

## Student Goes Extra Mile to Create Musical Performance at BYU

The long journey Meredith Ryan Taylor has been on is almost at an end. The musical performance he has been writing since 1999 will be performed onstage at BYU this fall.

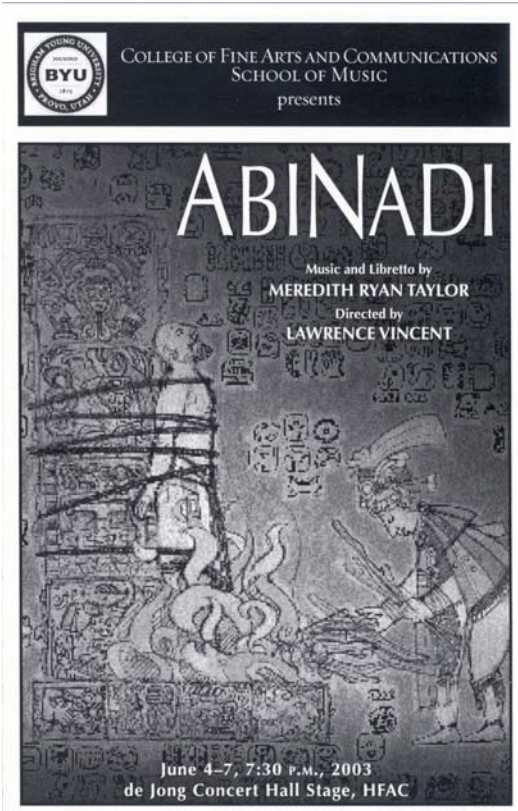
The “libretto” was initiated as part of an assignment for a religion class, but Taylor was further encouraged to continue with the project by BYU music professor, Lawrence Vincent. The endeavor wasn’t easy. With setbacks, delays and, worst of all, the death of his father, Taylor had to submit an incomplete report on his ORCA-funded project. Nevertheless, he continued working on the opera, even after he graduated.

“It was a much larger project than I had ever imagined,” he says. The Vocal Performance student earned his Bachelors degree in 2000 and continued his education as a Masters student in Composition at BYU. The project was not part of his Masters studies, but he says, “I was always sort of working on it on the side.”

After finishing the piano score for his libretto, Taylor learned that Dr. Vincent wanted to use his work for an opera performance at BYU. “It was a huge surprise,” he says about the unexpected opportunity and dream-come-true. “I was writing this, but I never really expected this to be performed,” he says. I know that’s a weird thing to say, but it’s really hard to get a new work like this – that involves so many people – performed because of funding and many other things.”

Taylor credits Vincent with getting his work on stage (and his formal mentor, Dr. David Sargent). He says the professor kept encouraging him to continue with the project and constantly asked him how it was coming along. The piano score helped convince Vincent that Taylor’s production should be performed.

“Abinadi,” the result of Taylor’s long-time efforts, made its debut at BYU’s de Jong Concert Hall Stage on June 4<sup>th</sup> for what Taylor calls a “workshop.” The four evening performances gave Taylor and his colleagues the chance to observe what changes need to be made before the curtain goes up again for the production in October.



Taylor’s opera debuted in June. It will be performed again this fall to a larger audience.

Taylor sees the opera as a way he can recount the Book of Mormon story and its message to people who might not otherwise read the scripture, such as friends from his hometown of Huntington Beach, California.



The writer, at right, also plays the part of despotic King Noah.

videotaping “Abinadi” for rebroadcast, which Taylor hopes will help open more doors for him, professionally. “In the future I’d like to do more of this kind of thing, and I don’t see any reason why I shouldn’t.”

The artist also wanted the musical story to be a “true gospel message” about the ancient prophet. To do this he avoided recounting the drama in his own interpretation, and says the only liberty he took with the story was adding women’s parts, to which there are none in Mosiah’s account.

For his Masters thesis, Taylor created a children’s opera that will be performed by students at nearby Wasatch Elementary School in December. In the meantime, KBYU has expressed an interest in