



COME FROM AWAY IS 100 MINUTES LONG WITH NO INTERMISSION.

Director's Note.....	2
Synopsis.....	3
Character Guide.....	4
The Real Humans of <i>Come From Away</i>	5
Gander, Newfoundland.....	6-7
Operation Yellow Ribbon.....	7
Learning Extension: Compare and Contrast	8
Radical Hospitality.....	9
Learning Extension: Prosocial Behavior	9-10
Creating <i>Come From Away</i>	11
Learning Extension: From Source to Stage	12-13
9/11 Timeline of Events.....	14-15
Suitcase Collection.....	15
Q&A with David Nehls.....	16

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

When I first saw *Come From Away*, I knew almost nothing about it. I only knew it had something to do with the tragedy we watched unfold on September 11th. I saw it alone, and I was overwhelmed in a way I didn't expect. Not just by the weight of remembering that day, but by what the story is really about: a community choosing to welcome strangers with open arms.

After the show, I did something I rarely do. I went for a drink with two other audience members who were also there alone. We didn't know each other. We weren't "supposed" to be together. But something about what we had just witnessed made it feel natural to keep talking as we walked out of the theater. We exhaled, we talked, we kept each other company. It felt like the story continued past the curtain call.

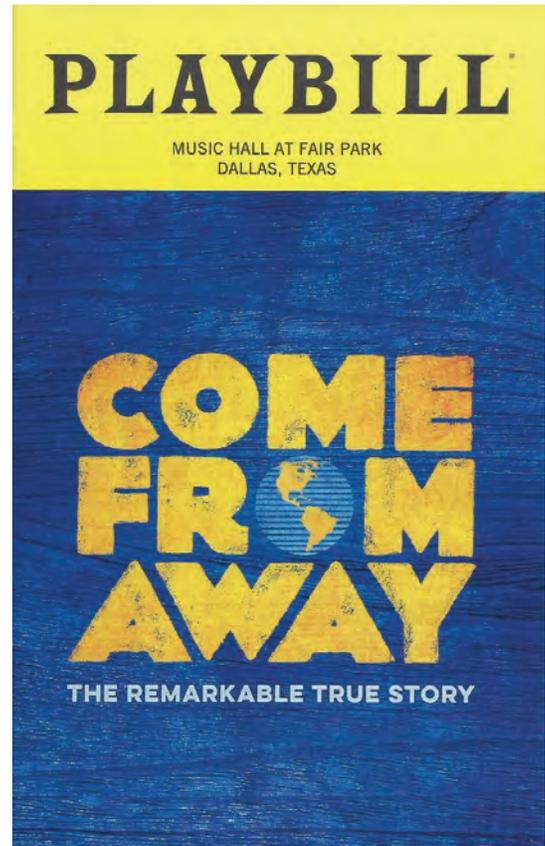
That experience is part of why I wanted to direct this piece. It's also why I keep returning to radical hospitality as the theme. Not everyone remembers 9/11. Many young people don't have a personal connection to that day, only what they've learned in history class. But they can understand the question at the heart of this musical: in a moment of crisis, do we turn away from each other, or do we show up?

In Gander, thousands of stranded travelers arrived with little warning and no timeline. The town met the moment with food, beds, rides, phone calls, patience, and care. I've been struck by how different the world is now: smartphones, the 24-hour news cycle, constant commentary on social media. Would the citizens of Gander respond the same way today? What would radical hospitality look like in our current moment, and what might get in the way?

My hope is that this production honors what happened then, and quietly dares us to imagine how we show up now. If this story moves you, let it move you toward people. Make room. Choose kindness. Show up for one another.

Kenny Moten

Arvada Center Associate Artistic Director



***Come From Away* Playbill**

SYNOPSIS

It's the tenth anniversary of the day that the town of Gander in Newfoundland welcomed thousands of people on airplanes that were diverted to their small town on the day of the 9/11 terrorist attack in New York City. This story is a remembrance of the events that happened when those plane passengers arrived to the town that welcomed them with open arms.



Gander Airport

On the northeast tip of North America lies Gander, Newfoundland, a place with an airport that was once one of the biggest in the world. The island of Newfoundland is nicknamed "The Rock," and Gander is a small town on that giant rock, with a small population of Islanders who have a very hospitable and welcoming local culture. Coffee and donut shop Tim Horton's is a popular spot for them, where people like Claude Elliott, the mayor of Gander, start their day. One morning, Constable Oz Fudge enters Tim Horton's and tells everyone to turn up the radio to hear the news, as something has happened in America and over two hundred flights are being diverted from U.S. Airspace - and 38 of them are heading to Gander.

The passengers on board those 38 flights are about to double Gander's population of just under 10,000, so Janice, a young TV reporter, begins getting the word out while other locals start preparing and gathering food and supplies.

Meanwhile on the planes, the passengers (collectively nicknamed the "Plane People" by the locals) are wondering what is going on, and concern grows as they are not allowed to leave the planes and given no news. Today is September 11, 2001, a day that will go down in history because of terrorist attacks on American soil. American Airlines pilot Beverley Bass lands in Gander, and as she sees all the other planes lined up like sardines, she wonders where she is going to park.

As the Plane People begin to hear the news, watching replays of the attacks on the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, and reaching out to their families, stress levels rise. Cultural differences clash and people begin to use various coping mechanisms to deal with the uncertainty. Some passengers head to church to pray, and some head to the bar. These passengers come from all different walks of life, including various sexual orientations, racial backgrounds, and religions.

Meanwhile, Gander does what they are best at - they treat these passengers with radical hospitality, the practice of going above and beyond to make people (and even animals) of all backgrounds feel welcomed and safe.

CHARACTER GUIDE

(In order of appearance)

CLAUDE ELLIOTT - Mayor of Gander who coordinates the town's massive relief effort. He is a steady, calm presence who reassures both the townspeople and the travelers that everything will be ok.

OZ FUDGE - A humorous Gander constable who comes up with logistics to care for and support the passengers.

BEULAH DAVIS - The warm and hospitable Treasurer and Provincial President of the Ladies Auxiliary, for the Royal Canadian Legion who helps organize shelter and food for the stranded passengers.

BONNIE HARRIS - The compassionate Manager of the Gander Animal Hospital and SPCA volunteer who takes care of the stranded animals that are on the planes.

JANICE - A local rookie TV News reporter who reports on the situation unfolding.

DOUG - A local air traffic controller who helps guide in the planes.

ANNETTE - A teacher and librarian from Gander Elementary. She's excited about the prospect of eligible men on the planes.

GARTH - A Newfoundland school bus driver who is currently on strike with the other bus drivers who are all desperately needed to transport the stranded passengers from the airport into town.

BEVERLEY BASS - One of the "Plane People" (also known as the Come-From-Aways.) A confident American Airlines pilot whose character is based on the first real-life female captain for American Airlines.

DIANE GRAY - A local teacher who falls for one of the passengers, showing how love can blossom even during tumultuous times.

NICK MARSON - A reserved and thoughtful British oil engineer who falls for the school teacher Diane.

BOB - A blunt New Yorker who softens as the story unfolds.

HANNAH O'ROURKE - The mother of a New York firefighter who is fearfully waiting for news of how her son is doing.

KEVIN T - An American marketing CEO who is diverted to Gander on a flight from Paris with his partner, Kevin J.

KEVIN J - The partner of Kevin T. who is anxious and outspoken.

ALI - A masterchef from an international restaurant chain. His Muslim, Middle-Eastern background draws suspicions from some of the "Plane People."

MUHUMUZA - A plane passenger from Africa who has language barriers and struggles to communicate in Newfoundland.

THE REAL HUMANS OF *COME FROM AWAY*



American Airlines Pilot **BEVERLEY BASS** - In 1986 Beverley Bass became the first female captain of an American Airlines commercial plane, later that year captaining the first all-female crew in the history of commercial jet aviation. She co-founded the International Society of Women Airline Pilots, which provided career support and mentorship to aspiring pilots. Born in Fort Myers, Florida, as a child she became fascinated with planes after her aunt took her to see take-offs and landings through a chain link fence at the airport. She began flying her first year of college, but her career in commercial aviation had a difficult beginning due to a lack of women in the field. She was piloting a Boeing 777 from Dallas -Ft. Worth when her flight was diverted to Gander on 9/11.

MAYOR CLAUDE ELLIOTT - The mayor of Gander on 9/11. Claude Elliott moved to Gander in 1974 to work as a paramedic in the hospital, and was elected mayor in 1996. On 9/11, Claude was spending his time dealing with the local bus drivers who were on strike, and was very crucial that day in coordinating everyone who was helping and getting the bus drivers to pause their strike and help transport the “plane people.” He was deemed a local hero for his efforts. Claude says that he has seen the musical production of *Come From Away* at least 128 times. He retired from politics in 2017.



GANDER, NEWFOUNDLAND

HISTORY

In 1935, an airport was constructed in Gander, Newfoundland, due to its geographic northeast location on the tip of North America (the province of Newfoundland and Labrador). This place was chosen as a strategic transatlantic refueling stop between Europe and North America due to it being the shortest flight route from London to New York, as the world anticipated the start of World War II.



Map of Gander, Newfoundland

Captain Douglas Fraser landed the first flight at Newfoundland Airport (now known as Gander International Airport) on January 11, 1938. When World War II happened, the town became a strategic post for the Royal Air Force Ferry, who were tasked with delivering thousands of aircraft coming from North American factories to front-line war operations throughout Europe, North America, and the Middle East. Up to 12,000 British, Canadian, and American military servicepeople crammed together in the tiny town, living in crowded barracks between the runways.



Town of Gander

After the war, efforts were made to move the Gander residents to safer spaces further from the airport, and construction began on the current site of the town in the 1950s. Due to its strategic location as a refueling stop for planes headed between Europe and North America, Gander was nicknamed the “Crossroads of the World,” and served an important role during the Cold War as a hub of commercial transatlantic aviation.

CULTURE

Because people ended up in Gander from so many different countries, its population is internationally diverse and includes people from countries on five different continents. Primarily English-speaking, many people also speak French. Culturally, Newfoundland is considered to be one of the friendliest places on Earth, and residents are known to treat non-Islanders as if they are family.

Some local traditions included mummering, which is dressing up in disguises and going from house to house as people guess their identities, kissing a dead codfish, and eating local favorites like fried bologna, fish chowder, and moose stew.

In Newfoundland, a popular tradition is the kitchen party that dates back to Irish and Scottish settler groups hosting cèilidhs (Scottish)/céilís (Irish) (pronounced “KAY-lee’s”). These casual, communal gatherings involve singing, dancing, storytelling, playing instruments, and sharing food with friends and neighbors, typically in someone’s home.



Kitchen party

While Celtic-inspired music is played, traditions like “kissing the cod” (literally kissing a dead codfish) happen, with modern kitchen parties serving such delicacies as fried bologna alongside traditional foods like fried cod tongues and toutons, which are fried leftover bread balls served with molasses. In *Come From Away*, the residents and passengers join together in a large version of these celebratory kitchen parties.

OPERATION YELLOW RIBBON

Operation Yellow Ribbon was the name given to the generous hospitality efforts of the Gander residents in taking care of the thousands of airline passengers who were unexpectedly diverted there after the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

As soon as the planes started to land, town officials and the Canadian Red Cross began coordinating a mass collection of food and supplies, and finding shelter. Everyone in Gander chipped in however they could. Employees from a local co-op grocery store arrived in a refrigerated truck filled with meat and provisions. St. Martin’s Anglican Church gathered bedding and cots and prepared their kitchen to provide meals.

Responding to announcements from local radio saying to **“LEND A HAND, DO WHAT YOU CAN,”** residents of neighboring communities donated hundreds of sandwiches, as well as toothbrushes,

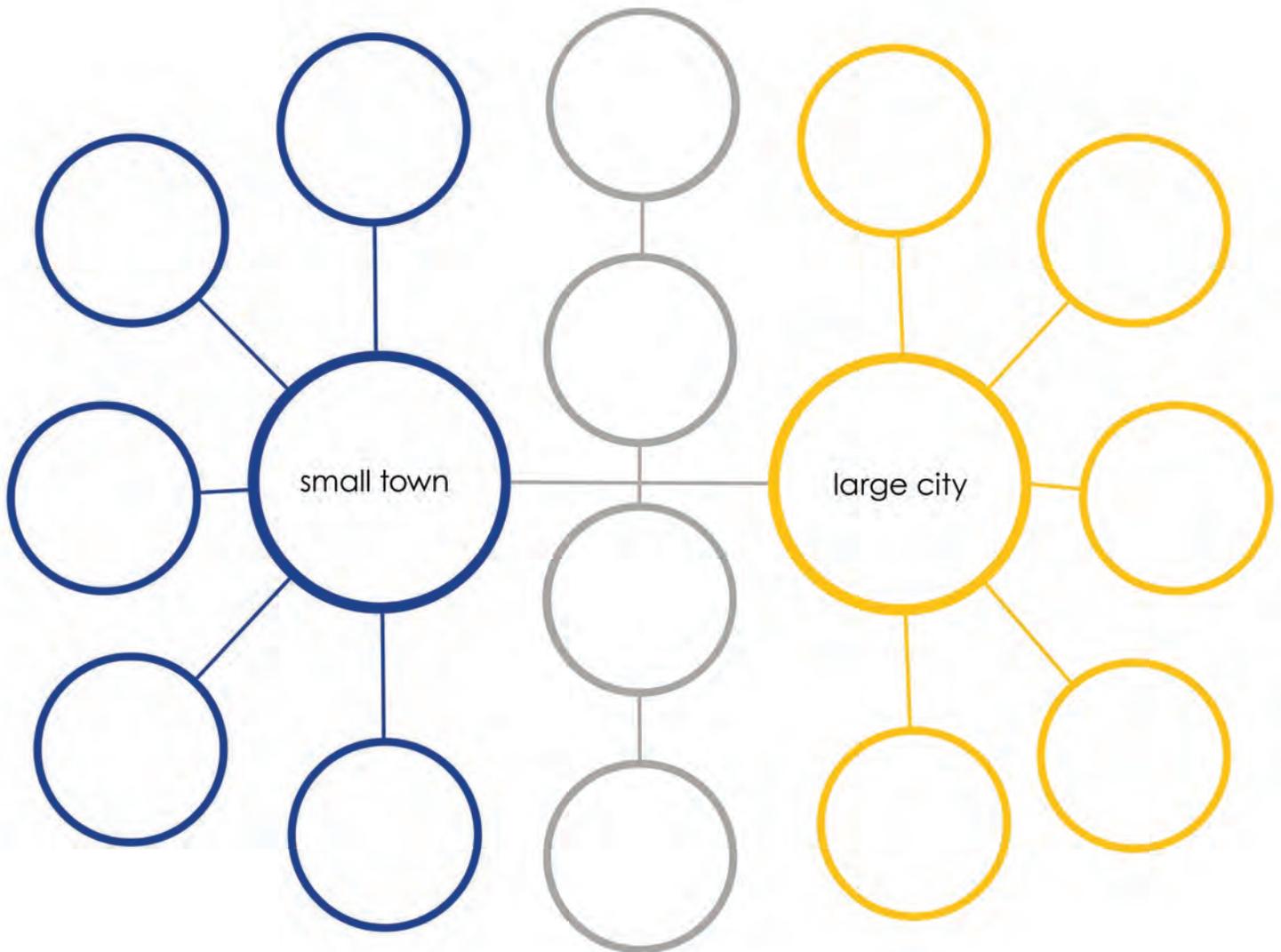


Gander Airport on 9/11

deodorant, and other toiletries that would help the passengers maintain their hygiene and dignity. Pharmacies filled prescriptions free of cost. Those who had the space offered up hot showers and guest bedrooms. After five days, most of the “Plane People” were able to return home; however, the imprint left from their time in Gander lives on.

LEARNING EXTENSION: COMPARE AND CONTRAST

How might the experience have been different if the planes had landed in a large metropolitan city instead of a small, remote town? **COMPARE ADVANTAGES AND CHALLENGES** of each setting using this double bubble map.



RADICAL HOSPITALITY

Radical hospitality is a term used to mean the extraordinary practice of going above and beyond to make people feel welcome and safe. The term radical means to “affect the fundamental nature of something,” so when combined with the word hospitality, it means to **NOT ONLY WELCOME SOMEONE, BUT TO STAND BESIDE THEM AND UPLIFT THEM.**

The people of Gander not only allowed the planes to land at their airport, they created shelter, gathered food, supplies, and medicines, and even provided entertainment with music in their efforts to make the “Plane People” feel not only welcomed, but accepted and valued. They paid attention and noticed when people had specific needs, and then made sure to fulfill those needs. Authentic radical hospitality makes you not only feel welcomed - it makes you want to come back again.

LEARNING EXTENSION: PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR

READ: Read the below information about prosocial behavior as it relates to *Come From Away*.

WRITE: Individually, students should write down their answers to the following questions:

SHARE: Students discuss their answers with a partner or in small groups.

REFLECT: Answer the exit ticket by completing the statement.

Radical hospitality is an example of **PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR**, voluntary actions like helping, sharing, giving time or money that benefit others. In many emergencies, people experience **DIFFUSION OF RESPONSIBILITY** – the tendency to assume someone else will step in to help. What made Gander so remarkable was that the townspeople demonstrated the opposite: **SHARED RESPONSIBILITY.**

PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR OFTEN DEPENDS ON THREE MAJOR FACTORS:

- 1. ACCOUNTABILITY** – Research on the bystander effect shows that helping decreases when responsibility is unclear or spread across many people. However, when individuals feel personal accountability, prosocial behavior increases. This is partly due to conformity bias, our tendency to follow the behavior we perceive as the social norm. When ethical action becomes visible, it signals to the group and makes it easier for others to step in. In Gander on 9/11, responsibility could have been diffused, but instead it was claimed. People stepped up and took action, making helping those in need the clear community norm.

2. INGROUP VS. OUTGROUP – People typically give more resources to friends or members of their own group than to strangers or those perceived as part of an “outgroup.” Yet in Gander, the stranded passengers were complete strangers, and still received extraordinary care. This reflects advanced perspective-taking and empathy. Learn more about this concept here:
<https://ethicsunwrapped.utexas.edu/glossary/in-group-out-group>

3. ALTRUISM – Studies show that people give or help more when recipients are clearly vulnerable or in need (e.g., during crises). The “Plane People” were frightened, displaced, and uncertain about many things. Their obvious need activated high levels of prosocial response and acts of care. Learn more about prosocial behavior here:
<https://thedecisionlab.com/reference-guide/sociology/prosocial-behavior>

Together, these factors help us understand that radical hospitality is not random kindness – it reflects developed empathy, perspective-taking, and a willingness to assume responsibility. In *Come From Away* the people of Gander quickly thwarted any perceived barriers to helping and jumped in head first. Instead of asking, “Who will handle this?” they asked, “What can I do?”

WHAT STOPS PEOPLE IN YOUR COMMUNITY (SCHOOL, NEIGHBORHOOD, ETC.) FROM HELPING OTHERS? (FEAR OF EMBARRASSMENT, ASSUMING SOMEONE ELSE WILL STEP IN, NOT KNOWING HOW?)

CHOOSE ONE BARRIER AND EXPLAIN HOW SOMEONE MIGHT OVERCOME IT.

EXIT TICKET

COMPLETE THIS STATEMENT:

“Radical hospitality requires _____, and I will practice it this week by _____.”

CREATING COME FROM AWAY

Canadian husband-and-wife writing team David Hein and Irene Sankoff wrote and performed their first show together, *My Mother's Lesbian Jewish Wiccan Wedding*, in 2010, and it was a hit at the Toronto Fringe Festival. Impressed with the show, fellow Canadian Michael Rubinoff introduced himself to the couple, and shared his idea for a new show about the tiny Newfoundland town of Gander, and its hospitable welcoming of approximately 7,000 plane passengers who were diverted there on 9/11.

Hein and Sankoff had lived in New York during 9/11, and with their Canadian and American connections were the perfect people to write the show. As they started researching, they realized that rather than this being a story about 9/11, it was a story about Gander and its radical hospitality, with 9/11 serving as the backdrop. They traveled to Newfoundland for the tenth anniversary event in 2011, which commemorated the pilots and "Plane People" who had returned to Gander, and set about interviewing people who had been part of the experience.

They had collected a huge amount of interviews, documentaries, and letters to use for their research and creation, and they asked themselves "What is the through story here?" In 2012, they workshopped a 45-minute version of the story with 14 actors playing over 100 characters. As the show traveled around to major regional theatres around the country, it eventually landed on Broadway with the cast cut down to 12 actors, a band of 8 musicians, and the whole thing shortened into one act.

**CRITICAL
THINKING
QUESTION:**

How does considering a variety of perspectives allow us to construct a more complete record of the past?



David Hein and Irene Sankoff

LEARNING EXTENSION: SOURCE TO STAGE

STEP 1: SOURCE INVESTIGATION

Divide students into small groups. Each of the groups receives 2 or 3 different sources about the same event. (newspaper article, interview transcript, social media post, documentary summary, etc.) All groups should have a different combination of sources such that no two groups are starting with the exact same information.

FOR EACH SOURCE THE GROUP SHOULD RECORD:

1. What type of source is this?
 - Primary (firsthand account)
 - Secondary (reported or analyzed by someone else)
2. Who created it?
 - Is the creator an authority on the subject? What are their credentials or experience?
 - What perspective or bias might be present?
3. When was it created?
 - Is the information current and updated?
 - Is it trustworthy?
 - Is the information supported by evidence or experience?
 - Is the information cited or has the content been verified?

STEP 2: CREATE A SCENE

Using the sources provided, each group creates a 1–2 minute scene based on real events.

SCENE GUIDELINES

- Must be inspired by information from the sources.
- Can combine characters, simplify or expand upon information
- Can take on any artistic tone the group would like (reflective, melodramatic, dark, parody, etc...)
- Setting can be pulled from any part of a source but does not have to be directly from the source information.

STEP 3: PERFORM AND REFLECT

After creating their scene, each group should read aloud their scene to the class (or rehearse and perform it if it makes sense for your group). Then, discuss the similarities and differences between each group's take on the same events.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- What role does information literacy play in research? In everyday life?
- What ethical responsibilities do creators have when representing true stories on stage?
- Where should the line be drawn between accuracy and artistic interpretation?

SOURCES RELATED TO THE CHILEAN MINING ACCIDENT OF 2010

SOURCE A:

https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/october-13/chilean-miners-are-rescued-after-69-days-underground?utm_source=chatgpt.com

SOURCE B:

https://www.cbsnews.com/news/33rd-miner-reaches-the-surface-in-chile/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

SOURCE C:

<https://www.bbc.com/audio/play/w3ct3bxk>

SOURCE D:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2010_Copiap%C3%B3_mining_accident

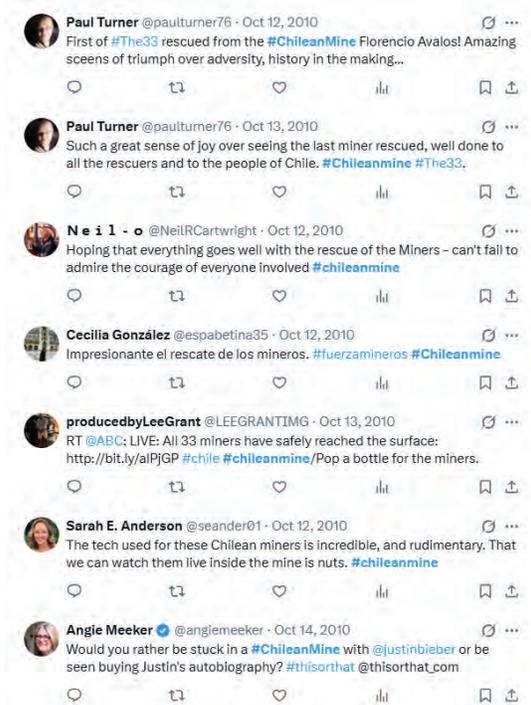
SOURCE E:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A3moxr_E7aA

SOURCE F:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20101013014756/http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/southamerica/chile/8058924/Chile-Miners-Rescue-Live.html>

SOURCE G:



SOURCE H:

<https://www.nbcnews.com/id/wbna38807555>

9/11 TIMELINE OF EVENTS

The morning of September 11, 2001 changed American history forever, when the news broke of terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City and, later that day, the Pentagon. 2,977 lives were lost in a matter of hours and our country's cultural landscape changed forever.

The impacts went far beyond the lives lost in New York City. There was a ripple effect as loved ones and coworkers worried about people they knew that may be on flights and in New York City. Few people had personal cell phones and many communication systems were down. As a result, it took a long time for people to learn whether their loved ones were safe, and it was hard to find information about what was going on.

Here is a timeline of what happened in different parts of the United States on that day, from 8am to 8pm.



World Trade Center on 9/11

8:19 AM Flight attendants aboard American Airlines Flight 11 that had taken off out of Boston alert ground personnel that the plane has been hijacked; American Airlines notifies the FBI.

8:46 AM Flight 11 crashes into floors 93-99 of the North Tower of the World Trade Center, killing everyone on board and hundreds inside the building.

8:47 AM NYPD and FDNY forces dispatch units to the World Trade Center, while Port Authority Police Department officers on site begin immediate evacuation of the North Tower.

8:50 AM White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card alerts President George W. Bush (who was visiting an elementary school in Florida) that a plane hit the World Trade Center.

9:02 AM Port Authority officials broadcast orders to evacuate the South Tower of the World Trade Center.

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTION: How would this moment of crisis be different with modern technology? How would a major global event happening now be different without it?

9:03 AM Hijackers crash United Airlines Flight 175 into floors 75-85 of the World Trade Center's South Tower, killing everyone on board and hundreds inside the building.

9:26 AM The FAA closes down air traffic to the United States. All flights from Europe were diverted.

9:37 AM Hijackers aboard Flight 77 crash the plane into the western façade of the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., killing 59 aboard the plane and 125 military and civilian personnel inside the building.

9:59 AM The South Tower of the World Trade Center collapses.

10:03 AM United Airlines Flight 93, a hijacked plane, crashes in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, killing all on board. After learning about the other attacks, the passengers and crew led a revolt and forced the hijackers to crash the plane in a field.

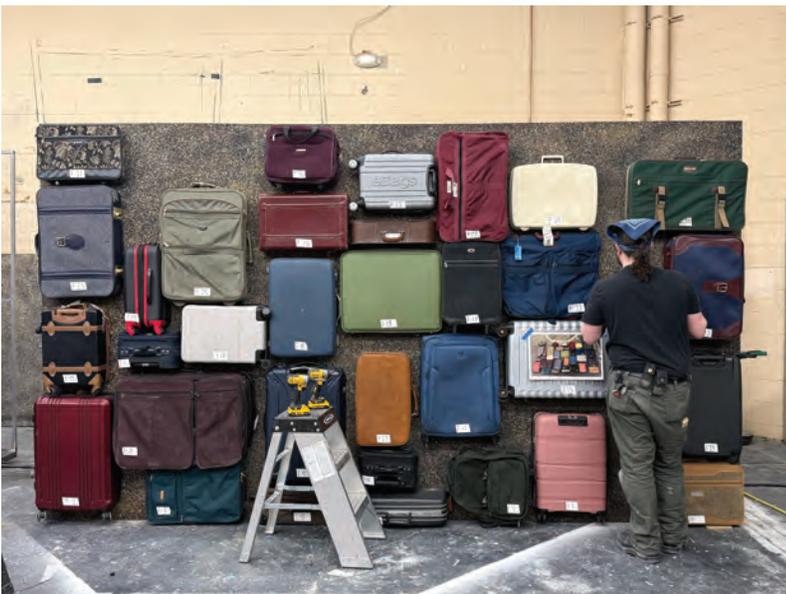


9/11 Memorial

10:28 AM The World Trade Center's North Tower collapses, 102 minutes after being struck by Flight 11.

8:30 PM President Bush declares that America, along with its friends and allies, would "stand together" to win the war against terrorism.

SUITCASE COLLECTION



Wall of suitcases

The set design in *Come From Away* calls for a huge wall made of suitcases, so the Arvada Center reached out to our staff, volunteers, and patrons asking them to donate any old suitcases they had lying around. Our patrons went above and beyond, and donated so many suitcases that we had to send an announcement saying that we could no longer take anymore! Our Production Team then used these suitcases to build the large wall that you see on stage– a community effort that literally sets the stage for our story about the community in Gander.

Q & A WITH MUSICAL DIRECTOR DAVID NEHLS

Music plays an integral role in *Come From Away*, with an onstage band playing music that draws from traditional Celtic songs, rock and roll, and Broadway pop. Musical Director David Nehls took on the challenge of coordinating all the different aspects of the music for this unique Broadway musical.

Q: Can you briefly explain what a Musical Director does?

A: Musical Director/ Conductor has the responsibilities of teaching the music to the actors including all choral music, teaching the orchestra how to navigate the play, and then conducting the performances, which is akin to driving the bus! We keep the show on the rails along with the stage management team. The Musical Director also works very closely with the Director and Choreographer in the prep time prior to rehearsals to ensure that all information will be given to all the artists involved in a cohesive manner.

Q: This musical is known for a blend of traditional Newfoundland, folk, and Broadway-style rock. Can you talk to us about how you work to create something cohesive when there are various styles like this?

A: The music has a very earthy feel to it. It is fun to lean into all of the differing styles, though my approach is more story-driven than what is on the page. If we feel that there is a moment we can create in the room emotionally, I will support that with the music.

Q: With the musicians playing on the stage, are there any unique challenges?

A: The challenges will be mostly in the sound department. We will be moving about on the stage quite a bit, so that means musicians will have to memorize songs like the actors do, which will be different for many of them.

Q: What sorts of instruments can audiences expect to hear?

A: A lot of different percussion sounds, fun whistles, and lots of mandolin and guitar. It is reminiscent of *A Man Of No Importance* which we did at the Center in 2014. There is a bit of an Irish flair to this show as in that one as well.



CRITICAL THINKING QUESTION:
How do artists communicate intent through music? How is music a form of cultural transmission?

Q: Are there any ways the music of the Arvada Center production differs from the Broadway version?

A: There are times where we may lessen the orchestration to enhance lyrics. I am a big stickler that when we work in the regional productions, we are not trying to replicate a Broadway production since we do not have the exact company members, venues, or budgets. I like to find intimate moments that might not exist in a big Broadway theatre to make each local production have our own energy, while being true to the original piece.