



G U L F S H O R E P L A Y H O U S E

*Kristen Coury, CEO & Producing Artistic Director*

**PERFORMANCE GUIDE TO**



**Scenic Designer**

NATALIE ROSE MABRY

**Costume Designer**

VICTORIA NICOLETTE GIST

**Lighting Designer**

ELIZABETH KNUDSON

**Sound Designer**

CORDARIOUS COX

**Production Stage Manager**

JOSEPH BLANCHARD

**Director of Production**

RAY INKEL

**Music Director**

JANE BEST

**Choreographer**

VASTHY MOMPOINT

**COO & Managing Director**

JOEL MARKUS

**CEO & Producing Artistic Director**

KRISTEN COURY

**Director of Education**

STEVEN CALAKOS

**Directed by**

DANN DUNN

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# About the Director



Dann Dunn has created and maintained professional works as a Director/Choreographer, Associate, Dance Captain, Educator, Producer, and Live Events Coordinator around the world. NYC: *Sesame Street On Broadway* (Madison Square Garden), *Miracle On 34th Street* (MSG), *The Adventures Of Tom Sawyer* (Symphony Space), *First Date* (Revised National Tour Workshop). National Tour: *CATS*, *The Music Man*, *The Adventures Of Tom Sawyer*, *Sesame Street Live!*. International: *CATS*, *The Music Of Andrew Lloyd Webber*, *La Traviata*. Regional: *Fiddler On The Roof*; *Mame*; *Chicago*; *Hello, Dolly!*; *Spamalot*; *The Best Little Whorehouse In Texas*. Walnut Street Theatre, Delaware Theatre Company, Fulton Opera House, Arden Theatre, The Kennedy Center, The Kimmel Center, Ogunquit Playhouse, Cardinal Stage, Sierra Rep, Weathervane Rep, PEG, Totem Pole Playhouse, Jenny

Wiley Theatre, Society Hill Playhouse Resident Theatre Company (Barrymore Nomination), The Eagle Theatre (Barrymore Nomination), and Ocean City Theatre Company. Contributing Choreographer: Norwegian Cruise Lines, The Red Cross, Modell's Sporting Goods, Merck Pharmaceuticals, The National Liberty Museum, Circus Circus Las Vegas, Sesame Street Workshop, Macy's, and The X Games. Dancer: Mariah Carey, Mark Kanemura (Lady Gaga, Janet Jackson, So You Think You Can Dance?). TV/Film: Good Morning America, The Today Show, The Emmy Award-winning PA Cardiovascular Health Project, Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade, Repetition Rhapsody. Proud Member, Actor's Equity Association.

## About Gulfshore Playhouse Education

Gulfshore Playhouse Education is a vital component of the Playhouse's mission, providing programs aimed at enhancing the lives of children, teens, and students of all ages. Each offering provides real-life skills and learning experiences that are invigorating, nurturing, and readily accessible to every member of our community, thanks to our scholarships and reduced-price programming for our region's most deserving schools.

From in-school residencies and pre-professional theatre training to community partnerships, audience engagement, and student matinees – our goal is to inspire creativity, encourage self-expression, and support the blossoming of self-confidence, collaboration, and a deep appreciation for the arts.

# Character Breakdown

## Land Dwellers:

- **Prince Eric:** An adventurous and charming prince.
- **Grimsby:** Prince Eric's prim and proper valet.
- **Scuttle:** A seagull and self-proclaimed "human expert."
- **Chef Louis:** A somewhat sadistic chef.
- **Carlotta:** The headmistress in Prince Eric's palace.
- **The Hopeful Princesses:** Six princesses vying for Prince Eric's hand.

## Sea Dwellers:

- **Ariel:** Our heroine. She longs to be human.
- **Sebastian:** King Triton's personal orchestra director.
- **Flounder:** A nervous little fish and Ariel's best friend.
- **Ursula:** A sea witch. She longs to overthrow her brother., King Triton.
- **King Triton:** The King of the Sea and Ariel's father.
- **The Mersisters:** Ariel's six sisters: Aquata, Andrina, Arista, Atina, Adella, Allana.
- **Flotsam:** A slippery and slimy eel. Ursula's eyes and ears.
- **Jetsam:** A slimy and slippery eel. Ursula's ears and eyes.

# Performance History

Disney's *The Little Mermaid* was initially released in 1989 and was the studio's first animated fairy tale since *Sleeping Beauty* was released in 1959. This film also saw the beginning of the "Disney Renaissance," a period of incredibly successful films created by the Walt Disney Company. The songs in the film were composed by Alan Menken and the lyrics were written by Howard Ashman.

The film is based on a fairy tale of the same name by Danish writer Hans Christian Andersen. Andersen's story, which was published in 1837, is much darker than the Disney film, with Ariel's human transformation being incredibly painful and her beloved prince leaving her for another woman at the story's end. Most film adaptations of Andersen's story alter the darker details of his story to make it more hopeful, uplifting, and suitable for young audiences.

In 2007, a stage adaptation of the film debuted on Broadway. It was directed by Francesca Zambello and starred Sierra Boggess as Ariel. New songs were added for the stage adaptation written by Menken and lyricist Glenn Slater. The show underperformed and closed in 2009, before being work-shopped again in California, where even more songs were added, along with new character backstories.

In 2023, a live-action adaptation of the original film premiered. This version starred Halle Bailey as Ariel and featured new songs not in the original film or the stage production.

# *Alan Menken and Howard Ashman*

Composer Alan Menken and lyricist Howard Ashman met in 1977 at a New York theatre workshop. In 1979, the two collaborated for the first time while working on Ashman's stage production of Kurt Vonnegut's *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater*. After their initial success, the pair went on to collaborate on their first Broadway success *Little Shop of Horrors*. The show was initially produced Off-Off-Broadway, before being transferred to Off-Broadway and later on to Broadway and being made into a popular 1986 film.

After their success in New York, the pair was set to work on Disney's newest big project: *The Little Mermaid*. With Menken's songs and Ashman's lyrics, the film was an immediate success, and its music was especially praised. Their work on the film's music won them two Academy Awards, two Grammy Awards, and two Golden Globe Awards, among others. This film also saw the beginning of the "Disney Renaissance." Menken and Ashman would continue to work together for the music of two other major films during this era: *Beauty and the Beast* and *Aladdin*.

While working on *The Little Mermaid*, Ashman was diagnosed with AIDS. He continued to work with Menken. He underwent treatment while working on *Beauty and the Beast* and passed away in 1991, shortly before the film was released. *Beauty and the Beast* is dedicated to him, with the dedication reading, "To our friend Howard, who gave a mermaid her voice and a beast his soul. We will be forever grateful. Howard Ashman 1950-1991."

After Ashman's death, Menken began working on his next big project: *The Lion King*. He worked on this film with lyricist Tim Rice and Sir Elton John. Menken continues to write for Disney today.

# Mermaid Lore

Different myths involving mermaids and water spirits can be found in hundreds of countries all across the world. They date back as far as ancient Mesopotamia. One of the most famous examples of early mermaids are the ancient Greek **sirens**. The sirens are typically described as beautiful women who live in the sea and lure sailors to their deaths with their songs. The sirens are not the only example of mermaids, however. On the next page, there are several examples of mermaids and similar figures from all over the world!



Ariel and her sisters in the original story of *The Little Mermaid*

Across these different cultures, a few consistencies emerged. Mermaids are often described as beautiful women with incredible singing abilities. The myths surrounding mermaids became so widespread that storytellers and authors began using them in their writing. A Swiss alchemist named Paracelsus combined a collection of "lore" surrounding mermaids and water spirits. This became the basis for several stories, including *Undine* by Friedrich de la Motte Fouqué and *The Little Mermaid* by Hans Christian Andersen.

# Mermaids Around the World



A coin featuring the ancient Syrian goddess **Atargatis**, who is represented as a figure with the head of a woman and the body of a fish.



A mosaic of the Greek hero Odysseus meeting a **siren**. The Greeks originally described sirens as being part bird. Sirens were later described as half fish creatures or fully human in appearance.



A painting of a **Melusine**, a figure in many European folklores. She can be found waiting in sacred springs or in rivers.



A painting of **Mami Wata**. Mami Wata is a water deity that can be found in religions and folklores across Africa and in the Caribbean. Her name reflects her status as "Mother of Water."



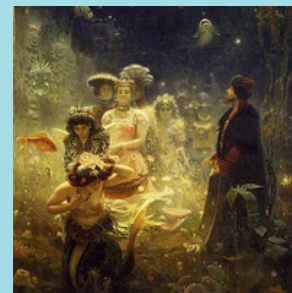
In Japanese folklore, the flesh of a **Ningyo**, a fish with the head of a human, could bestow long life on those who consumed it.



This stamp depicts **Iara**, a character from Brazilian folklore. She has green hair and the upper torso of a beautiful woman, and the tail of a river dolphin.



A statue of **Pania**, a figure from Māori mythology, who lives in the sea. In one myth, she fell in love with a human man who betrayed her trust, causing her to return to the sea forever.



In Slavic mythology, the **Rusalkas** are spirits that serenade sailors and lead them to their demise. These spirits are often depicted as the ghosts of young women who died tragically.



# Themes

## Parenting

King Triton doesn't know what to do with Ariel. From her point of view, Ariel is 16 and old enough to make her own decisions. From her father's point of view, Ariel is his youngest child. King Triton thinks the humans are dangerous. Ariel is enchanted by the human world. *How can parents respect their children and their worldviews while also keeping them safe?*

## Sacrifice

Initially, this film drew some criticism from feminist activists. They didn't like how Ariel gave up her home, her family, and her body as she knows it for a prince. However, if you look at the lyrics of "Part of Your World," Ariel tells the audience that what she wants to be part of the world she loves, which is the human world. *What does Ariel actually want? What would you give up for what you want most in the world?*

## Freedom

One of Ariel's desires is for freedom. She wants the freedom to truly experience the world above her. However, even after she gains her freedom, she still meets obstacles that make it hard for her to be herself, mainly a language barrier between herself and everyone around her. *What can make it difficult for you to explore a new place? What can you do to overcome those obstacles?*

# Further Viewing and Reading



## *The Tale of Princess Kaguya (2013)*

Princess Kaguya is a retelling of a Japanese myth called *The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter*. A bamboo cutter and his wife find a baby girl in a bamboo thicket and raise the child as their own. As the girl grows up however, she begins to feel out of place in her society and longs to fit in.



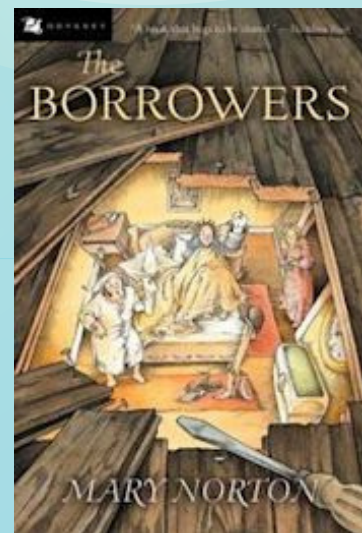
## *Ponyo (2008)*

Written and directed by world-renowned filmmaker Hayao Miyazaki, *Ponyo* tells the story of a young goldfish who desperately wants to be human. Miyazaki was inspired to create this story after reading the original story of *The Little Mermaid* as a child.



## *The Arrival by Shaun Tan*

This wordless picture book by Shaun Tan follows a man emigrating to a new country where everything is different. As he learns the language, customs, and culture of his new home, he works to support his family that he had to leave behind.



## *The Borrowers by Mary Norton*

This classic fantasy story follows a family of incredibly small people that live in the walls of houses. They "borrow" household objects in order to survive and move between houses as needed. All is well until one day a human spots one of the Borrowers.

# CREATE A CHARACTER

**Create your very own merperson! Use the space below to tell us a bit about your character. Where do they live? What powers do they have? What do they like to do?**

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