating costs. Susan Phillips insists that producers of outdoor dramas have to figure out how to do “more for less. . . I think that’s a really big factor.”

*Under the Cherokee Moon* may be looked to as an example of this mantra. By having the show in a more intimate setting, the producers did not need to worry about paying for the sound, lighting, and electrical systems involved in staging a production, nor did they need to worry about spending as much money on paying the large number of employees needed to staff a larger venue. Furthermore, because the production was much smaller in scale and did not rely on large spectacles such as battle scenes, pyrotechnics, large casts, choreography, large set pieces, etc., the production budget did not need as much allocation for costumes, supplies, props, employee wages, designers, choreographers, etc. The small-scale, intimate feel of both the space and the style of production poses less financial strain than other outdoor historical dramas, while still maintaining an entertaining and educational representation of history and culture.

Hutcheon considers one characteristic of many postmodern works to be the refusal to “hide their interpretative and narrating acts behind the third-person voice of objectivity that is so common to both historical and literary critical writing.” In other words, traditionally those who pen history have tried to cover their own biases and perspectives with a mask of objectivity.

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36 Hutcheon 91.
Oftentimes, in the way history is written, it ignores the considerations of the context, intentionality, the parties that produced and received the statements, etc. According to Hutcheon,

In the postmodern writing of history . . . there is a deliberate contamination of the historical with didactic and situational discursive elements, thereby challenging the implied assumptions of historical statements: objectivity, neutrality, impersonality, and transparency of representation.37

As noted in previous chapters, outdoor dramas have traditionally adopted a mask of objectivity. The storylines of most of the dramas only allow for one view of the events depicted, selected and styled by the playwright. Program notes often advertise the historical nature of the piece, and often laud the expertise of the playwright. In addition, the presence of extraneous historical sites such as the Oconoluftee Village, the museum at Tecumseh!, and the site of the Gnadenhutten massacre all lend a sense of accuracy and historical authority to the productions. Furthermore, the representational format of the productions suggest an objective replication of events as they happened, rather than calling attention to the performative nature and constructedness of the presentation. In many ways, exposing the multiple perspectives and lack of objectivity, as the performances treated in this chapter successfully do, can be a risk. Producers of outdoor historical dramas risk a loss of authority over the material and control over the productions and representations therein if they expose the subjectivity, polyvocality, and uncertainties in the historical narratives they have touted for decades. This loss of authority can potentially mean criticism and even closure, like in the case of Blue Jacket. To protect themselves from such risks, these productions have labored to buttress their authority beneath a veneer of accuracy, historical rigor, and a seamless, corroborated narrative of agreement.

37 Hutcheon 92.
Under the Cherokee Moon, on the other hand, does not try to hide behind a mask of objectivity. Instead, it challenges the audience’s implied assumptions of history by gleaning the past from a chorus of voices who acknowledge the multiple “truths” that exist concerning their personas and places in history. Furthermore, representation is rendered transparent due to the transformation of identities employed in the play.

The production’s approach to history also sets it apart from other outdoor historical dramas in that it does not try to replicate past events. Hutcheon argues that in postmodern considerations of history, “the meaning and shape are not in the events.” She contends that instead such meanings are “in the systems which make those past ‘events’ into present historical ‘facts.’” Hutcheon considers this “an acknowledgement of the meaning-making function of human constructs.” Whereas other outdoor dramas such as Tecumseh! and Blue Jacket are concerned with depicting historical events such as battles, deaths, treaty negotiations, etc., and constructing and performing history through those enactments, Under the Cherokee Moon is concerned with the accounts that construct histories and make meaning of events. For instance, the audience is not shown a scene from the Trail of Tears in Under the Cherokee Moon, like they are with Unto These Hills…A Retelling. Instead the characters’ narratives reveal information about the event. Because we watch different accounts, and because within each of those accounts the characters acknowledge that others’ have different stories, the audience sees how the narratives surrounding the event have been constructed and given meaning through historical record. Through her research, Willis constructed the descriptions of the event she relays as Bushyhead. Therefore, what the audience receives is a network of accounts that demonstrate how individuals perceived the Trail of Tears, rather than a re-enactment of the event itself. This

38 Hutcheon 89.
39 Ibid.
maneuvering eschews complete objectivity while acknowledging that 100% accuracy is not possible. It is important to reiterate, however, that Willis does not view this as license to completely disregard the notion of accuracy. She stresses that “The history is the foundation of what we do. And we build from there. Because if it is not historically accurate, it reflects poorly on the heritage center.” Willis recognizes that inaccuracies have the potential to be harmful, so she continues to strive for accuracy as much as possible. She also recognizes through her script that historical “truths” are subjective. Willis’ approach to sharing Cherokee history and culture relies upon repertoire-based knowledge transmission and indigenous notions of history to effectively “edu-tain” her audiences.

The idea of connections is one that has been in the discourse surrounding outdoor historical drama since the beginning. The early practitioners of outdoor drama stressed the importance of having a connection to the surrounding community. In our discussion, Herbert Friedman, one of the founders of Tecumseh! stressed that you can’t start an outdoor drama without “a strong financial base. And believers. You need the public.” Each outdoor drama I researched was connected to a sense of community in one way or another. Both Greg Bergman and Danny Mangan expressed the close connection Blue Jacket had with the community of Xenia. At Tecumseh!, there seems to be a strong sense of community within the cast and crew of the show. The return rate for staff is high, and Maureen Yasko explained why the return rate, in her eyes, is so strong; “This is a very spiritual, welcoming place. The story is really unlike any other. It’s a very powerful story, but there’s something about the mountain; also, the family that

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40 Laurette Willis, personal interview, 22 September 2011.

41 Herbert Friedman, personal interview, 13 July 2011.
is created here and the warmth that is created here." Other staff members agreed with Yasko and added that they feel appreciated, that they are given opportunities for artistic growth, and that there is great amount of faith in each other and the show, all of which contributes to the strong sense of community amongst the producers of Tecumseh! From many of my conversations with individuals associated with the drama in Cherokee, North Carolina, I learned that there has been an increased sense of community in the Cherokee people surrounding the show. John Tissue discussed how, although support dwindled during the first few years of changes to the drama, the Cherokee community has begun to connect with the drama and support it again. Tissue described the connection that garnered, in his estimation, the greatest amount of community support:

[W]e started putting community volunteers like community clubs and stuff, using them as ushers and concessionaires and if the community club . . . spent a week with us, at ten people there for a week, we’d give them a thousand dollars for their club . . . I think that helped get some people up there that wouldn’t come see it, and started getting more buy-in and giving back to the community.43

It seems that community support, though it may be construed in different manners is important to outdoor historical dramas. The connection and community that I sensed at Under the Cherokee Moon was slightly different than those described above. In their guide book on historical dramas, Christian Moe, Scott J. Parker, and George McCalmon maintain,

Without an audience . . . we cannot have a dramatic experience: it is created solely in and by us when we gather to rediscover common hopes and to share a

42 Maureen Yasko, personal group interview, 22 June 2011.

common self-discovery. When we as an audience respond, the power of the communal experience is felt.\textsuperscript{44} The sense of community that emerges from \textit{Under the Cherokee Moon} is one that is shared between the actors and the audience, as well as amongst the audience members. I believe that this connection between the actors and the audience and between the audience members is a result of the intimate setting and style of the production, as well as the audience participation that is encouraged. As I watched my fellow audience members during the show, I noticed they looked to be engaged through their responses. During the Emcee's pre-show, the audience seemed quiet and hesitant to reply to his inquiries and jokes. After the intermission, however, when the Emcee opened the second act, the audience seemed much more relaxed and I heard audience members offer many more replies to the Emcee’s questions. During the intermission itself, I went to the vending machines to get a snack. While in line, I noticed strangers introducing themselves to each other and engaging in conversation about the show, their hometowns, why they were visiting Oklahoma, etc. When my vending machine purchase got stuck, four people immediately came to my aid to help me retrieve my snack. When I sat back down in my seat, the people in front of me turned around and started asking me about myself and invited me to join them since I was alone. Never before have I ever experienced such a friendly, communal feeling while attending a show. The audience seemed to be responding to the production, and thus, I felt a communal experience because of it.

Perhaps the sense of community I perceived at \textit{Under the Cherokee Moon} manifested because of the audience interaction and intimate feeling. Perhaps aiding in that creation is also the driving force behind Willis’ work. Willis shared with me that service to others is what motivates her to perform. She contends,

\textsuperscript{44} Moe, et al 8.
And that’s what it’s supposed to do. I mean, if it doesn’t add to their life in some way, then why bother? You know life is too precious to waste it on just some titillation, or to numb people, or shock them. But to add to their life, and what better way than to show them the history from whence we came so that they say, “wow, what would I have done if I had been there.”

Willis sees performing as a way to serve others by exposing them to history and getting them to critically engage in that history. In our conversation she shared her personal motto; “I want the audience to leave our presence feeling fuller on the inside than when they came in,” and explains that when the connections between the audience and the actors occur, the experience becomes “something we shared together.” Willis hopes to give audiences an authentic experience when they attend the show. She also raised some difficult questions in terms of what motivates other outdoor historical dramas, including, “Maybe we have to ask what is the bottom line? Is the bottom line money? Is it sharing a message to go on beyond us? What is the reason we’re doing it?” These questions speak to Waggoner’s words that I referenced at the beginning of this chapter. That is, change is necessary for outdoor historical dramas to survive, even if that means producers have to revise the mission of the production. Waggoner advises,

[E]mbrace the change and recognize that maybe you need to do something else. And it still can be outdoor drama, it just, it may not be exactly what you did, the way you did it. And sometimes if it’s still working, don’t change. . . . The other part is, and this is the pill that nobody likes to swallow, I certainly don’t, sometimes there’s nothing you can do. . . . In other words, what I’m saying,

45 Laurette Willis, personal interview, 22 September 2011.

46 Ibid.

47 Ibid.
sometimes the paradigm shifts so radically that you can only do your best, you can only try.\textsuperscript{48}

For many outdoor historical dramas, the outdated, harmful, and negative representations of Native American cultures need to be remedied. In Tahlequah, Oklahoma, after years of struggle over various attempts at changing the show there, the Cherokee Heritage Center looked to do something else. \textit{Under the Cherokee Moon} is still an outdoor historical drama, it is just not exactly what they did or the way they did it previously. Nor was it what I expected or had grown accustomed to in my research. \textit{Under the Cherokee Moon} provides alternative modes of representation to the depictions presented in other outdoor historical dramas. By ditching the Aristotelian-based, plot-driven, representational format traditionally uses by outdoor dramas, \textit{Under the Cherokee Moon} is able to adopt a meta-theatrical style that encourages views of history that allow for a plethora of voices, the transmission of embodied knowledge to audience members, and individual depictions of Native Americans. It is my hope that other dramas follow the new directions established by \textit{Under the Cherokee Moon}.

\textsuperscript{48} Marion Waggoner, personal interview, 19 July 2011.
CONCLUSION

“Who owns history? Everyone and no one—which is why the study of the past is a constantly evolving, never-ending journey of discovery.”

Eric Foner

I learned recently that the Cherokee Heritage Center in Tahlequah has ceased production of Under the Cherokee Moon. I am disappointed in the news that the show in which I invested much hope for the outdoor historical drama genre was not able to continue past its 2011 season due to budgetary constraints. When I originally set out on this project, I hoped I would somehow, through research and analysis, concoct brilliant suggestions on how to “save” this declining genre. The outdoor historical drama seems to be vanishing like the Indian figure so many of them perpetuate in their performances. The mention of this stereotype prompts the question; are outdoor historical dramas worth saving?

Over the course of this document, I have wrestled and struggled with many of the issues that emerge from outdoor historical dramas. These issues have included stereotyped images such as the Noble Savage, Savage Indian, Vanishing Indian, and General Indian; the Aristotelian-based use of catharsis that serves the audience and yet fails to instigate action; the suggestion of historical accuracy; differing views of authenticity on behalf of audiences, producers, and Native Americans; the privileging of the archive over the repertoire as a source of information; and the implications of “playing” Indian. These issues affect how Native Americans are represented on these outdoor stages. I fear that as attendance numbers decline, producers will give in to

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audience expectations of “the Indian,” rather than take risks by changing the depictions presented. Instead of re-programming the perceptions held by older audience members who desire the outdoor drama they saw as a child fifty or more years ago, producers will continue to feed them easily consumable images that perpetuate negative and harmful messages about Indians because the older crowd is regarded as the genre’s “bread and butter.” Furthermore, as these older audiences bring their grandchildren to the productions, younger generations are being indoctrinated with these inaccurate portrayals. The stakes almost seem too high and the risk too great.

But there is also hope. Though I have not seen it yet, Larissa Fasthorse’s new show in Cherokee, *Cherokee Family Reunion* promises to succeed in attracting new audiences and combat some of the preconceived notions of non-native audience members. Its comedic approach and direct grappling with issues of family, tradition, heritage, and identity may provide a new and fresh take on the genre. Additionally, because the play focuses on a family that is creating a historical play, the notion of history as a subjective construction is brought to light. By featuring contemporary Cherokee characters, the drama hopefully also disrupts the temporal dissonance that regards Indians as relics of the past.

Furthermore, I find the changes to other productions such as *Unto These Hills* promising in the effort to rectify the harmful representations that have been propagated in these dramas. My conversations with several producers at *Tecumseh!* also demonstrated that many of them are concerned with the treatment of Native Americans in their drama and ways they can continue to reach out to and learn from Shawnee about their culture and history.

Should outdoor historical dramas continue? Yes. For me, the bottom line is that despite the problems in representations, outdoor historical dramas can be a viable form of “edu-
tainment” as Laurette Willis calls it. Not only can dramas expose audiences to the past, but they can also critically engage audiences in the ways that historical narratives are constructed. The dramas can also introduce audiences to cultures they have never before encountered.

Freddie Rokem, in *Performing History: Theatrical Representations of the Past in Contemporary Theatre*, suggests that post-World War II theatre, especially that which presents historical material, possesses “restorative energies”:

> in the sense of recreating something which has been irretrievably lost and attempting, at least on the imaginative level and in many cases also on the intellectual and emotional levels, to restore that loss. These creative attempts aim at overcoming the destructive energies without necessarily becoming . . . a direct process of mourning for that loss.

While Rokem’s study focuses on plays that depict the French Revolution and the Holocaust, I believe that his idea of “restorative energies” may be applied to the outdoor historical dramas I have addressed. The idea of retrieving a loss is one that I feel is illustrated in *Unto These Hills* and *Under the Cherokee Moon*. In both of these cases, the audience is left with an image of the survival of the Cherokee, despite the horrific loss experienced on the Trail of Tears. *Unto These Hills* does this by staging a parade of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Cherokee leaders and their accomplishments, including athletes, actors, political leaders, tribal leaders, etc. at the end of the play. The final scene of the play is a celebration of the return of Junaluska, who had been forced west on the Trail of Tears. This scene can be read as emblematic of the survival of the Cherokee in North Carolina and the present-day strength of the Eastern Band of Cherokee.

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In *Under the Cherokee Moon*, each character exhibits their strength despite loss, whether that is of loved ones, agency, rights, etc. The characters are able to work through their loss in their conversations with the audience. As noted in Chapter Four, the play also presents audiences with contemporary Cherokee, thus reminding audiences of the survival and strength of the Cherokee Nation. Both of these productions are testaments to the survival of the Cherokee after the loss experienced on the Trail of Tears and other atrocities. Each production also speaks to the retrieval of agency on behalf of the Cherokee. For decades, whites had controlled the representations of Cherokee culture in each area, but the Eastern Band of Cherokee and Cherokee Nation each retrieved authority over the depictions within the last fifteen years. In this sense, the restorative energies of the theatres at each site have creatively overcome the destructive energies that tainted the images of their cultures.

I believe that all of the dramas I witnessed have the potential to employ such restorative energies to create performances that provide edu-tainment to audiences. In spite of the various issues I have addressed in this project, I view the performances in outdoor dramas as embodied practices that have the power to critically engage audiences. The subject of representation is difficult, sensitive, complex, and significant, especially to those whose cultures are depicted. I realize that in many ways I have presented more questions than answers. Like history itself, though, these issues are unresolved and unable to be resolved. It is in this unstable space, however, that conversations about such quandaries and complexities can continue to emerge and develop. I hope that others will find themselves in the same space and will continue to grapple with these unresolvable, but nonetheless important, issues.

*I remember the excitement I felt when I sat down to watch the first show of my research journey, Unto These Hills. I remember my disappointment each time I saw a half-full house at*
an outdoor historical drama. I remember my shock at some of the representations I witnessed. I remember how welcoming the cast of Tecumseh! was and I remember how hungry they were for connections with each other, the material, and opportunities to learn more. I remember the concern and stress that marked many of the producers’ faces as they spoke of the challenges facing their productions. I remember the excitement and renewed energy I felt when witnessing Under the Cherokee Moon.

As I look back at my journey through this topic, I find myself in an unresolved place. I thought I would emerge from this process with stable notions of “right” and “wrong” performance practices. Instead, I find myself feeling nostalgic for the shows I watched and the people with whom I spoke. This sense of nostalgia layers itself upon my lingering nostalgia for the viewing experiences I had as a child. On one hand, I feel guilt for this longing. On the other hand, I realize that it is this nostalgia that led me to this project and my discoveries therein. I hope that this nostalgia will continue to propel me into journeys of (re)membering, (re)evaluating, and (re)searching those images and practices that shape our perspectives.
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APPENDIX A: IMAGES

Figure 1: Schoenbrunn Amphitheatre—site of *Trumpet in the Land* and *The White Savage* (All photos by Heidi L. Nees).

Figure 2: Schoenbrunn Amphitheatre.
Figure 3: Mountainside Theatre—site of Unto These Hills.

Figure 4: Unto These Hills . . . A Retelling. Kanati the Great Hunter and Selu the Corn Mother act as narrators, introducing the audience to Cherokee history and culture.
Figure 5: Sugarloaf Mountain Amphitheatre—site of Tecumseh!

Figure 6: The General Store at Adam’s Corner Rural Village—site of Under the Cherokee Moon.

Note the contrast in venues. As I discuss in Chapter Five, Under the Cherokee Moon took a new approach to conventional staging practices in outdoor drama by eschewing the large amphitheatre for a more intimate space.
June 3, 2011

TO: Heidi Nees
THEA

FROM: Hillary Harms, Ph.D.
HSRB Administrator

RE: HSRB Project No.: H11D249GE7

TITLE: Representations of Native Americans in Contemporary Outdoor Dramas

You have met the conditions for approval for your project involving human subjects. As of June 3, 2011, your project has been granted final approval by the Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB). This approval expires on May 2, 2012. You may proceed with subject recruitment and data collection.

The final approved version of the consent document(s) is attached. Consistent with federal OHRP guidance to IRBs, the consent document(s) bearing the HSRB approval/expiration date stamp is the only valid version and you must use copies of the date-stamped document(s) in obtaining consent from research subjects.

You are responsible to conduct the study as approved by the HSRB and to use only approved forms. If you seek to make any changes in your project activities or procedures, send a request for modifications to the HSRB via this office. Those changes must be approved by the HSRB prior to their implementation.

You have been approved to enroll 100 participants. If you want to enroll additional participants you must seek approval from the HSRB.

Good luck with your work. Let me know if this office or the HSRB can be of assistance as your project proceeds.

Comments/Modifications:

C: Dr. Scott Magelssen
Research Category: EXPEDITED #7
Informed Consent

My name is Heidi L. Nees and I am a doctoral student in the Department of Theatre and Film at Bowling Green State University. I am conducting interviews with several people who are involved with outdoor historical dramas as part of my research for my dissertation, which focuses on the representations of Native Americans in outdoor historical dramas. My advisor for this project is Dr. Scott Magelssen, who is a member of the Bowling Green State University faculty. It is because of your experience with outdoor historical dramas that I would like to interview you about this topic.

The purpose in conducting this research is to gain insight on any recent changes that have been made to outdoor historical dramas; in particular, changes in depictions of Native American characters. I hope that this study will be beneficial in raising awareness regarding how populations, as well as, their cultures and histories are depicted in performance. There are no direct benefits in terms of monetary award, raffle, prizes, etc. to you as the interviewee.

The interview will consist of a series of questions that inquire about your thoughts on outdoor historical dramas, your experience with and involvement in these productions, your perceptions regarding any changes that have been made to the productions, and your thoughts on how Native American characters are represented in these dramas. The interview will consist of one session, which should last between one and two hours. In addition, I will be audio-recording the interview for my records.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time. You may decide to skip questions or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. Deciding to participate or not will not affect your relationship with Bowling Green State University. I have notified the production company and obtained permission to conduct interviews with production participants.

Your responses in this interview may be used in my dissertation. If you prefer that your name not be attached to your statements, please state that preference below. Please note that the name of the production with which you are associated may still be attached to your responses.

There are no foreseeable risks involved in this project. By signing this form you acknowledge that you are at least 18 years old.

You will receive a copy of this Informed Consent Form. Please feel free to contact myself or my advisor if you have any questions regarding my research and/or your participation in my research. You may also contact the Chair, Human Subjects Review Board at 419-372-7716 or hsr@cogs.gmu.edu, if you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research.

Heidi L. Nees
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130 E. Washington St. #8
Bowling Green, OH 43402
310-429-4288

Dr. Scott Magelssen (advisor)
magelss@bgsu.edu
Department of Theatre & Film, 338 South Hall
Bowling Green, OH 43403-0180
419-372-9367

(Continues on back)
Thank you for your time and assistance in this project. I look forward to talking with you about your experiences with outdoor historical dramas.

I have been informed of the purposes, procedures, risks and benefits of this study. I have had the opportunity to have all my questions answered and I have been informed that my participation is completely voluntary. I agree to participate in this research.

_________________________________________
Participant Signature

Additional comments: ____________________________________________________________

_________________________________________
Thank you for your submission of Continuing Review/Progress Report materials for this project. The Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a project design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

The final approved version of the consent document(s) is available as a published Board Document in the Review Details page. You must use the approved version of the consent document when obtaining consent from participants. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that you are responsible to conduct the study as approved by the HSRB. If you seek to make any changes in your project activities or procedures, those modifications must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the modification request form for this procedure.

You have been approved to enroll 100 participants. If you wish to enroll additional participants you must seek approval from the HSRB.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office. All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must also be reported promptly to this office.

This approval expires on May 2, 2013. You will receive a continuing review notice before your project expires. If you wish to continue your work after the expiration date, your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date.

Good luck with your work. If you have any questions, please contact the Office of Research Compliance at 419-372-7716 or hsrb@bgsu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence regarding this project.
This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Bowling Green State University Human Subjects Review Board's records.
Informed Consent

My name is Heidi L. Nees and I am a doctoral student in the Department of Theatre and Film at Bowling Green State University. I am conducting interviews with several people who are involved with outdoor historical dramas as part of my research for my dissertation, which focuses on the representations of Native Americans in outdoor historical dramas. My advisor for this project is Dr. Scott Magelssen, who is a member of the Bowling Green State University faculty. It is because of your experience with outdoor historical dramas that I would like to interview you about this topic.

The purpose in conducting this research is to gain insight on any recent changes that have been made to outdoor historical dramas; in particular, changes in depictions of Native American characters. I hope that this study will be beneficial in raising awareness regarding how populations, as well as, their cultures and histories are depicted in performance. There are no direct benefits in terms of monetary award, raffle, prizes, etc. to you as the interviewee.

The interview will consist of a series of questions that inquire about your thoughts on outdoor historical dramas, your experience with and involvement in these productions, your perceptions regarding any changes that have been made to the productions, and your thoughts on how Native American characters are represented in these dramas. The interview will consist of one session, which should last between one and two hours. In addition, I will be audio-recording the interview for my records.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any time. You may decide to skip questions or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. Deciding to participate or not will not affect your relationship with Bowling Green State University. I have notified the production company and obtained permission to conduct the interview.

Your responses in this interview may be used in my dissertation. If you prefer that your name not be attached to your statements, please state that preference below. Please note that the name of the production with which you are associated may still be attached to your responses.

There are no foreseeable risks involved in this project. By signing this form you acknowledge that you are at least 18 years old.

You will receive a copy of this Informed Consent Form. Please feel free to contact myself or my advisor if you have any questions regarding my research and/or your participation in my research. You may also contact the Chair, Human Subjects Review Board at 419-372-7716 or hsr@bgsu.edu, if you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research.

Heidi L. Nees  
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310-429-4288  

Dr. Scott Magelssen (advisor)  
magelss@bgsu.edu  
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Bowling Green, OH 43403-0180  
419-372-9367  

(Continues on back)
Thank you for your time and assistance in this project. I look forward to talking with you about your experiences with outdoor historical dramas!

I have been informed of the purposes, procedures, risks and benefits of this study. I have had the opportunity to have all my questions answered and I have been informed that my participation is completely voluntary. I agree to participate in this research.

_____________________________________
Participant Signature

Additional comments:__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________