Rachel Hibler

Director’s Statement

The Little Mermaid

**WOP**: Atlantica and Eric’s Kingdom. Vaguely 1830s.

**Seed**: Finding your Voice

* How do you find your voice as you grow up?
* How do others help us find our voice?
* What are we willing to do to find who we are and learn to speak up?

**Director’s Statement**

The Little Mermaid is my favorite Disney movie and princess. Ariel is the princess of many of my generation and I want to celebrate the beautiful story and beloved characters. I want our show to feel familiar and bring our audiences back to their childhood. We want to be recognizable by audiences to the film and look of each character. However, we don’t want to copy Disney’s entire design as we build our world. Use it as inspiration and decide what are absolutes that must be the same but feel free to take the next step in the design. I want the world to feel expansive and exciting during our large numbers such as “Under the Sea”. I want the world to feel claustrophobic and scary for Ursula’s songs. I want to feel intimate and special when Eric and Ariel sing together. Our on-stage world reflects how we grow up and how our world feels like it’s constantly changing. I want to capture those moments we always remember when we grow.

Every decision in design must be made with the question of how we find our voice. As we take our first steps into adulthood, we must make difficult decisions. I want the feel of our show to be grounded while maintaining a fantasy element.

**Color Design**

Disney is known for its use of bold, primary colors. Please use bold colors in all choices. We will honor the color choices for each character and location. This will not be a muted palette in any choices. I want the world of the ocean to be blue, green, bright, and happy colors, a very liquid world. Eric’s human world should feel familiar to Ariel but also foreign. Here is where colors are bolder, reds, yellows, oranges, lots of earth tones. I want a clear delineation between the worlds of water and land. When Eric and Ariel are together, I’d like to see combinations of those colors such as romantic purples to show the two worlds coming together. Dark, mysterious colors for Ursula and her eels, lots of lime greens and creepy purples.

**Character Design**

This is a fairytale and I want all acting choices to lean into a children’s story. I want acting to be realistic, grounded and believable but also fun and character driven. I’d like to have our seagulls tap for their songs. This show needs high energy and a feeling of hopefulness running throughout.

**Set Design**

The show requires several locations, all of which are familiar to the film audience. The set needs to be transformative to create all locations. I want the set to be two sided and turn easily into each world. I want to send the message that our worlds are not so far apart as we may think. Land and sea are two sides of the same coin and can work together. I want all the boats to move easily on casters. The “Kiss the Girl” and Eric’s boats need to turn. I don’t want any set pieces to be stationary. I want everything to move easily and seamlessly, gliding across the stage. Waves and the ocean set pieces should be on the fly system and come in and out as Ariel goes up and down from the surface. When Eric drowns, I want to use the fly system and have the waves come down and up as he “falls”.

**Costume Design**

This is the area I think audiences will expect the most traditional looks. I want to keep the basic looks of each character. Honor the color choices from the film while also exploring new ways to interpret each character through costume. The ensemble characters can be more interpretive in their designs, but all main characters must have Disney style costumes. I want to use heelies shoes for all characters who are underwater. I want our fish friends to glide across the stage. I want Ursula and the eels to move easily as well. I’d like the fish costumes to have fins so they “swim” as the actor glides across the stage. I want the costumes under the sea to catch air. I do not want the mersisters with a tail coming out the back of them, I want their legs to be used in their tails as much as possible. Ariel must be a redhead, Eric needs black hair, Grimsby needs his powdered wig, Triton needs a beard, Flounder and Sebastian must be instantly recognizable in their color palettes.

**Props Design**

Here is another element that has quite a bit of audience expectation on it. Honor the design of each element provided by Disney. The expectation is we have two of every prop. I want every prop to be recognizable, such as Ursula’s necklace and the dinglehopper. Use practical props where we can. I want the stage magic to feel real.

**Lighting Design**

Disney colors will be considered heavily in this design element. I do not want any blackouts; I want the show to keep moving as the set transitions happen and use cast as much as possible to do transitions. I want water gobos when we’re under water and natural light when we’re on land. I want soft, romantic light throughout. Lots of darkness with Ursula’s lair, purples, and greens. I want glimpses of light throughout the show as Ariel finds her way. I want us to have a feeling of the surface above us when we are under the water. Really create a vertical world when we are under the sea.

**Sound Design**

The music is fun, upbeat, and exciting and I certainly want to keep the energy of the show. However, I don’t want to lose moments of powerful silence. We will find beats of silence as characters make choices and grow as they find a voice. The music will be used to push plot and character forward, but always give the characters a moment prior to or after their song.

**House Design**

I’d like to decorate our lobby to bring our audiences into the magic immediately. If we could have two sides of the lobby: Sea and Land, I’d love that. Or if we must choose just one, I’d like it to be Eric’s kingdom. I want the House Crew to be in costume welcoming our audience to the castle.