



a new musical

book and lyrics by
Daryl Lisa Fazio

music by
Aaron McAllister

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www.liftthemusical.com

Lift

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LOGLINE

In a small Ohio town, 8-year old Ethan Hale falls through the ice and is miraculously saved. But no one sees the rescue. And no one steps forward as the hero. So when Ethan insists that it was a "birdman," the townspeople embark on a journey into their individual faith and doubt, their collective hope, and what it means to be extraordinary.

CHARACTERS (14-17)

- ETHAN HALE, 8 years old
- SAM OGDEN, 30s, chief of police, Ethan's uncle
- EVE HALE, 20s, Ethan's mother, Sam's sister, widow
- DR. RUTH CONTI, 40s, psychiatrist
- IRIS CONTI, 70s, Ruth's mother
- MASON WILLIAMS, 50s, African-American, hardware store owner and town sage
- MARY WILLIAMS, 50s, African-American, Mason's wife, professor at the college
- BRIDGET "BRIDGE" SIMOVITZ, 18, college student, Ethan's babysitter, loner and activist
- ENSEMBLE MEMBERS, miscellaneous roles, 6 to 10

SONG LISTACT ONE

01 THE PLACE WE LIVE	<i>Sam, Ensemble</i>
02 SEE-THROUGH	<i>Ruth, Iris</i>
03 HERE I AM	<i>Ruth, Eve</i>
04 DREAMS	<i>Eve</i>
05 TALK	<i>Mason, Ensemble</i>
06 AIN'T NO BIRDMAN	<i>Mason, Mary</i>
07 PROOF	<i>Sam</i>
08 PILGRIMAGE	<i>Eve, Ensemble</i>
09 INSIDE OUT	<i>Bridget</i>
10 LOST FOUND LOST	<i>Ruth, Iris, Ethan, Eve</i>

ACT TWO

11 TODAY	<i>Ensemble</i>
12 THE DOCTOR'S WIFE	<i>Iris</i>
13 PROOF (REPRISE)	<i>Sam</i>
14 INVINCIBLE	<i>Bridget, Ethan</i>
15 RUNNING	<i>Sam, Eve</i>
16 FEATHER	<i>Ethan</i>
17 TO SAVE US	<i>Ruth</i>
18 LET YOU GO	<i>Eve</i>
19 BELIEVE	<i>All</i>

ACT ONE: Creer, Ohio, Late February, Present Day

SCENE 1

Lights up. Dusk. Quiet.

Snow falls steadily.

The stage is empty, except for a hand-painted wooden sign that says "LAKE SPARROW, 3 FISH LIMIT" and a white scrim. The shadow of a bird flies across the stage, then back.

*A child, 8-year old **ETHAN HALE**, runs onto the stage. He wears a winter coat and a fur-lined hunter's cap with ear flaps. He carries a satchel and a tiny pair of cheap binoculars.*

ETHAN stops suddenly, in the middle of the stage, realizing he's at the edge of the frozen lake. He looks down, the shiny surface reflecting up onto his face.

He looks up again to see the "bird" hovering near the far edge of the scrim.

He watches it through his binoculars. Soon after, it disappears.

The boy is crushed.

ETHAN wobbles for a moment at the lake's edge, then charges out onto the ice, sliding to a stop, almost losing his balance, and looking again through his binoculars.

The bird shadow reappears, hovering again, this time right above ETHAN's head. He looks up in wonderment.

Abruptly, there is a series of small cracking sounds. Then one deafening crack. And a splash. And the child is gone.

Silent. Still. For what seems like hours. The snow has gotten much heavier now, blizzard-like.

Then the stage is engulfed in a bright, white light that blinds us to onstage action. We hear ETHAN take a massive breath. And everything goes dark.

SCENE 2

Lights up.

*An hour later. Emergency room hallway. A small-town hospital. The ENSEMBLE as **PATIENTS**, **NURSES**, and a **DOCTOR** move through the scene constantly.*

*Police chief, **SAM OGDEN**, in uniform, stands in the middle of the hall staring at his cell phone. Finally, he gets up the nerve to dial a number.*

Music begins (#1).

SAM

Evie? It's your brother, kid. You need to ask work to let you go early tonight. Yeah, you need to ask them to let you go now. *(pause)* Because I've got your boy here. *(pause)* The hospital, Eve. They're taking good care of him. He was talking earlier. He's resting now. *(pause)* Uh-uh, no, you have somebody drive you. Somebody with their wits about 'em. I mean it, okay? *(pause)* Eve, just say you understand me. *(pause)* Okay. *(SAM hangs up the phone)*

DORIS, a hospital nurse, approaches.

DORIS

Who found him, Sam? Everybody's askin'.

SAM

A fisherman. But Ethan was out of the water by then.

DORIS

Did he see anything?

SAM

No. Said he heard what might have been the ice cracking, but he couldn't see through the snow. Just white, he said. Then, when he got close, the boy. Lying on the bank.

DORIS

It's so strange. Like a dream, isn't it?

SAM

A mystery maybe. A nightmare even. Did you hear his screaming? That was no dream.

DORIS

Was that screaming to you? I thought it sounded more like...I don't know...he was worked up, yeah. But he sounded...happy.

SAM

Happy? I'm not sure I buy that, Doris.

Song (#1)—“THE PLACE WE LIVE”

SAM

(singing)

CREER, OHIO'S THE PLACE WE LIVE.
FOR SOME IT'S THE PLACE WE SURVIVE.
WE GO ABOUT OUR DAYS
WITH A SMILE AND A WAVE,
WHILE DOWN DEEP WE DON'T FEEL ALIVE.

A HUNDRED YEARS PAST, CREER CAME TO BE,
A COLLEGE TOWN RISING FROM THE STEEL
WE MILLED AND THE FAMILIES WE MADE.
30 YEARS BACK, THE STEEL MILL CLOSED
WE LOST MANY JOBS, BUT SAW NO ANGRY MOBS;
THE TOWN PRETENDS WELL WHEN AFRAID.

SAM/ENSEMBLE

CREER, OHIO'S THE PLACE WE LIVE.
FOR SOME IT'S THE PLACE WE ENDURE.

WE GO ABOUT OUR DAYS
WITH A SMILE AND A WAVE,
WHILE DOWN DEEP WE ACHE FOR MORE.

SAM

EIGHT YEARS AGO, MY NEPHEW WAS BORN;
RIGHT OFF A SPARK, DAYLIGHT IN THE DARK,
BRAVE AND BRIGHT; LOOK HOW HE'S GROWN.
TWO YEARS AGO, I TOOK THIS JOB
CHIEF OF POLICE, KEEPING THE PEACE,
THOUGH HERE, IN CREER, IT KEEPS ITS OWN.

ONE YEAR AGO, EVE'S HUSBAND, JAMES, DIED;
EVEN THOUGH I TRY, I DON'T KNOW WHY.
JUST AN ACCIDENT, LEAVING A MOTHER, A BOY. ALONE.

SAM pulls one of ETHAN's shoes from his coat pocket.

SAM/ENSEMBLE

CREER, OHIO'S THE PLACE WE LIVE.
FOR SOME IT'S THE PLACE WE ENDURE.
WE GO ABOUT OUR DAYS
WITH A SMILE AND A WAVE,
WHILE DOWN DEEP WE ACHE FOR MORE.

EVE HALE enters, out of breath, eyes red from crying. She wears khaki pants and a golf shirt, the uniform for her job at a local motel.

EVE

Sam? That's Ethan's shoe.

SAM

It's the only one we found. The other one must be at the bottom of the lake.

EVE

He's not supposed to wear these shoes in the cold. He's supposed to wear his boots.
He's...supposed to...

She trails off and becomes unsteady on her feet. SAM holds her to him.

SAM

(singing)

SOME HOURS AGO, HE FELL THROUGH THE ICE,
TOO THIN TO HOLD, WHEN FOUND HE WAS COLD,
BUT ALREADY PULLED FROM THE HOLE.

The ENSEMBLE whisper amongst themselves.

ENSEMBLE

(singing)

ONE HOUR AGO, ETHAN WAS SAVED;
WE DON'T KNOW HOW; IT'S THE TALK OF OUR TOWN;
NO FOOTPRINTS, NO WITNESS, NOT A SOUL.

CREER, OHIO'S THE PLACE WE LIVE.
FOR SOME IT'S THE PLACE WE SURVIVE.
WE GO ABOUT OUR DAYS

WITH A SMILE AND A WAVE,
WHILE DOWN DEEP WE DON'T FEEL ALIVE.

CREER, OHIO'S THE PLACE WE LIVE.
FOR SOME IT'S THE PLACE WE ENDURE.
WE GO ABOUT OUR DAYS
WITH A SMILE AND A WAVE,
WHILE DOWN DEEP WE ACHE FOR MORE.

Music continues.

EVE

He's alive, Sam? Right? Say it so I can hear it.

SAM

He's alive. *(He strengthens his hold on her.)* Can you stand up?

SAM hands EVE the boy's shoe and points to a doorway.

SAM

He's sleeping. They had to sedate him to make him rest. He was delirious, really beside himself, wanting to get up and find who...well...who pulled him out of that lake. He says...Evie, I don't know what to make of this, and I sure don't want to scare you, but he said it was a...well, some kind of...birdman. He kept sayin' it over and over: b—

EVE

Birdman? What's a birdman?

EVE turns to look at the closed door. Behind it, lights come up on ETHAN, asleep in a hospital bed.

SAM's cell phone rings. He looks at the ID.

SAM

Damn. *(flipping the phone open)* Yeah? *(pause)* Yeah, all right. No, I've got it. Thanks, Tommy.

SAM ends the call.

I have to take care of this. Go be with him.

EVE

I can't open the door.

SAM

Don't be afraid, Evie.

EVE turns the doorknob.

Lights out.

SCENE 3

Lights up.

Fifteen minutes later. It's snowing on a deserted street.

***IRIS CONTI** walks slowly across the empty stage. Her hair is snowy white. She wears a nightgown and a long robe that drags on the ground. One of her slippers comes off, but she keeps walking, head up, watching the snow fall, smiling vaguely. Her hands tremor, a side-effect of the Parkinson's medicine that keeps her from freezing up. Her neck jerks awkwardly.*

Light, offstage, from car headlights shine on the old woman. A car door slams. SAM comes up behind her. He picks up her slipper, then takes her elbow gently.

IRIS stops walking.

Cold night for a walk, Mrs. Conti. **SAM**

The wind is the inside of my head. **IRIS**

How's that? **SAM**

Circles. Winter pulls from underneath. You think you're alone. Then it melts. **IRIS**

You've got a way with words. **SAM**

He takes off his coat and puts it around her.

Your daughter'd like to see you home safe.

Ruth is a peacock. **IRIS**

You need me to guide you to the car or do you know where you are? **SAM**

Music underscore (#1A) and transition.

Where you are. **IRIS**

They exit.

Lights down.

SCENE 4

Sounds of knocking on a door.

Lights up on the Conti home's foyer. There's a front door and, off to one side, another door that leads to Ruth Conti's study/office. The house may be very detailed, old and stately with antique lamps and tables and dark-stained mahogany trim and doors. It may also be merely suggestive—wealthy and oppressive.

DR. RUTH CONTI enters, harried but still business-like, phone to her ear and wearing her winter coat.

RUTH

No. I didn't, but there's simply no way she made it that far. Hold, please.

RUTH opens the door. SAM and IRIS are in the doorway.

RUTH

Mother! Chief Ogden, you're a marvel. I've just driven the entire town. Where was she?

SAM

Old highway 12.

RUTH

(hanging up the phone abruptly)

Good God, are you certain?

SAM

Yes, ma'am.

IRIS

Peacock.

RUTH

(pulling her mother into the house)

Mother, you're fortunate you don't have hypothermia. Please, Chief Ogden, please come in.

SAM

Call me Sam, Dr. Conti. Chief Ogden was my dad.

RUTH

And Dr. Conti was mine.

SAM comes in and closes the door behind him, as RUTH gives her shaking mother a cursory exam.

(to her mother)

I can't tell if you're shaking from the cold or the Parkinson's.

SAM

Could you use some help with her, Doctor?

IRIS

I'm not dead.

RUTH

I have things under control. Sam. And I suppose if we're on a first-name basis, you should call me Ruth.

SAM acknowledges with a nod, then takes his coat from IRIS's shoulders and puts it on. He rubs IRIS's arms and hands to warm them.

SAM

She's real different, your mother. Different from how I remember her when I was a boy. She smiles all the time these days.

You remember her? **RUTH**

I grew up here, ma'am. Ruth. **SAM**

True. You were probably born around the time she sent me away to boarding school. In my mind, Creer wasn't even on planet Earth after that. *(pause)* Not to dismiss your childhood. I certainly didn't mean— **RUTH**

I know you didn't. If you two really are all right here, I should get back to the hospital. **SAM**

Someone's been hurt? **RUTH**

My nephew had an accident on the lake. The ice broke. **SAM**

Oh my God. How old is he? A very little boy? **RUTH**

Seven. No, wait, he just turned eight. He's okay. Physically he's okay. **SAM**

You're worried about him beyond the physical? Is he talking since it happened? **RUTH**

He's in hysterics. They had to medicate him. **SAM**

IRIS wanders off into another part of the house. RUTH doesn't notice, now completely absorbed in Sam's story.

Angry screaming? Fearful screaming? Do they have him restrained? **RUTH**

A lot of questions. **SAM**

I apologize. You're right. Certainly, it's not my business. **RUTH**

It's not that. I just don't know how to answer— **SAM**

I was prying. It's an occupational hazard. And one I don't have many outlets for here. **RUTH**

I guess he's been seeing things. **SAM**

Things? **RUTH**

SAM

Kids have big imaginations, though, don't they? I mean, this one, he's usually pretty serious, I've always thought, and he lost his dad not too long ago. But kids are...I don't know...it's just strange the way he makes it sound like some sort of...angel. *(pause)* We aren't religious. Not his mother. Not me. Never were. Where would he get that?

RUTH

Chief Ogden—

SAM

Sam.

RUTH

Yes. You let the boy's mother know, if she's worried, I can be of help. We'll leave it at that. *(taking a card from a nearby table)* You can call the cell number.

SAM

I don't think his mom can afford a big-time psychiatrist.

IRIS enters.

RUTH

This is Creer, not the big-time. Something can be worked out.

IRIS

Cats are curious.

SAM

Thank you, Ruth. That's mighty charitable.

IRIS

High and mighty.

SAM

(to RUTH, referring to IRIS)

It's probably not a bad idea to keep something reflective on her. A runner's vest maybe. *(starting to leave)* Oh, and, um, welcome home. 'Night.

SAM slips out the door.

RUTH glares at her mother.

RUTH

Mother, I thought you were dead in a snow bank. I honestly did. I came back to this toy town just to watch over you. The least you could do is respect my feelings.

IRIS stands in front of her, completely still, until one hand shoots up above her head. RUTH tries to push the hand down, but Iris is a statue. RUTH reaches into her pocket for a bottle of pills. She forces a pill into IRIS' mouth.

Not to mention the fact that it's time for your meds. What if you'd locked up like this in the middle of the road? *(to herself)* Jesus, Ruth, it's not her fault. She has no idea.

IRIS

(glowingly)

Jesus!

RUTH

Do you have an idea, Mother?

Music begins (#2).

Is anything in there? You disappear. You come back. Sometimes I can't even tell.

RUTH starts to guide her down the hall, but IRIS won't go.

Lights dim.

IRIS' hand slowly starts to fall as the meds kick in.

Song (#2)—“SEE-THROUGH”**IRIS**

(singing)

COME AND GO,
 EBB AND FLOW,
 LOOK THROUGH THE GAP,
 SEE THE SHOW.
 OVER THEN,
 STARTING NOW,
 YOU CAN'T SPOT IT;
 TELL ME HOW.

COVER ME IN PLASTIC WRAP.
 PUT ME UNDER GLASS.
 SET ME IN THE WINDOW.
 PEOPLE LOOK RIGHT PAST.

RUTH

WHERE DID YOU GO?
 THE ONE THAT I KNEW?
 WHAT DO YOU KNOW?
 I CAN'T SEE THROUGH.

IRIS

HERE AND THERE,
 OFF AND ON,
 PUNCH THROUGH THE SHADE,
 THERE'S THE DAWN.
 WHEN IT'S LIGHT
 YOU CAN SEE
 IT'S ALWAYS THERE
 AND IT'S FREE.

COVER ME IN PLASTIC WRAP.
 PUT ME UNDER GLASS.
 SET ME IN THE WINDOW.
 PEOPLE LOOK RIGHT PAST.

RUTH

WHERE DID YOU GO?
 THE ONE THAT I KNEW?
 WHAT DO YOU KNOW?
 I CAN'T SEE THROUGH.

IRIS

COVER ME IN PLASTIC WRAP.
PUT ME UNDER GLASS.
SET ME IN THE WINDOW.

Music continues.

RUTH

Let's put you to bed, Mother.

Lights down.

SCENE 5

Lights up.

Later that night. ETHAN's hospital room. EVE watches him sleep.

EVE

For the life of me, I can't figure out what you were doing out alone. We'll have to let that sitter go. Right to jail, if I had my way. Really unbelievable. *(pause)* Did you know sometimes you make me feel like a not-so-good mother, Ethan? When it's clear you're so smart, but then you do things that just don't make any sense. You don't listen. Like you don't understand you're all I have. That my whole life is about you. Here I am trying to be prepared, Ethan, but I never really am. Maybe it's 'cause you're more like your dad, all adventurous and curious and damned careless. You can't be careless and get away with it. You can't...you can't just always expect the best will happen. See? You and me. We're different. And I'm really not prepared.

Lights up concurrently on another part of the stage.

IRIS's bedroom. RUTH sits at her mother's bedside, having just gotten her to sleep.

RUTH

Maybe I should have put you in a home, Mother. Would you like that? Would you have done that to me? If the shoe were on the other foot? You already did, didn't you? When you sent me away to school all those lifetimes ago.

Pause.

Can you hear me, Mother?

No answer.

EVE

Can you hear me, Ethan?

Song (#3)—“HERE I AM”

EVE

HERE I AM, ETHAN.
WE'RE ALL WE'VE GOT.
YOU'VE GOT TO HEAR ME, THOUGH;
YOU'LL KEEP ON GROWING, SO
YOU'LL HAVE TO LEAVE ME, THOUGH...

RUTH

HERE I AM, MOTHER.
 TAKE YOUR BEST SHOT.
 YOU'D HAVE TO HEAR ME, THOUGH;
 YOU'D HAVE TO KNOW ME, THOUGH;
 YOU'D HAVE TO NEED ME, SO...

RUTH/EVE

HERE I AM.
 BUT I HAVE NO IDEA
 HOW OR WHERE OR WHEN.
 HERE I AM.
 LOOK AT ME, UNDERSTAND,
 OR WE'RE ALONE AGAIN.

RUTH

HOW DID I GET HERE?
 I'VE FALLEN OUT OF MY CAREER
 WHERE I HAD CONTROL AND FORMALITY,
 BUSY DAYS THAT CHASED
 AWAY MOST MEMORIES.
 I COULD FORGET ABOUT MOTHER AND ME,
 YEARS AGO,
 DYSFUNCTIONAL. YET—

RUTH/EVE

YET HERE I AM,
 BUT I HAVE NO IDEA
 HOW OR WHERE OR WHEN.
 HERE I AM.
 LOOK AT ME, UNDERSTAND,
 OR WE'RE ALONE AGAIN

EVE

HOW DID I GET HERE?
 I THOUGHT AT THE ALTAR,
 EXPECTING, BUT JUST A KID MYSELF;
 LOOKING AT JAMES, A GOOD MAN,
 BUT WAS THIS MY LIFE?
 I THOUGHT I WOULD HAVE ONE OF MY OWN
 BEFORE BEING A MOTHER AND WIFE. BUT—

RUTH/EVE

HERE I AM,
 BUT I HAVE NO IDEA
 HOW OR WHERE OR WHEN.
 HERE I AM.
 LOOK AT ME, UNDERSTAND,
 OR WE'RE ALONE, WHAT THEN?

HERE I AM.
 BUT I HAVE NO IDEA
 HOW OR WHERE OR WHEN.
 HERE I AM.
 LOOK AT ME, UNDERSTAND,
 OR WE'RE ALONE AGAIN
 HERE I—

(speaking, with an edge)

I'm here. For you.

Lights down on RUTH and IRIS.

Lights stay up on EVE and ETHAN. She holds the sleeping boy in her arms now.

DORIS sticks her head in the door.

DORIS

Another 15 minutes, Eve.

EVE

I'm not leaving.

DORIS

Eve, he needs his—

EVE

I'm not leaving this kid.

DORIS exits.

I'm not, Ethan. Got me? *(pause)* You look like you're smiling in your sleep. What are you thinking about? Dreaming, I guess. Must be a good one. *(longer pause, as if she's trying to decide whether to say this out loud)* Dreams like that used to get me through the day when I was your age. Little fantasies. I used to draw. Make up songs. You probably wouldn't recognize your ole mom. But fantasies weren't such a good thing in our family. Somehow. Maybe I stopped trying to figure out why anymore. I'll just wear this motel uniform right to my grave. And everyone'll buy it, no questions asked. Because I do. I buy it.

EVE touches ETHAN's face.

You're warm. How are you so warm already?

Beat. Music starts (#4).

Song (#4)—“DREAMS”

EVE

(singing)

WATER DOES
FIRE DOES
AIR DOES
FADE.

SUNS DO
MOONS DO
STARS DO
FADE.

WHAT DOESN'T FADE
IS MY LOVE FOR YOU
THOUGH THE LIFE WE'VE MADE
CAUSES FEAR I'M THROUGH
REACHING FOR CHANGE,
A DIFFERENT FUTURE

OUT OF RANGE.
OUT OF RANGE.

RAGE DOES
GRIEF DOES
FEAR DOES
FADE.

WHAT DOESN'T FADE
IS YOUR POTENTIAL
TO BE SOMEONE GREAT.
OR THE SIMPLE JOY I FEEL
WHEN YOU START TO SMILE,
TELLING A STORY
IN YOUR OWN STYLE.

DAYS DO
NIGHTS DO
YEARS DO
FADE.

WHAT DOESN'T FADE
IS MY LOVE FOR YOU

EVEN THOUGH

DREAMS DO
DREAMS DO
DREAMS DO
FADE.

ETHAN

(barely audible)

Where's the bird?

EVE

Hey, E.T. You awake?

ETHAN

Where's the bird, Momma?

EVE

No birds here. Just us.

ETHAN

(suddenly agitated)

There is a bird! Where's my coat? I need my coat!

EVE

Shhh. Calm down. We'll find your coat. You're warm now.

ETHAN's breathing slows. Then:

ETHAN

I saw the birdman, Momma.

EVE

You just had a scare, Ethan. It might have been snow. Or maybe the moon.

ETHAN

No, it was a bird. He wrinkled in the wind like the sheets when you hang 'em outside. And he could hover like a hummingbird, even though he was as big as a man. And he glowed. He glowed, Momma.

Music transition (#4A).

Slow fade to black.

SCENE 6

Lights up.

A few days later. Williams' Hardware Store. Dusk.

MASON WILLIAMS, an African-American man in his 50s, stands at the counter in his small downtown hardware store, going through receipts. **MASON** is a large, fatherly man who grew up in Chicago's housing projects and retains the speech patterns of the inner city.

BERT, a local plumber, peruses the "shelves." A filthy rag hangs from his back pocket.

BERT

Hey, Mason, you got any PVC bigger than this? I got a busted septic system on Elm. It's a real doozie.

MASON

Hey, Bert, my man, how about doing some serious hand-washing next time you feel like coming in to touch the merchandise?

BERT wipes his hands with the disgusting rag.

A little bell rings indicating the entrance of DORIS, the nurse from the hospital. She wears her scrubs.

MASON

You done for the day, Doris?

DORIS

Night shift this month. My husband wouldn't lay off until I picked up some pepper spray. He doesn't even like me walking to the car alone.

BERT

You work at the hospital? How's that kid? That crazy one?

DORIS

Nobody's crazy. He's alive. How do you explain it?

BERT

Not with Bigfoot or moth people or whatever.

MASON

Bert, you've got all the social grace of a Mack truck. I don't think I have any pepper spray, Doris. Not much of a demand. How'd your old man get it in his head you're unsafe?