

# Nomination Form - Governor's Arts & Heritage Awards- 2015

Select a category below:		
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual Arts Award (Outstanding generative individual artist or individual arts leader) <input type="checkbox"/> Arts Organizations or Organizations that support the arts <input type="checkbox"/> Arts Educator Award <input type="checkbox"/> Individual Heritage Award (Individual artist/practitioner) <input type="checkbox"/> Heritage Organization Award <input type="checkbox"/> Young Arts Leader Award (Individual between the ages of 18 to 35)		
Name of Nominee- Individual or Organization:		
Name of Contact if Organization:	Home Phone:	Business Phone:
Address:		
Email:		
Your Name:		

Submit this form with a nomination letter. Type or print legibly the significant accomplishments and contribution of the person or organization you are nominating. Be specific about the nominee's achievements and document their impact. Include: why the efforts, achievements, and accomplishments of this nominee are noteworthy; how their efforts have been recognized by their community; and a brief biography detailing the career and/or the history of the nominee. For Heritage nominees also include how their actions preserve and promote ethnic and/or cultural heritage.

In addition, gather and submit supporting materials in digital format, including PDF formatted documents, jpeg files and links to websites such as YouTube. You may also upload video and audio files, and send them via email or DropBox. Letters of support (up to three letters only) may be emailed separately but must be submitted by the deadline.

Supporting material may include:

- Additional letters of support (up to three)
- A resume or biography of the individual or history of the organization (limit eight pages)
- Digital work samples (may include links to websites, YouTube videos, jpgs, etc.)
- PDF or linked articles written by or about the nominee
- Other material regarding nominee, etc.

Nominations must be emailed by 5:00 p.m. August 17th, 2015. Email the nomination form, nomination letter and all supporting materials to the Washington State Arts Commission, c/o [glenda.carino@arts.wa.gov](mailto:glenda.carino@arts.wa.gov). Please type **GAHA Application** in your email subject line. If you have questions please call Glenda at (360) 586-8093.

# Seattle Children's Theatre

201 Thomas Street, Seattle, WA 98109

## **LINDA HARTZELL, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR, SEATTLE CHILDREN'S THEATRE: Nomination for the 2015 Governor's Individual Arts Award**

*"In Japan, certain master artists are declared 'National Treasures' - in Washington State, Linda is our treasure. For thirty-plus years she has been providing generations of children with the best theater in the country - funny, smart, compassionate, thought-provoking, passionate, and wildly entertaining. We have been so lucky to have her leadership and her artistic vision."*

~ Robert Schenkkan

*Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award winning playwright*

Creative. Visionary. Inspiring. These words describe Linda Hartzell, the beloved Artistic Director of Seattle Children's Theatre (SCT) for 31 years and a nationally and internationally respected authority on Theatre for Young Audiences (TYA). Linda is acknowledged as both an outstanding "generative artist and arts leader" by the arts and education community here in Washington and by leading professional theatre artists and executives around the world. She has worked tirelessly and successfully to bring the highest quality theatre to the children and families of our region, and has established SCT as a center of excellence for children's theatre, bringing attention and acclaim to Seattle and Washington State. On behalf of the board, staff, artists, supporters and audiences of SCT, it is my heartfelt pleasure to nominate Linda Hartzell for the 2015 Governor's Individual Arts Award.

Linda has received many of the highest honors in her field. In 1998, she was invested as a Member of the College of Fellows of the American Theatre at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC. ASSITEJ, the International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People presented Linda with the Artist of Excellence Award in 2011; and the Children's Theatre Foundation of America presented her with the prestigious Orlin Corey Medallion award in 2013, for contributing to the cultural enrichment of children and youth through artistic work in theatre.

Locally, in an award that is very close to her heart, Linda was honored in 1994 by the University of Washington College of Arts and Sciences with the Distinguished Achievement Award. In 2001, she received the Gregory Falls Sustained Achievement Award, given by Theatre Puget Sound. In 2006, she received the City of Seattle's Mayor's Arts Award; in 2008, ArtsFund's award for Outstanding Achievement in the Arts; and in 2012, Seattle Metropolitan Magazine's Lifetime Achievement Award.

So what is it about Linda Hartzell that has earned all this acclaim and makes her worthy of the Governor's Arts Award? To begin, Linda's leadership has transformed SCT physically from a small group using borrowed performance space at the Woodland Park Zoo to an established theatre with an annual budget of more than six million dollars and a permanent home at Seattle Center. SCT's facility includes two performing venues, the 482-seat Charlotte Martin Theatre and the 285-seat Eve Alvord Theatre, along with the Allen Family Technical Pavilion which houses the paint, costume, prop, and scene shops as well as rehearsal and classroom spaces. Completed in 1996, we believe that SCT was the first self-contained theatre complex built for young audiences in the nation, a frequent model for other theatres.

More important than the physical facility is the artistic work that Linda has led SCT to create and produce. Since 1975, SCT has produced 235 plays including 110 world premieres. Since her arrival in 1984, Linda has directed 64 of those plays, including 47 world premieres. She is esteemed by playwrights due to her ability as a dramaturg, recognizing the stories that will engage and challenge children, and using her skill to help playwrights develop their scripts, often into award-winning dramas that expand the repertoire of plays for young audiences worldwide. The best playwrights writing for young audiences today find a home working with Linda at SCT and come back again and again – Robert Schenkkan, Suzan Zeder, Y York, John Olive, Steven Dietz, and Finegan Kruckemeyer, to name a few.

At the heart of Linda’s philosophy and skill is the cherished ideal that children are worthy of the utmost respect. Under her leadership, SCT has been committed to offering young people the highest quality experience that respects both their intelligence and their vulnerability, challenging them artistically and intellectually at age-appropriate levels, and never “talking down” or pandering to trends. That is an attitude that has provided for SCT’s education programs to grow and flourish. In fact, Linda’s attention to education as a vital part of a living theatre has contributed to an atmosphere that is process-oriented, positive, and safe for children to experiment and stretch their creativity.

Perhaps most important to this nomination is Linda’s extraordinary example of collaboration. She has served on the board of Theatre Communications Group, and is a former vice president of the United States Center for the International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People (ASSITEJ/USA). Currently, Linda sits on the board of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society.

Linda is always quick to give the credit for her success to others. This generosity of spirit makes her a leader of leaders, one who is able to attract and inspire the most talented professionals to work with her and SCT. She treats everyone with warmth and compassion, nurturing their strengths and inspiring them with her own dedication and drive. Allen MacInnis, Artistic Director of Young People’s Theatre of Toronto, has worked with Linda for years, leading to an exchange of plays in the upcoming season. Says Allen: “Linda Hartzell is one of America’s national treasures and her continuing enthusiasm for young audiences is utterly inspiring. We take it as the highest compliment that she would host our production and share one of hers with our Toronto audiences.”

Linda Hartzell has made an enormous contribution to the theatre arts in our state, the nation, and the world. Her work will live on in the legacy of SCT, in the wonderful plays she has helped to create, in the talented people she has inspired and encouraged, and – most of all – in the hearts of the millions of children she has introduced to the joy of live theatre meant especially for them.

We hope you will honor Linda Hartzell with the 2015 Governor’s Individual Arts Award. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Interim Managing Director

# Seattle Children's Theatre

201 Thomas Street, Seattle, WA 98109

## **BIOGRAPHY – LINDA HARTZELL** **Artistic Director, Seattle Children's Theatre**

Linda Hartzell has been the Artistic Director of Seattle Children's Theatre and its Education Programs since 1984. She has directed more than 64 plays for SCT, including 47 world premieres of plays such as *James and the Giant Peach*, *Mwindo*, *Dick Whittington and His Cat*, *The Red Badge of Courage*, *Holes*, *The Hoboken Chicken Emergency*, *Afternoon of the Elves*, *When I Grow Up I'm Gonna Get Some Big Words*, *Pink and Say*, *Still Life with Iris*, *The Odyssey*, *The Taste of Sunrise: Tuc's Story*, *The Rememberer*, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, *Addy: An American Girl Story*, *Goodnight Moon*, *Busytown* and *A Single Shard*. She received her BA in Education from the University of Washington and was a faculty member of Lakeside School in Seattle from 1977 to 1992, where she taught drama.

In addition to SCT productions, Ms. Hartzell has directed *The Lion*, *The Witch and The Wardrobe* at the Syracuse Stage and developed a new toddler production, *Dot & Ziggy*, which premiered at Chicago Children's Theatre. Her directing credits in the Northwest include the productions of *Lemons*, *Nuts and Creeps* for The Group Theatre; *Kitchen*, *Church and Kids* and *The Fabulous Sateens Spill the Beans* for Empty Space Theatre; and *The Grapes of Wrath* for Intiman Theatre. She has directed the Seattle Repertory Theatre's Mobile Outreach Bunch (MOB), and was the director for the original production of *Angry Housewives* at the Pioneer Square Theatre. During the summer of 1991, Ms. Hartzell worked with One Reel Productions in Seattle and Furusato Caravan to create and direct *Labor of Love*, a play that toured both Japan and the United States. *Labor of Love* was remounted in 1992 and performed as part of the Olympic Arts Festival in Barcelona, Spain. She also directed the Australian premiere of *Afternoon of the Elves* for Adelaide's Windmill Performing Arts and the State Theatre Company in Sydney in August 2004. Ms. Hartzell has been instrumental in developing *Connecting Stories*, a cross-cultural exchange program with theatre artists in the U.S., The Netherlands, and Iran, which brought Iranian performance artist Yaser Khaseb to Seattle to kick-off the 2009-2010 season.

Ms. Hartzell was formerly on the board of the national organization, Theatre Communications Group (TCG), serving as secretary. She is a former vice president of the United States Center for the International Association of Theatre for Children and Young People (ASSITEJ/USA), and currently sits on the board of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society.

Ms. Hartzell was invested as a Member of the College of Fellows of the American Theatre in 1998 at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC, and received the international ASSITEJ Award for Artist of Excellence in 2011. In 2013, Linda was awarded the Orlin Corey Medallion Award by the Children's Theatre Foundation of America.

In 1994, she was honored by the University of Washington College of Arts and Sciences with the Distinguished Achievement Award, and received the Women of Achievement award from the Seattle Chapter of Women in Communications. Seattle newspapers voted Ms. Hartzell one of The Ten Best of Puget Sound in 1996 for "giving Seattle one of the best playhouses for children in the nation." In 2001, Ms. Hartzell was honored with the Gregory Falls Sustained Achievement Award given by Theatre Puget Sound. Other honors include the Seattle Mayor's Arts Award in 2006, and ArtsFund's Outstanding Achievement in the Arts award in 2009.

## **AWARDS AND HONORS TO SEATTLE CHILDREN'S THEATRE Under Linda Hartzell's Leadership**

**2014** American Theatre Magazine chooses SCT's world premiere production of *James and the Giant Peach* for the cover.

**2014** SCD Magazine features a cover story on Linda Hartzell speaking with playwright Y York on creating theatre for young audiences.

**2010** The Wall Street Journal and TYA (Theatre for Young Audiences) Today Magazine recognize SCT as a leader in Toddler Theatre for work with *The Green Sheep*.

**2006** Mayor's Arts Award for contribution to the cultural vitality of our region.

**2004** *TIME Magazine's* #2 ranking in the top five children's theatres in the nation.

**2004** *Tibet Through the Red Box* receives the **AT&T: OnStage®** award, making Seattle Children's Theatre the only theatre for young audiences to receive the prestigious award for three productions.

**2002** *Holes* receives the **AT&T: OnStage®** award.

**2001** \$50,000 award from The Pew Charitable Trust and Theatre Communications Group to continue a multi-year-collaboration with Speeltheater Holland, internationally acclaimed puppet artists from The Netherlands.

**2000** *Cyrano* performed at the opening night festivities of Theatre Communication Group's annual conference; this is the first such invitation offered to a theatre for young audiences.

**1999** *The Book of Ruth* receives the **AT&T: OnStage®** award, making us the first theatre for young audiences to be so honored.

**1999** *Cyrano* performed at The Kennedy Center in Washington, DC.

**1997** \$100,000 award from The Pew Charitable Trust and Theatre Communications Group to facilitate a collaboration with Speeltheater Holland.

**1996** *Still Life With Iris* granted a Kennedy Center Fund for New American Plays award; the first time a script for young audiences had been so honored.

**1993** \$500,000 National Arts Stabilization Fund award to create a working capital reserve; the first time a theatre for young audiences was so honored.

## ABOUT SEATTLE CHILDREN'S THEATRE

### Linda Hartzell, Artistic Director, since 1984

Since 1975, Seattle Children's Theatre (SCT) has served the mission "to provide children of all ages access to professional theatre, with a focus on new works, and theatre education." SCT has grown from a small organization performing at the Woodland Park Zoo into one of the most respected professional theatres for children and families in America. To consistently create the highest quality theatre for our young audiences, SCT commissions acclaimed playwrights from throughout the United States and the world to create exciting original works, as well as to adapt familiar beloved children's books for the stage. SCT has produced more than 235 plays--including 110 world premiere productions--inspiring, entertaining and educating more than four million children over the years, and adding to the repertoire of plays for young audiences worldwide.

SCT produces five to six plays a season at our Mainstage theatres at Seattle Center – the Charlotte Martin Theatre (482 seats) and the Eve Alvord Theatre (275 seats) – serving approximately 130-150,000 children, families and teachers. All productions are developed specifically for young audiences with the goal to stimulate their imaginations and encourage independent, creative and critical thought. SCT maintains a full performance schedule of school shows and public performances every week during the school year. With access for all children at the heart of our mission, and working in collaboration with schools and community organizations, SCT works to ensure that children from all socio-economic backgrounds are able to attend our live performances and benefit from the accompanying educational resources.

**MAINSTAGE:** As Seattle Children's Theatre looks forward to our 2015-16 season – the 41th season for SCT and the 32nd for our Artistic Director, Linda Hartzell – we are pleased to be presenting six Mainstage productions with great appeal for our family and school audiences. Each of these productions also serves as the basis for the companion educational resources SCT creates to support classroom curriculum, made available free, on-line to teachers and the public.

- \* Elephant & Piggie's "We Are In A Play!" (ages 4+): October 8 – November 29, 2015
- \* Chitty Chitty Bang Bang (ages 6+): November 5 – December 27, 2015
- \* Where the Wild Things Are (ages 3+): January 27--February 21, 2016
- \* Hana's Suitcase (ages 10+): January 21 – February 7, 2016
- \* Brooklyn Bridge (ages 9+): February 25 – March 20, 2016
- \* Dr. Seuss' The Cat in the Hat (ages 3+): April 14 – May 22, 2016

**ARTS EDUCATION:** SCT is well established as an arts education institution, with our major programs continuing to be strong and popular.

\* **School Children Access Program (SCAP):** provides educational support and helps defray the cost of all SCT tickets for students, teachers, and chaperones by providing substantially subsidized and free tickets to all visiting school groups. Last year more than 50,000 children and teachers participated in SCAP.

\* **Drama School:** offers year-round drama instruction on-site at SCT and at satellite locations; the program is geared to students ranging from pre-K through the twelfth grade. Last year we offered 281 classes, serving 3,421 students.

\* **Education Outreach:** offers workshops and residencies on-site in classrooms, as well as professional development opportunities for teachers. The teaching artists in our Educational Outreach program spent more than 1,100 hours in classrooms throughout the community, serving 5,526 students, with nearly 20% from disadvantaged schools.

Much of SCT's accomplishment in education is ongoing and process-oriented with a strong measure of our success being our leadership position in the arts education community. SCT is the lead organization for the state's Teaching Artists Training Lab, a professional development initiative focused on supporting arts education as part of basic education in K-12 schools. We are a lead partner for the summer teacher training program Bringing Theatre into the Classroom. SCT is also a Creative Advantage partner (an initiative of the Seattle Public Schools, the Seattle Arts Commission, and The Seattle Foundation) with the goal of providing all students in Seattle public schools with access to a continuum of arts classes by 2020.

In everything we do, Seattle Children's Theatre is dedicated to offering professional theatre and related educational programs that inspire imagination and possibility for children.

August 2, 2015

To Whom It May Concern:

I'm writing with a full heart and unabashed enthusiasm to nominate Linda Hartzell, longtime Artistic Director of Seattle Children's Theatre for a Governor's Arts and Heritage Award. My full heart and enthusiasm are nothing to the unstoppable energy and conviction Linda has brought to her work over the past 31 years, as she's built one of the two most important children's theatre companies in the nation, pioneering the field of theatre for young audiences, reshaping its dramatic literature, and, in the process, building a singular theatre in the city of Seattle. She's a gift to the state, the nation and the fields of theatre and education. Like her, the theatre she's grown is a leader.

I arrived in Seattle a year ago, after nearly 30 years working in the New York theatre and writing about the national theatre. I've known Linda's work for most of those years and admired it the whole time. During my year as Executive Director of the University of Washington, School of Drama, I've had a chance to see much of it firsthand. Seattle Children's Theatre is the theatre of choice for my family and me, and for many of our friends. In part this is because, unlike so much of the fifty-year-old regional theatre movement, SCT has stayed on mission. Linda has kept it true to mission. She has refused to dumb down her theatre's work for family audiences or to pander to them. At the same time, she draws from and creates work remarkably attuned to her theatre's young audiences, work of quality comparable that on any of our stages. (I'm thinking, this season, of the compelling, four-person *Robin Hood*, which was as inventive and alive as anything I saw in my first year in Seattle. I'm not surprised it's headed to NYC for a run on Broadway this fall.)

Linda's two-decade collaboration with playwright Y York, beginning with the seminal *Afternoon of the Elves*, is an example of her national artistic leadership. That play, developed and produced by SCT in 1993, changed the game for children's theatre in America and began a shift towards more challenging subject matter and the involvement of a generation of significant playwrights not previously identified with children's theatre. Linda's expansion of the possibilities of Children's theatre has never ceased. In 1994 she became the first theatre person to receive the Distinguished Alumni Award from this University's College of Arts and Sciences, just one of a slew of deserved awards in her singular career.

If there's anyone working in the theatre in Washington State who is deserving of the Governor's Arts and Heritage Award, it is Linda Hartzell. She has married artistic excellence and educational efficacy, institutional ambition and social betterment. She is a national treasure, and a local one. I hope you'll honor her with this important award.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

[Redacted signature]

[Redacted address]

[Redacted phone number]

[Redacted email address]



DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE & DANCE  
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

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1 University Station • D3900 • Austin, Texas • 78712-0362 • 512-471-5793 • FAX: 512-471-0824

August 4, 2015

Glenda Carino  
Governor's Arts and Heritage Awards  
Washington State Arts Commission  
PO Box 42675  
Olympia, WA, 98504-2675

Dear Ms. Carino,

It is my distinct honor to write in the support of the nomination of Linda Hartzell, Artistic Director of Seattle Children's Theatre for your consideration for Governor's Arts Award for 2015. In 1989 Seattle Children's Theatre received this prestigious award, but it is time to move beyond recognition of the accomplishments of the organization, to honor the beating heart and creative soul of SCT, Linda Hartzell. Under Linda's inspired leadership SCT has grown from a tiny facility housed in an auditorium at the Seattle Zoo staffed mostly with volunteers, to a magnificent multi-million-dollar facility, the first self-contained theatre complex built for young audiences in the nation. Today SCT is arguably the most highly respected, internationally recognized professional theatre for young people in the country largely due to Linda's steady hand at the helm. Known for the highest caliber of artistry in the creation of new and classic plays for young and family audiences, innovative educational programming and fiscal responsibility and administrative ethics, SCT has brought honor to the city of Seattle and the state of Washington.

Both Linda and SCT have received many honors and awards such as The Gregory Falls Sustained Achievement Award, The ASSITEJ Award of Excellence, (an international honor), The University of Washington College of Arts and Sciences Award, where Linda stands as the only female theatre artist among politicians, philanthropists, scientists and poets. Behind all of the accolades and honors stands a kind, generous, wildly talented individual: Linda Hartzell.

As a producer and director Linda is a fierce advocate of new plays and does not shy away from difficult, controversial and serious subjects. As a dramaturgical collaborator she works tirelessly to be sure that plays are well crafted and will resonate with young people. She has an uncanny sense of how children will respond to a character, situation or a line of dialogue. Plays are workshopped until they are truly the best they can be, which benefits both the playwright and the audience. It has been my honor to have eight of my own plays commissioned, developed and produced by SCT in close collaboration with Linda. Six of them have won Distinguished Play awards from The American Alliance of Theatre and Education, including one I am accepting this week in Milwaukee. Over the past several decades plays developed at SCT have won this award more than plays from any other theatre in the country. Linda has created a space where writers are empowered to transcend what is merely good work and create exceptional art. Whether for herself, her theatre or her collaborators, Linda holds the same high standards and demands nothing less than excellence.

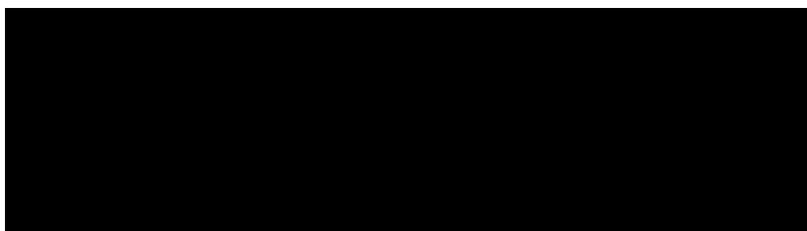
Linda's inspiring personal history mirrors the meteoric rise of her theatre. Coming from a family background of modest means, she faced some of the darkest fears and shadows any person can face and came through them with a sense of humor, joy and optimism that has fueled virtually all of her creative work. In the more than 80 plays she has directed in Seattle and all over the world, many feature child protagonists who triumph over adversity with courage, dignity and grace. Linda makes plays about child heroes because she was one. Linda believes that every play for young people must contain an element of hope, because hope has always been her mantra. She is a living example of the power of paradox in life and art that comes with the ability to embrace fear and courage, joy and sorrow, despair and hope, not as opposites but as manifestations of the same life affirming energy. This understanding lies at the heart of her deep respect for children individually as people and collectively as discerning sophisticated audience members. The work of Linda's theatre goes far beyond the usual fare in children's entertainment. She has established an ethos for creative work that applies just as much to adults as to children.

Linda Hartzell's contributions to the field of theatre for both children and adults cannot be overestimated. As a Board Member of several of the major theatrical service organizations such as Theatre Communications Group and Stage Directors and Choreographers Society, she has earned the respect and admiration of working professionals, theatre critics and administrators nationwide. In doing so she has brought honor and name recognition to her city and her state.

On a personal level, those who know Linda well know of her razor sharp intelligence and the breadth of her knowledge of literature, politics, philosophy and history even though she sometimes keeps these attributes tucked away under a veneer of modesty and self-deprecation. Her generosity is legendary and extends to everyone she encounters from the artists on creative teams, to the staff members of her organization, to children in the lobby or on the street outside the theatre. All are treated with equal respect and kindness.

Linda Hartzell always puts the theatre and others before herself. When honors and opportunities for praise present themselves she waves them away, asking that the spotlight shine on those around her. I sincerely hope that your selection committee will recognize that the fire that illuminates the work of Seattle Children's Theatre starts with Linda Hartzell. I hope you will seriously consider her for a personal Governor's Arts Award, I can think of no one, in your state or in the country, more deserving!

Sincerely,





COLLEGE OF  
ARTS AND SCIENCES

August 4, 2015

Nomination of Linda Hartzell  
For the 2015 Governor's Arts & Heritage Awards

Dear Awards Selection Panel:

I'm honored to nominate Linda Hartzell for the 2015 Governor's Arts and Heritage Award. Linda exemplifies the Award through her 31 years of service as the Artistic Director of the Seattle Children's Theatre (SCT) and her contribution to the field of children's theatre throughout the United States and in fact, around the world. Linda is a pioneer in the field of producing professional drama for young audiences and for supporting the work of hundreds of playwrights through the production of 110 world premiere plays during her tenure as Artistic Director. Linda has mentored countless Washington artists who seek to develop their craft and remain in Washington when Hollywood and New York can be alluring to further their artistic careers. Linda is an educator, children's advocate and is often consulted by arts and non-arts leaders for her advice on developing strong educational programs for children.

I had the honor of sharing the leadership of SCT with Linda as Managing Director from 2001-2007. As her producing partner, I was able to witness Linda's generosity, compassion and true creative genius firsthand. I often would read a script of a selected play and could not imagine how it could be produced on a tight budget; large casts, multiple scenes, music, choreography and complicated props. On opening night, I would sit in awe as I watched Linda's artistry in action and see the children in the audience in rapt attention with the story being told on stage. The post-play conversations were always my favorite. Children would run up to Linda and want to know how the theatre magic happened, what happened to their favorite character after the play, and to suggest their treasured books for future productions. Linda would always kneel down and make eye contact with the child and give them her full and undivided attention. This personal connection to her audience and her community is a Linda Hartzell trademark.

Linda has received many awards and recognitions over the years but I know she would be truly honored to be recognized by the state that she has called home for over 50 years. She is truly an artistic treasure for our state.

Sincerely,

[Redacted signature block]

DEPARTMENT OF FINE ARTS

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# Seattle Children's Theatre

**Linda Hartzell's Recent Work with Distinguished Playwrights**  
For these works Linda was both Dramaturg\* and Director

**Link to Video Clip Compilation:** <http://youtu.be/98E7WHsYQ1Y>

*(Please note, due to Actor's Equity regulations, SCT videos are for archival purposes only, so these clips only hint at the quality of the actual productions.)*



**A Single Shard, 2011**

**By Robert Schenkkan**



**Mwindo, 2015**

**By Cheryl L. West**



**James and the Giant Peach, 2013-14**

**Book by Timothy A. MacDonald; Words and Music by Justin Paul and Benj Pasek;  
based on the book by Roald Dahl**

\*A dramaturg is a person who works to help shape the development of a play from the writing stage through the on-stage presentation.

COVER STORY

WRITTEN BY MISHA BERSON  
PHOTOGRAPHED BY JIMI LOTT

NORTHWEST PEOPLE



## Seattle Children's Theatre director takes her cues from the real world

Once upon a time there was a little girl who, when things got tense and scary at home, would curl up with the family atlas. She turned the pages carefully, and fantasized about all the places she would visit someday. That is, when she grew up and had a life of her own.

Many years later, that wistful child has become a very well-traveled adult. She has ventured to Japan, to Prague, to Holland, Spain and other foreign lands, often as a welcomed cultural emissary. But even when at home in Seattle, just a few miles south of where she grew up, she's come farther than she ever would have imagined.



After every performance at Seattle Children's Theatre, actors sit down to talk about the play with their young audiences. Here, Hartzell, center, joins them after a performance of "Johnny Tremain."

Her name is Linda Hartzell. An apple-cheeked, vivacious woman of 53, she now presides over a world of story and fantasy as the dedicated, celebrated head of a Northwest cultural treasure, Seattle Children's Theatre. During her 17 years in charge, Hartzell has nurtured the theater into one of the nation's leading drama companies for young people. Once a lively but broke troupe working out of a well-worn hall at Woodland Park Zoo, SCT has blossomed into a Seattle Center mainstay with a \$5.4-million budget, a staff of 80 and a state-of-the-art, two-theater playhouse with an annual attendance of 280,000.

Ben Cameron, director of Theatre Communications Group, a major national drama network, is one of her many fans. He places Hartzell "at the forefront of the theater-for-young-audiences movement. She's an outstanding, visionary advocate for raising standards in that field."

Not much given to shining the spotlight on herself, Hartzell takes quiet pride in all of this. She's proud, too, of having won the respect of children, parents, educators and theatrical peers for mounting highly polished shows that don't talk down to kids or sell their intelligence and imagination short — from non-cutesie versions of "Winnie the Pooh" and "Charlotte's Web" to sophisticated condensations of "Cyrano de Bergerac" and "Romeo and Juliet."

In action rehearsing a workshop of the upcoming fantasy drama "Holes," this self-assured director pleasantly but firmly guides a group of young male actors through the complex production. Hartzell knows just the effects she wants onstage, and she goes about achieving them with the brisk confidence of a successful artist in her element.



Known as an able fund-raiser as well as an accomplished director, Linda Hartzell is proud of this wall of tiles created at the theater as part of one fund-raising campaign. Many of the handmade tiles are from children who depicted scenes and characters from plays they'd seen at the theater.

But how she got to where she is, what she overcame to get there, is nearly as compelling as what she's built. It is a sometimes dark but ultimately inspiring tale of family dysfunction, alcoholism and violence, of balancing single motherhood with the demands of art, of breaking through in a tough, male-dominated field with one's humanity intact. It's a story about a woman of sweetness and spine whose compassionate devotion to young people is hard-earned. And it's a story the gregarious yet deeply private Hartzell hasn't shared in public. Not wanting to appear poor-me, she does so now only because she's been asked.

• • •

Like most stories about childhood and growing up, Hartzell's begins with her parents, who met during World War II at a giant USO dance. "My Dad, Joe Misiuda, was in the Army," stationed at Fairchild Air Force Base outside Spokane, she recounts. "He was third-generation Polish from Chester, Pennsylvania, and so poor he didn't have dress shoes for the dance. He had to borrow some that didn't fit, and wound up limping all the way home."

Tight shoes and all, Joe caught the fancy of young Darlene Law, a Spokane native of Scottish-Irish extraction, who worked in a Lewiston, Idaho, daycare center. When Joe said blithely he'd marry Darlene the next time he saw her, she took him at his word. She showed up with marriage on her mind when he returned from combat duty in Guam, in 1945.

The newlyweds moved back East to Chester, where Joe worked as a machinist and Darlene gave birth to Linda in 1948, daughter Susan five years later and son Joe a year after that.

Her parents' marriage was always rocky. "Things were not good, you could tell," she recalls. "One moment it would feel OK. But my Dad was an alcoholic, and as a child you were always afraid something awful was going to happen. Because there were bad scenes — often."

In 1957, the family moved to Everett. Her father worked hard all week as a machinist, but drank steadily all weekend. "He was a mean drunk and physically abusive to my mother, though never to me," Hartzell says. "So I became the funny one in the family, the nurturer, the one who makes everything OK and everybody laugh. That's typical of children of alcoholics, particularly the eldest. It's textbook.



At age 5, Linda Hartzell dresses in her Sunday best for Easter in Chester, Penn.



Hartzell, center, began her theater career as an actress with a great singing voice. Here she poses with cast mates of "Cheez Whiz" at the Empty Space Theatre in 1975.

"My mother would tell me everything, I became her confidant when I was too young. Then I'd go to school, and a kid would say, 'I saw your father's car parked in front of the tavern,' and I felt so humiliated. I was embarrassed we never had anyone over to our house, because the few times we did my Dad was so awful."

Still, along with the torment, there was much affection: "Look, my folks really, really loved their kids, and they made me feel like the most beautiful, the most gifted, the most wonderful person in the world. During the week, when he was sober, my Dad was so funny and playful. My Mom sang in a trio, like the Andrews Sisters. They weren't into art or books or high culture, but there was laughter, music and silliness in the house. I remember really happy times with my Dad watching Sid Caesar on TV, old Charlie Chaplin movies, Ed Sullivan's show."

Early on, Hartzell had a yen to clown around, too. "The first time I got a laugh I was 5. I told a joke at a big Thanksgiving family dinner. Everybody stopped, watched me and laughed. I thought, o-o-o-kay . . . This is great!"

By fourth grade, she was producing and starring in classroom versions of "Rumpelstiltskin" and "Hansel and Gretel." And by middle school, Hartzell had a part-time carhop job at Dog 'N Suds drive-in, appeared in school shows, and was "Miss Perfect, Miss Goody Two-Shoes, Miss Head of Everything. I was going to make everybody in the *whole world* laugh."

She found several key adult mentors, including her drama teacher at Lynnwood's Meadowdale High School, Bill Crossett. Hartzell was an initially timid but vibrant teenager, he says. "She had this tremendous sense of humor. She was in the chorus when we did 'Finian's Rainbow,' and stood out with this wonderful presence, this pizzazz. When we did 'Boys From Syracuse' she got a big part, sang a featured number, and was terrific."

As for her problems at home, Crossett says, "Linda never spoke about them. I didn't have any indication at the time that she had a troubled family life."

But troubled it was. Her father continued to drink heavily. "I stayed really busy, and the rest of the time I practically lived at the movies," Hartzell says. "Anything — anything to get out of the house."

After high school, she went as far away as she could get — to Washington State University in Pullman, on an academic scholarship. "I never, never thought theater was something I'd do for a living. I thought for sure I'd be a lawyer, or a historian. But I'd always been such a goody-goody in school that when I got to WSU I just went wild! I partied a lot, skipped classes and blew my scholarship."

She also auditioned badly for a part in an acting class, and was told by a teacher, "You have no talent." Deflated, Hartzell didn't perform for four years. But after transferring to the University of Washington, she

### Coming attractions

The Seattle Children's Theatre operates the Charlotte Martin Theatre and Eve Alvord Theatre at the Seattle Center. Tickets, from \$14.50 to \$22.50, are sold at the SCT box office or by phone at 206-441-3322.

**"The Hoboken Chicken Emergency."** Linda Hartzell directs a spoofy sci-fi musical by Chad Henry. Nov. 9 — Jan. 5. For kids ages 5 and up.

**"The Wrestling Season."** A show exploring peer pressure and the search for identity. Jan. 11 — Feb. 16. Ages 12 and up.

**"Charlotte's Web."** A dramatization by Joseph Robinette of E.B. White's beloved tale of friendship between a pig and a spider. Jan. 18 — March 30. Ages 4 and up.

**"Into the West."** This modern folktale concerns two children who are given a magic white horse. March 1 — April 28. Ages 8 and up.

signed up for an acting class, and things started turning around.

"I had great, encouraging drama teachers at UW," Hartzell recalls, "professional actors and directors like Ted D'Arms, Eve Roberts, Greg Falls. But I still didn't believe I'd ever *work* in theater. I thought I'd be a teacher, so I majored in education and drama."

Fellow student Chad Henry says Hartzell "seemed very shy, extremely self-conscious then. I never would have pegged her as someone who'd find success in the theater, though she obviously loved it."

Indeed, while most of her UW friends were off forming theater troupes and protesting the Vietnam War, Hartzell got married at 21 to a public-school teacher, Will Hartzell, and had a son, Adam. "I was a stay-at-home mom, counting checks at night for Seafirst Bank to make money. Then one day a friend called and said, 'I'm doing this late-night show at Empty Space Theatre. Want to be in it?'"

• • •



Visually attuned and detail-oriented, Hartzell stays involved with costumers all through the process. At left, she checks with costume designer Scott Gray on the progress of a costume for "The Hoboken Chicken Emergency," one of just two plays she is directing this season.

In what's been her pattern, Hartzell's drive and vitality won out over her timidity. "I'm the kind of person, if anybody ever asks me to dance I say yes," she says with a wry laugh. "I'm so flattered to be asked that I never say no, even when I want to. That's the child of an alcoholic talking."

Back then, in 1974, the Empty Space on Capitol Hill was the hippest stage in town, a haven for such zesty talents as Lori Larsen, John Aylward and Kurt Beattie. The late-night show Hartzell joined was the wacky revue "Cheez Whiz, or Puttin'on the Ritz."

"The most astonishing thing about Linda, which most people don't know," says "Cheez Whiz" castmate Beattie, now associate artistic director of A Contemporary Theatre, "is what an incredible singing voice she has. She sang 'Ain't Misbehavin' in that show and knocked our socks off."

Co-actor Steve Tomkins, who now heads Issaquah's Village Theatre, recalls Hartzell as "very, very nervous at the time, because she hadn't done much onstage. She was always terribly self-effacing and apologetic, but so funny."

What started out as a "one-shot deal" turned into a months-long run, and Hartzell was on her way.

Then, it happened.

On a visit to her parents' Stanwood home one day, Hartzell noticed that her mother's face was badly bruised. "Mom lied again, said she had tripped and fallen, but I knew my Dad had hit her. I'd begged her so many times to leave, but she always covered for him."

Hartzell's mother enjoyed babysitting for 18-month-old Adam, and, insisting everything would be fine, begged to be allowed to continue. Not long after, Hartzell allowed Adam to

stay overnight at his grandparents' house. When she came to fetch him the next day, her teenage brother met her at the door.

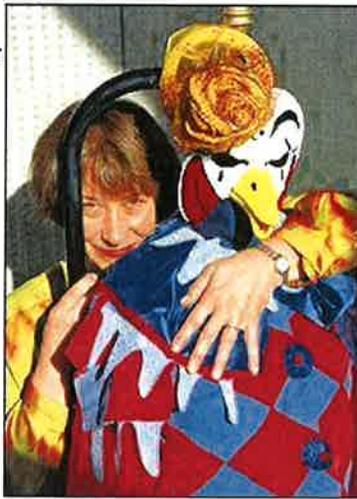
"Mom's dead," he told her. "Dad shot her."

"Apparently my Dad was very drunk, and was outside shooting his gun in the air to get their horse back into the corral," Hartzell explains 26 years later. "He went into the kitchen and Mom said, 'Is that gun loaded?' Dad got real belligerent with her, told her no, then pulled the trigger. If they'd been in Seattle, she would have lived. But it took an hour for an ambulance to get to her."

On April 13, 1975, a short item in an Everett newspaper reported that police booked Joseph Stanley Misiuda, 51, into the Snohomish County Jail on murder charges. It identified the victim as 52-year-old Darlene Misiuda.

• • •

Sitting in her own pretty, quiet North Seattle living room with its Puget Sound view and array of family pictures, including some of her parents, Hartzell relates the story evenly — until she recalls seeing her distraught father in court. Then the tears come. "We all stood up for him, because it wasn't premeditated, just the bad judgment of a drunk," she says. Joe Misiuda was convicted of second-degree manslaughter, and served a short jail term. "He loved her, and felt terrible about everything," his daughter says now. "Then he went through detox in jail, and an alcohol program, and I finally got to know my real Dad. When he died of a heart attack at 68, I was really sad.



**Left** - Hartzell is happy to give the chicken costume a hug. **Below** - She waits for an elevator to move the dummy of a wounded soldier from "Johnny Tremain."



In their North Seattle home, Hartzell shares life and chuckles with her husband, teacher Mark Perry, and their dog, Ziggy. Hartzell is modeling a mask the couple bought on one of their many trips.

"For so many years he'd been sick, sick, sick from alcoholism. I just want people to realize that alcoholism really is a horrible disease, and my father should have been treated for it. If he had been, my mother might still be alive."

Used to deflecting despair and self-pity with hard work and a zany, self-deprecating wit, Hartzell insists she didn't have it so bad as a kid. "Many children have it so much worse than I did." Still, those years have left their mark.

"I'm very careful when our theater does plays with difficult subjects," Hartzell says. "We adults forget, when we do a play about child abuse or addiction or some other horrific thing, that one out of 10 kids seeing it have to go home to the same problem that night. For this reason, every single play we do gives the child some little sense of hope that life can get better."

If children in difficult straits glean hope from her story, Hartzell will be gratified. But she also wants "some parents to take a hard look at themselves, and remember how crucial it is to be responsible, honest adults, and role models for their kids."

Hartzell did not sink into despondency because of the tragedy in her family. But she abruptly ended her marriage to Will Hartzell. "He's a great, sweet guy," she offers. "I just went a little crazy after Mom's death."

And, she admits now that as a struggling single parent and busy theater worker, she wasn't always the "perfect" mother. "I dragged Adam with me a lot to work, and still feel guilty about that," she confesses. "I'd take him in his little Snoopy sleeping bag to rehearsals with me. At age 4 he'd say, 'Mom, the pace of Act II is too slow.' " But she's very proud that today, at 27, he is a "healthy, happy person," an investment banker in New York.

For his part, Adam acknowledges resenting how much time she spent at the theater — "it was all-consuming to her." But all grown up, he appreciates the example she set.

"One memory I have is of when I was going through a tough time myself, and Mom told me, 'Look, you can either be a victim or a survivor. I chose to be a survivor, and you can, too.'

"My mother deals with the world from a position of strength," he says. "And I admire that about her very much."

• • •

After the shooting, Hartzell revealed her strength by throwing herself, full-force, into Seattle's amped-up theater scene: acting in more shows, then jump-starting a directing career with a peppy version of "The Pajama Game" at a Snoqualmie Falls theater.

Her star rose as she won kudos directing hit shows at Group Theatre, Skid Road Theatre and Pioneer Square Theater — where she staged the biggest smash in Seattle theater history, a spoofy, feminist, punk-rock musical by AM Collins and Chad Henry called "Angry Housewives." It ran here eight years, and is still performed nationwide.

To make ends meet, Hartzell also spent a decade teaching drama at Lakeside School, "where I learned so much about kids, and about my craft. You learn composition when you're moving 40 kids around onstage." Another steady gig in the '70s was acting with a frisky, city-financed ensemble that performed smart plays for young folk, at the Poncho Theater in Woodland Park Zoo. She met her second husband, Waldorf School teacher Mark Perry, in a Poncho version of "Cinderella." But by 1984, the group, known as the Seattle Children's Theatre, had lost its city financing and its artistic director.

"I was hunting for someone to fill the void," says veteran children's theater board member Eleanor Nolan, "and Linda Hartzell's name kept coming up. People raved about her. At first she told me, 'I can't do it. I don't even know what an artistic director does.' She didn't even have a résumé."

But Hartzell was asked to dance again, and she soon whirled into action and took the gig. Over time, she managed to increase the pay for the actors, raise more local and national funding, beef up the theater school (which now serves 3,600 kids a year) and use her sharp instincts ("I'm basically an entrepreneur") to create some savvy, populist programming.

Example: Through sheer moxie, Hartzell persuaded basketball great Bill Russell to star in "The Former One-on-One Basketball Champion," a terrific publicity ploy. She also invited major playwrights (John Olive, Steven Dietz, Len Jenkin) to write new scripts for youths, thus blurring the hard line between children's drama and adult theater.

She lured kids to their first live shows with titles they'd recognize ("Little Lulu," "Treasure Island," "The Hardy Boys"), and tackled sensitive topics onstage — the internment of Japanese Americans (in "Naomi's Road"), civil rights ("Little Rock"), the plight of Native-American children ("The Rememberer"). The theater's Deaf Youth Drama Program became a

national model.

But Hartzell's biggest legacy to Seattle Children's Theatre will likely be her championing of the \$12 million Charlotte Martin Theatre, the attractive and versatile complex the company built in 1993. (The gleaming Allen Pavilion, the company's new technical facility, opened next door last year.)

Says Peter Donnelly, head of Seattle's Corporate Council for the Arts: "The children's theater was on the verge of dissolving, and Linda turned it into something marvelous. She's very hands-on, very engaged on every front. She works as hard as anyone I know."

• • •

On a recent workday, you might have found Hartzell calmly conducting a technical rehearsal in the Charlotte Martin Theatre, or looking in on preparations for another director's show, in the smaller Eve Alvord theater.

Or you might have tracked her down to a spiffy theater conference room, sitting before a dollhouse-sized scale model of a stage set, swapping ideas with scenic designer Carey Wong.

Or you could have caught up with her out in the community, graciously representing SCT and accepting another honor for her contributions to the local arts scene. (Earlier this year she received the Gregory A. Falls Sustained Achievement Award from Theatre Puget Sound.)

Wherever Hartzell is these days, she tends to exude good cheer and a passionate concern for young people. Around the theater, colleagues know her as a warm-hearted earth mother — and relentless dynamo.

"When the big earthquake happened in Seattle last spring, I was rehearsing a show at SCT," recalls Seattle actor-director Jeff Steitzer. "Linda came in and hugged everybody and said, 'This has been scary, so we have to be really good to each other.' She's the sort of person who'll bring in fruit for the actors, she'll bring in rolls."

"Linda is very warm, very generous but she has a tough side, too," notes composer and former classmate Chad Henry. "When she plants her feet in the ground and decides to do something, you don't mess with her."

While the grit and the hustle are still there, Hartzell admits to "working 45 hours a week now, instead of 60," thanks in good part to her reliance on two trusted artistic associates, Rita Giomi and Deborah Frockt. This year Hartzell will direct only two SCT shows: Henry's "The Hoboken Chicken Emergency" and "Holes," by award-winning children's author Louis Sachar. She'll take more time to read (books on politics and history are favorites), to travel, to stop and smell the roses in her lush new garden.

Moreover, Hartzell says she has come to terms with her turbulent past. And talking about it now is "part of my healing process."

The once-upon-a-time fearful little girl has grown up to be a confident, accomplished woman. And though she's skeptical about happy-ever-after endings, Linda Hartzell thinks every child deserves some hope.

"I never promise kids a happy ending, because in the '50s we were promised that and it often didn't happen," she muses. "But kids aren't cynical. They're usually loyal and trustworthy, even in the worst circumstances. And they need to hear that life can get better, if they just hold on."

*Misha Berson is theater critic for The Seattle Times. Jimi Lott is a Times staff photographer.*

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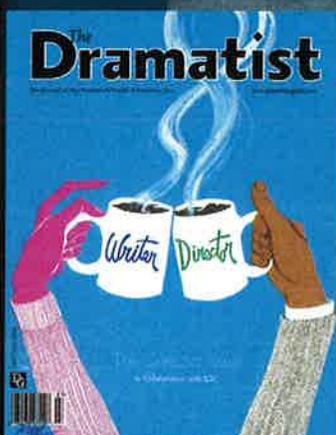
# JOURNAL

SDC

SPRING 2014 | SPECIAL ISSUE

BASED ON TRUST

## LINDA HARTZELL + Y YORK



**SPECIAL ISSUE**  
IN COLLABORATION WITH  
THE DRAMATISTS GUILD

**SDC** STAGE  
DIRECTORS AND  
CHOREOGRAPHERS  
SOCIETY

## IT STARTS WITH THE TEXT

GRACIELA DANIELE,  
LYNN AHRENS +  
STEPHEN FLAHERTY

THE  
CHICAGO  
AESTHETIC  
DIRECTORS +  
PLAYWRIGHTS  
IN THE WINDY CITY

IN RESIDENCE  
DANIEL EZRALOW

BACKSTAGE  
DANCE CAPTAINS

+ MORE



# BASED ON TRUST

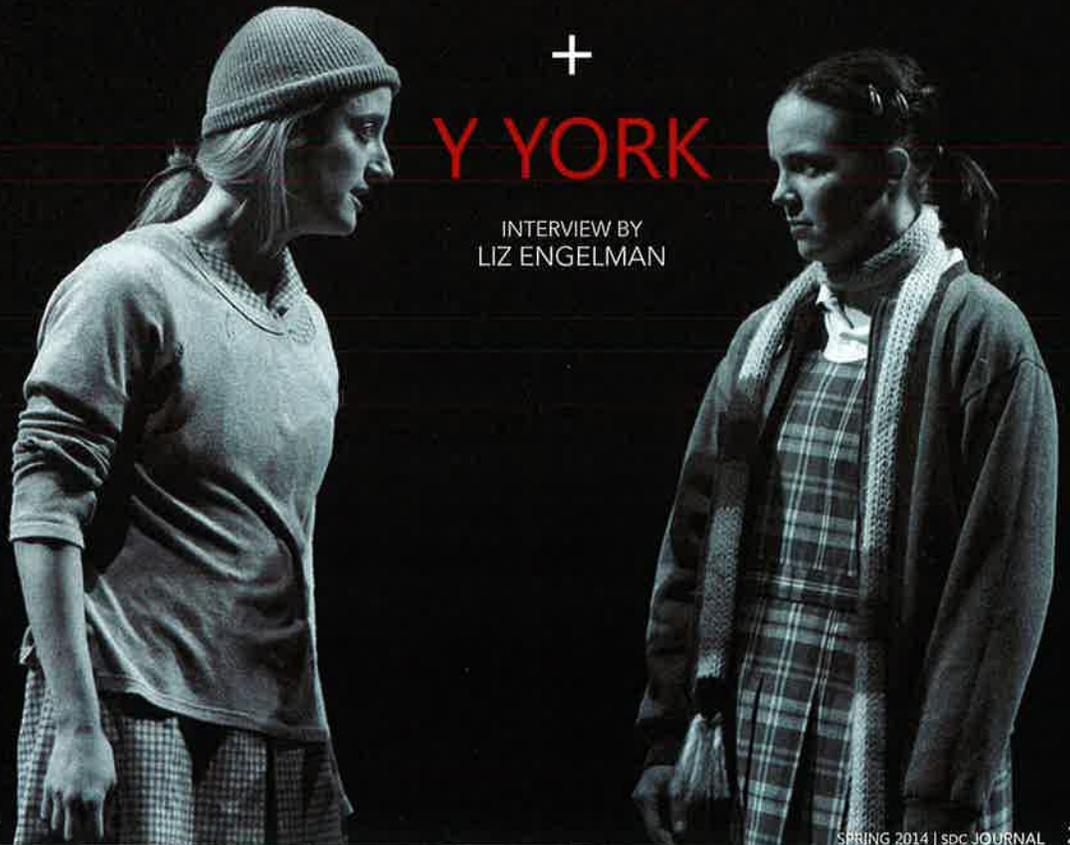
IN CONVERSATION  
WITH

LINDA  
HARTZELL

+

Y YORK

INTERVIEW BY  
LIZ ENGELMAN



Jennifer Lee Taylor + Emily Hunt  
in *Afternoon of the Elves*  
PHOTO Windmill Performing Arts



*The Witch of Blackbird Pond*  
PHOTO Chris Bennion

sending you the book." And I said, "Okay, send me the book. I'll read the book." It was a complete stall, because I'd never adapted a book. I'd never written a play for children, and I was so overwhelmed with the possibility that I would disappoint you that I was about to turn you down.

And then, well, I liked the book, and my husband, **Mark [Lutwak]**—he was really on me to give this a go. He said, "You have to give it a go, you're in a rut, try something new." So I said yes without really having a clue how to proceed, just with this arrogant notion that whatever I was going to write was going to be a play I could be proud of.

**LIZ** | Linda, given that Y was playing hard-to-get in your courting process, and the fact that she had never adapted before, what made you think that Y might want to adapt this book, and what kept you going through her hard-to-get?

**LINDA** | She's fun to be with at parties! That's what kept me going. [laughter] I had seen in some of her other work what I thought would be right for this first story. She finds the heart of a character, she gives a unique and a different voice to every character. Interesting patterns and idiomatic phrases that make one character sound different than the other. She shows us, she doesn't tell us, so the plot is interesting and moves along and you're surprised. And she does not overwrite; she doesn't use the play to posture about every single theory and belief in the world. I love to read editorials, but I'd rather read an editorial in a newspaper than share it in a play.

I saw a respect for the work, and I've seen that through every single play that we've done with Y here, which is eight or nine now. Most of these we commissioned. I saw a respect for the work and a respect for the audience. She doesn't talk down to kids and she keeps her plays theatrically surprising. I saw that from the very beginning, and that's never changed.

**Y** | When I look back at these 22 years of collaboration and friendship, I see myself back then as really somebody who was just beginning. I was such a beginner when I hit Seattle; I had a couple of plays, but I'd never had a commission. I'd never gone through the development process with anyone.

I'd write a play and I thought my job was to go to rehearsal and explain to everybody what they needed to do in order to make my play work. What I have learned is that this process is so much better when I write a play and I go into the room with these other people

**LIZ ENGELMAN** | I am here with two longtime collaborators, Y York and **Linda Hartzell**. Y is a prolific and widely produced playwright who in the last three years alone has premiered three plays: *Crash* at Seattle Children's Theatre, *Don't Tell Me I Can't Fly* at First Stage Milwaukee, and *Star Girl* at People's Light & Theatre Company. Among her many awards, Y is a proud recipient of the Smith Prize for *...and LA Is Burning* and a recipient of the Charlotte Chorpenning Award for her body of work.

Linda Hartzell has been the Artistic Director of Seattle Children's Theatre and has led its education program since 1984, where she has directed more than 62 plays, over 45 of which were world premieres. In addition to her SCT productions, Linda has directed plays both across the country and abroad. Among her many honors, she has received the ArtsFund's Outstanding Achievement in the Arts Award in 2009, and the prestigious Gregory Falls Sustained Achievement Award from Theatre Puget Sound in 2001.

I have known Y and Linda for a long time from my years in Seattle and beyond, but this may actually be the first time I've had the opportunity and pleasure to talk with both of you together in virtual person. I'll begin by asking: how did the two of you first meet?

**Y** | It was at a conference—some college south of Seattle. **John Dillon** had invited Jon Klein, **Steven Dietz**, and me to talk to children's theatre directors. We went to this children's theatre conference and the first question that they asked us—we were the playwright

panel—was, "What's the worst experience you've ever had with a director?" And then it was like somebody pushed our "on" buttons and I think we went on for about an hour.

And that's when I met Linda. I remember this lady sitting very close to the front row, looking at us all very quizzically and fiercely.

**LINDA** | I think after hearing funny, smart, compassionate Y speak—I knew Steven and Jon already—I thought, "Oh my gosh, I need to talk to her. I need to learn more about her." So I read—and please correct me if I've got the name wrong—I read a play that she'd written, *If It Rained No Fish*. Is that the title of the play?

**Y** | No. *Rained. Some Fish. No Elephants.*

**LINDA** | There you go. And so I opened up the play and here was the funniest stage direction in the history of mankind, and I thought, she's so funny, she's not pretentious, she's imaginative; I think we should talk to her about commissioning her for something at Seattle Children's Theatre.

I think I called you up...I can't remember if I went to your house, and you—as you always did—treated me to some delicious vegetarian black bean soup, and we talked about what the first project would be.

**Y** | You called me on the phone and you started talking to me about the book *Afternoon of the Elves*, and I started talking you out of hiring me—that's the way it went—and you said "No, no, I'm not *not* hiring you, I'm

and I am quiet. I can see more clearly what is there for people to get, and when it isn't there for them to get it; I can see how to not blame them. Instead, blame the play, because maybe—even though it's in my mind—maybe it's not on the page yet. That is an amazing thing that you get to discover when you have a development process. To me, the workshop is imperative, and if I don't get one from a theatre, I invent my own. I have to have the voices in the air and I have to have the collaborator there, not to tell me how to fix stuff, but to tell me when something is wrong or missing or when I'm going down a wrong path.

I have to say Linda is amazing at this. When we were working one afternoon on *Elves*, there was a scene that we kept going back to. I couldn't figure out what it was, because it looked like all the other scenes to me and it sounded like all the other scenes to me, and having to dissect this scene was like an evolution for me. And I realized the kids—the two characters were Hillary and Sara Kate—they were not playing. They were talking about playing. And just to stay on track with this scene that wasn't working for Linda, even though I couldn't hear that, allowed me to develop the notion of being able to analyze a scene. I can track back to *Afternoon of the Elves* for that discovery.

The other thing about collaboration that I attribute to *Elves* was the idea that the production is also the storyteller. When you have a director who can see that we're going from one day into the next and how we can do that with a light shift and having the character come into the scene the next morning in her nightgown, then I don't have to write it. I can cut those 40 words. And we have achieved something elegantly and collaboratively better than what I could do on my own.

**LIZ** | Talk a little bit about what that conversation looks like to get to your realizations in the two examples you just shared. For example, talking about playing versus actually playing. Is that something that Linda said to you that you resisted at first? Did you come to understand that on your own over time? What was the conversation to get you to that realization?

**Y** | It was the introduction of the term "active." I think, at that time in my playwriting life, action and activity were still intermingled in their definition, and suddenly they were no longer intermingled. A play is active when one character is trying to get something from another character in a scene; when that's there, then no matter what they're talking about,

the play is active. Linda said the scene was not active, and it wasn't that I resisted her or thought it was active. I didn't even know what the term really meant. Because I used to be an actor, it took reading the scene out loud to myself to realize there was nothing to act; nobody's trying to impress, nobody's trying to overcome, nobody's trying to connect. There was just reflection and I don't really like reflection in a play.

**LINDA** | Yes, both of us have been actors in the past. So I think we always, in the back of our mind, put ourselves up there. We expect the actors to execute what she, the playwright and me, the director, want them to. So we put ourselves in their place to see: how easy is this to play? Are there huge leaps that are being made? What's the conflict between the two characters? And Y could see that.

Y has an honest way, not a confrontational way; she doesn't make me play 20 questions with her as a director. We discovered how to explore and solve things together. She said, "It's in my head, it's not on the page." That's what she and I have been able to do with a lot of time and trust and finding ways to communicate. "I want you to be happy; I want it to be the play you wanted to write. You're the composer and I'm the conductor, and together we find the music, the rhythms, the different movements, the tone. I always remind Miss Beethoven, if it's still in your head, then the notes may not be on the page."

Another thing that I have learned working with Y—and not to be condescending when I say

this—but I've learned that when you teach or when you work with actors, I've learned very early on with the playwright, to read them. What kind of a person are they? Do they want a lot of notes, do they not want a lot of notes? When is something clear, when is something hard, when is something easy?

When I'm working with Y, most times, I'm not just the director but also the dramaturg. I've learned with her that in a fun, humorous, cordial way, how and when to give thoughts and notes. I've learned from Y to be much more concise, to find the time when it's right to say something, when it's right to ask a question. It used to take me five hours to get my notes out because I didn't want to hurt her feelings, and now I think in a more direct way...and I always start with all the things that are working. We're human beings. We need to hear what's working.

**LIZ** | Do you feel as if this conversation has changed over the 22 years you've worked together? That the trust and friendship that you've built has afforded you the luxury of cutting to the chase? You mention the dramaturgical aspect of this, phrasing things in terms of questions and enabling the playwright to find what they're trying to say rather than give them your own solution. Is it easier now to say, "Hey, that's not working"? Is that familiarity a journey that you've taken together?

**Y** | It's totally a journey we've taken together, and here's the thing: Linda's extreme gift is that she can identify what isn't there, which is a miracle because how do you know what isn't



Debra Pralle + Kelly Boulware in the world premiere of *The Mask of the Unicorn*  
PHOTO Chris Bennion

there? Also, Linda knows when you're going to lose the audience; she knows when there's a dip in the storytelling or the conflict, and she will identify those moments. I'd be a fool not to listen to her. It's an evolution; I didn't know this when we did our first play together, but when I saw it, I saw that whatever didn't work was something that she'd pointed out. We have this trust; I'm not defensive. At least I'm much less defensive than I used to be.

**LINDA** | I think what develops over time is trust, and I think in theatre we know we need trust—everything we do is based on trust. Yet sometimes we take it for granted what is required when you build a basis of trust. It means, again, you know, 101 corny things about a good relationship, be it a romantic or working relationship. That means when things are tough, you're going to work on it in a healthy, productive way; you're not going to take advantage of the other person and there's going to be patience, there's going to be kindness, and there's going to be respect. I think it allows you to take time, it allows you to breathe, it allows you to be a little bit vulnerable, knowing ultimately you're on the same page and the end result is going to be ultimately what you dreamed in the very beginning what it would be. Luckily with *Y*, I've been pleased with her scripts since the very beginning, and she's been pleased with the end result when she saw the play.

**LIZ** | Trust is also helpful when you are in a disagreement, because collaboration is not synonymous with agreement. How do you negotiate disagreements? What has that looked like?

**Y** | I think a disagreement is often a misunderstanding. Part of the process of making a script into a production is the design process, which can be challenging and lead to disagreement. I'm not a visual girl. I don't know what they're wearing, I don't know what the set looks like. But through the design process I can see if there's an understanding of how the play is moving. If we're going from the desert into the professor's backyard and I see there's a costume change, I know that there's a misunderstanding, because no time has evolved between those two scenes. That's why I'm interested in lighting design, costume design, and set design. The reason that I'm there is so that I can see if everybody knows how the play moves. If we disagree, I always think I'm right, but you know, you can be right and quiet; it's actually kind of amusing to be right and quiet.

**LINDA** | I don't want it to be just my idea; I want it to be something that the playwright is proud of and envisions. I'm proud to say over all the years that I've been [at SCT], with all the commissions we've done, I think everybody's walked away going, wow, that

was an honorable, worthy experience and we worked through the differences because we listened to each other. We were connected, we were joined at the hip; you can't run if you're tripping each other.

**Y** | I remember when we were working on my adaptation of *The Witch of Blackbird Pond*, which was directed by John Dillon. I'd just come off *Afternoon of the Elves*; in retrospect, I was incredibly lucky, because I had made this very funny, moving play. When I dove into *Witch*, I was so excited because I'd made this play where there had been no play, out of this incredibly vast, sprawling story that takes place over a year. The play takes place over a matter of days, and it was really fun and it was funny.

We read the play. There was just complete disappointment in the room, and I was upset and the theatre was upset and I think it actually could have been a divorce. I was flying off to somewhere and I took the play and I took the book; my husband Mark read the book and he said, "Well, you can do it, like a page-to-stage thing." I said, "I'm not going to do that." And then I realized I had heard very little of what was said in the room. But there was this one word, and I think it was Linda who said it, and the word was "danger." I had successfully removed all the danger from the story, and it was that word, that word was like my way back into the play.

I don't even think I changed the structure; I think scene for scene they're probably identical, but the content of every single one of those scenes changed. And every element, either from the book or elements that I had introduced, became dangerous, instead of elements of joy and discovery and welcomingness—which is what I had turned the story into.

**LIZ** | Can you talk a little bit about what workshop means to you? There are so many definitions.

**LINDA** | Everything. If you need time to explore the text, we're going to read it and give you a couple of days off to do rewrites. If the physical world and the design is going to be helpful, then from day one I've worked way in advance and put the design team there, so that, as Y said earlier, if there are questions about how to make this moment work, we have the time. You have time—drop in 30-foot ropes and teach the actors how to climb up. Then the playwright can say, "Wow, okay, great, I don't need four scenes to explain how they'd gone up into the atmosphere." It's a bad example, but I've learned to put whole teams together way early in advance, because most playwrights love that. I used to be afraid of doing that, afraid to share too much with the playwright for fear they'd want to direct the show or dictate to all the designers how the

world would be. But I find that not to be the case, especially with somebody like Y.

**LIZ** | For example, in *The Mask of the Unicorn*. Y, you have a woman transforming into a unicorn before our very eyes. Did you have a vision in your head of what that might look like?

**LINDA** | Do you want to tell her why we did that play?

**Y** | This is great. Linda's looking for any excuse to be able to promote a play, because you couldn't get a book anymore. You couldn't adapt anything. And it's still true; the movies have everything, all the titles. So Linda goes to France and sees the tapestries in the Musée de Cluny, and she calls me up and says, "Can you write a play based on the old tapestries?" I said, "I don't think so. What's in them?" And she describes this woman sitting in a corral and she's got a unicorn in the corral and she's holding a mirror and she looks in the mirror and she sees the unicorn. I said, "I can do it. I don't need to know anything else, I can do it." I didn't even know what they looked like yet, but I knew I could do it because I'm very fascinated with the mystery of the mirror. It's very alive in my imagination. So I'm living in this valley in Hawaii—Manoa Valley—and the winds at night, it's like they're going to take our house down. And this play comes to me. I love this play; it's so outrageous, but it was also a difficult collaborative experience.

I'm very low-spectacle. Like, my idea of spectacle is that you turn on some twinkle lights. I think that is the degree of spectacle that I appreciate and want in my plays. Did you ever see *Golden Child*? You know how Julyana Soelistyo turns around in a circle and she goes from being seven to being 92? That's kind of what I thought. I said, well, this is what it'll be. It will be the actor, just the actor. Well, we didn't do it like that. We used a puppet. And you know, you can do that on stage; you can have somebody turn around, and with lights and sounds, you can have a puppet appear. It was beautiful. It's not how I envisioned it, but I certainly loved and respected the choice, because the unicorn was very strong. It was a very good presence in the play.

**LINDA** | I feel that that's the one play of the ones we've done together where I totally failed as a director working with designers. I failed because the antagonist in the play is the wind, and I was having a hard time making that present and making it dangerous and more than an offstage character. Even though the world was minimal, I think I allowed everybody to keep adding on and adding on, except for the unicorn—and this was 20 years ago—was designed to be very much like the brilliant horse in the opening of *War Horse*. It was a see-through skeletal puppet operated by humans. The size of a horse and operated as a

puppeteer. It was beautiful, beautiful, beautiful, but we didn't leave the play alone and say, okay, it's finished. I didn't know how to say "Okay, the world is there, the world is done, let it go."

**Y** | There were some terrific successes with that show and I thought that the staging was stunning. When people ask what do you want from a director, I say I want a director who's going to reveal the subjects through staging, because that's not the actors' job. Their job is to play their action. There's so much mystery and secrets in this play, and you could just feel it. You could feel it between the actors, because of the staging. I thought it was gorgeous.

**LIZ** | Along these lines of what's not the actors' responsibility and what the director helps reveal, such as subtext, you've mentioned that you were learning how and when to mete out information and that this play was a prime example of that. Could you talk a little bit more about this?

**Y** | When a play is coming from nothing, coming from air, everything you write is about discovery. Now when I do this, I call this kind of writing "blah-blah," and I don't even have it in play form anymore; I don't allow myself to do that. But I did when I wrote this play. The first scene of this play was so bulky with backstory and exposition it was like an anvil. I realized not only was it awful, but nobody was going to get any of the information because the exposition was not contained in action. It was about looking at all this, figuring out what was actually imperative for anybody to know, and then figuring out a way to get it into the action.

The other thing about *Mask*, which is completely the result of talking to Linda, was how much of the story we contained in the tapestries and how those tapestries were revealed, and the characters' responses to the reveal. Many words got to be eliminated, because the tapestries were telling the story. They were imbuing the danger.

**LIZ** | Y, in several of the plays you've written that I've read, there's an outsider girl protagonist and I'm wondering what draws you to a specific work and sensibility in terms of the plays you choose to work on together, and if this is in the DNA of a sensitivity and a sensibility that you share.

**LINDA** | Y writes female characters in an interesting way. We know who they are because they're a little bit of who we are, yet very different and surprising. There's nothing wrong with being a princess, but these are not your typical princess characters. There are many layers to the characters. There have been strong female characters in most of the shows.

**Y** | Yeah, I keep changing the locks but the outside girl keeps getting in. I'll tell you about a brave female. This is one of my favorite stories. Linda and I are at New Visions and Voices with *Afternoon of the Elves*, and everybody there is at a reading of a new play—not our play—just a reading of a new play. It's the afternoon and it's a musical and it's okay. I don't know much about musicals, but I don't think it's horrible or anything, and it's short.

Afterwards, the discussion starts and almost every person in the room starts hammering this play. I mean, really hammering. And I'm thinking, "Oh my god, are they going to do this to my play?" And this goes on for about six minutes. Linda stands up and she says, "I think everyone here is really hungry. I think that we all really need to go to dinner now." And I just thought that is the kindest, best way anybody ever had their face slapped. It's emblematic to me of her awareness of the room, her generosity, and kindness.

**LIZ** | Which leads to the question of being women artists. Is it different working with each other as women collaborators?

**LINDA** | I think in theatre we can be very cruel, really snide, and selfish at times. More importantly, we forget to go out of our dark theatres and see the rest of the world, be with people who are not in our tribe, who are not like us. We've got to do that, and not think that when a play doesn't work, it's their fault because they're stupid. Y doesn't do that. She is the smartest person in the room. You don't get paid very much in theatre and the hours are really long. I think the best thing is to not work with high maintenance people, you know, but rather mature, generous people who make the process fun and meaningful. That's the kind of woman she is. What I particularly like, though, [is] she's still a girl—and I mean that in the most generous of ways—she's still playful and imaginative and kind and loyal, the way kids are. That's why I love having her at Seattle Children's Theatre; that's why I love to work with her.

**LIZ** | You've created a wonderful home and playground for her at Seattle Children's Theatre and that is so appreciated.

**LINDA** | Yes, and we're going to do another play next year, *The Garden of Rikki Tikki Tavi*. All of Y's plays are stylistically so different; she can write a dark, scary, emotional 17th-century play, and she can write a contemporary, funny, upbeat drama. She's so versatile as a writer.

**LIZ** | Linda, you spoke about comedy and humor, which is so ingrained into who you are, Y. I wonder if children are some of the smartest audience members. Is there a different way of handling humor when you know you're writing a play for them?

**Y** | I really try to get into the head of my nine-year-old characters and try to stay as honest to their points of view and their language as I can. This is what I know about humor and kids' plays: a lot of times the kids don't laugh. They're going to laugh in the *Garden of Rikki Tikki Tavi*, which Linda's going to do, and I'm so glad we're doing it next year because [it] has a lot of slapstick. But really what the kids watch is the character's plight. When the audience is mixed, then the experience becomes mitigated and the adults will laugh in a kind of reminiscent way. So sometimes when the adults laugh, the children will then have the freedom to laugh, too. This also works the other way because kids will laugh at something that's very silly and that will enable the adults to laugh as well.

**LINDA** | I think the rule that we have is: don't ever write a joke or a situation that's at the expense of the kids. That's the trick of a sophisticated work; it's for an ageless audience.

Y understands that most basic human experiences of love and betrayal and jealousy and failure can be shared by that 10- or 11-year-old in the audience. The one thing those kids are not is cynical. Sometimes you can't have a certain form of satire because they don't have the history, the basis.

**LIZ** | Is that something you learn before opening? I'm thinking of rehearsal; you probably don't have a lot of children in the room watching.

**LINDA** | Actually, we do invite students in to see our workshops. I think young people are the most authentic dramaturgs.

**LIZ** | As a dramaturg myself, I would have loved to sharpen my skills as a kid in your rehearsal room! Even though I learned that skill later in life, I will say that so many of your productions at SCT remain my strongest memories of my time in Seattle. The Seattle community continues to be the lucky recipient of your one-of-a-kind collaboration. It's been wonderful to hear you share some of it with us. Thank you both. This has been wonderful.

**Y** | Thank you, dear Liz.

**LINDA** | Yes, thanks so much.

# Seattle Children's Theatre

201 Thomas Street, Seattle, WA 98109

SCT's Production of *Robin Hood* is going to New York this fall, with a presentation at The New Victory Theater in October 2013. Here is a screenshot of part of the web page about the production, highlighting how the work of Linda Hartzell brings attention to Seattle and Washington State.

URL here: <http://www.newvictory.org/Show-Detail?ProductionId=6713>

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the New Victory Theater website. The browser's address bar shows the URL [www.newvictory.org/Show-Detail?ProductionId=6713](http://www.newvictory.org/Show-Detail?ProductionId=6713). The website header includes the New Victory Theater logo and navigation links for Home, Log in, and Register. The main banner features the title "Robin Hood" with the dates "October 2, 2015–October 11, 2015 at The New Victory Theater" and a "SHOW TIMES & TICKETS" button. Below the banner, there are navigation tabs for "About", "Explore", "Visit", and "Buy", along with a language dropdown set to "English". The main content area is titled "Getting to Know Seattle Children's Theatre" and features a video player showing a woman, Linda Hartzell, speaking. To the right of the video is a map of the United States with Washington state highlighted in yellow, titled "All The Way From...". Below the map, the text reads "...Seattle, Washington" and "If Seattle Children's Theatre traveled as the arrow flies (with an average distance per shot of 100 yards), Robin Hood would have to take aim 42,328 times to make it from Seattle to New York." At the bottom right, there is a "NEW VICTORY TICKET SERVICES" chat widget with the text "Need help?" and "Let's chat."

(Please note: SCT has produced 110 world premiere plays since 1975, the number above is in error)

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