

Pushing the Boundaries: Experimental Theatre Project at the History Museum at the Castle



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Framing the Problem

Museum theatre programming is known for widening audience engagement, livening up static collections, and increasing a deep emotional connection with visitors and the subject matter.

Avant-garde theatre is known for attracting an audience through its edgy entertainment and thought-provoking ambiguity. Theatre is make-believe, and an avant-garde theatre program can venture into alternate realities and narratives. It can also delve into unknown figures and voices with infinite opportunities.

The staff at the History Museum at the Castle in Appleton, WI enjoys creating traditional programs like Behind the Scenes Tour, Bus Tours, Walking Tours, and exhibit presentations.

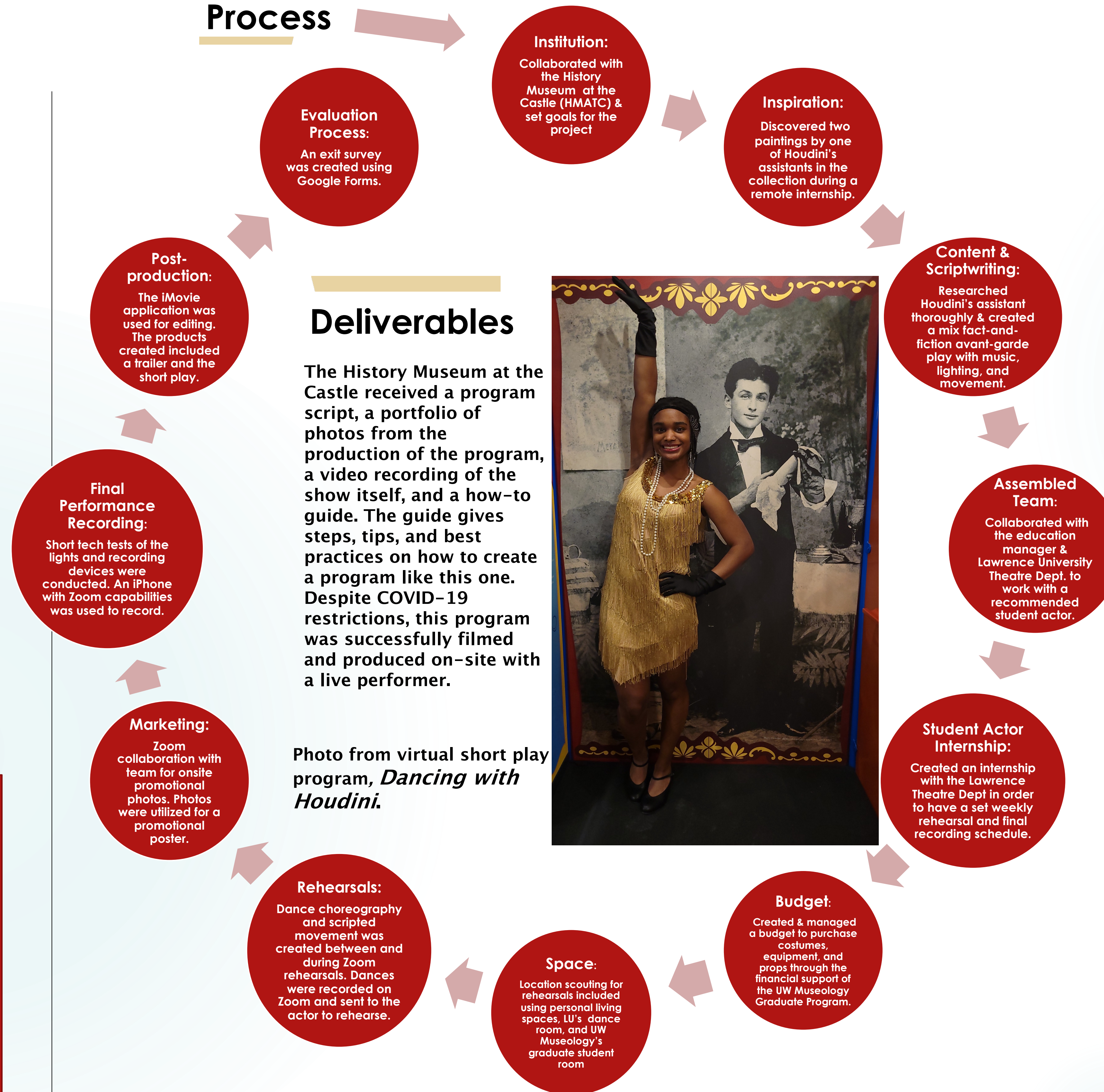
The museum had yet to develop a program that would specifically engage Millennial and Generation Z audiences or any kind of museum theatre program. The creation of an experimental theatre program as an interpretative tool aimed to engage this new target audience at the museum. Current literature states that both Millennial and Generation Z audiences engage more with museum programming that is immersive, provides unique experiences that are entertaining and lead to learning, and have a combination of "depth and breadth."

Purpose and Impact

The purpose of this project was to create a theatre program which uses an avant-garde acting interpretative approach to attract Millennial and Generation Z visitors for the History Museum at the Castle.

Considering this project occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was important to understand how museum theatre and theatre programming was reshaping and transforming to the current conditions with virtual programming. The goal was to promote the show on social media platforms, reach the target audience, and to the further understanding of how a virtual experimental theatre program can be effective and the use of new formats and technologies in cross theatre and film mediums.

Process



Conclusions

On April 8th, 2021, the museum posted the program on their Facebook page with a follow-up survey for audience feedback.

Based on feedback received from the survey, the audience found the program very engaging, would like to see more museum theatre programs, and felt like they had learned about the subject matter and curious to know more.

The museum is also currently using best practices from this project on future programs.

References

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