Producing Thacker Jr. A Guidebook to Production & Reflections of a Student Director

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PRODUCING THACKER JR.
A GUIDEBOOK TO PRODUCTION & REFLECTIONS OF A STUDENT DIRECTOR

by
Ava Carol Street

A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of
the requirements of the Sally McDonnell Barksdale Honors College.

Oxford
May 2020

Advisor: Professor Nancy Maria Balach

Reader: Professor Andrew Paney

Reader: Professor Virginia Rougon Chavis
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Firstly, I would like to thank my advisor, Professor Nancy Maria Balach. I am beyond grateful for the influence you have made on both my academic career and life. Thank you for showing me that there are more paths from which to choose than the most obvious. Thank you for teaching me to hear “not yet” instead of “no.” Lastly, thank you for modeling what it means to be an outstanding teacher who cares for students and places their best interest first.

Additionally, I would like to thank my committee members Dr. Andrew Paney and Dr. Virginia Rougon Chavis. Without your advisement, this process could not come to fruition.

Finally, I would like to thank Amanda Fliflet and my Dream Team members. Thank you for answering every call and every email. Thank you for hours setting up and striking Nutt Auditorium. Thank you for supporting me every step of the way. I could not have produced *Thacker Jr.* without you.
ABSTRACT

AVA CAROL STREET: PRODUCING THACKER JR. A GUIDEBOOK FOR PRODUCTION & REFLECTIONS OF A STUDENT DIRECTOR
(Under the direction of Nancy Maria Balach)

This narrative documents a student’s preparation and execution of the children’s music and literature program entitled, *Thacker Jr. Radio Hour*. The author documents and analyzes experiences over the course of two academic years preparing and producing the program. The author describes the process of production including content creation, marketing, budgeting, fundraising, and casting. The author recounts and reflects upon her experience in the role of *Thacker Jr.* Executive Director and her desire to create student-centric arts programming. Finally, the author evaluates the immediate impact of the program on the LOU community and predicts how her experience will shape her future career. The following pages provide “checklists” to serve as guidelines for production for future Executive Directors. The author includes an Appendix featuring templates, forms, and other resources adaptable for future use; full copies of the 2019 and 2020 program scripts; stills from the 2020 production; and links to view each program. Also, a file containing the audio recording of the 2020 *Thacker Jr. Radio Hour* is available for listening.
PREFACE

Thacker Mountain Radio Hour (TMRH) was founded by Caroline Herring, Bryan Ledford, and Richard Howorth. Howorth named the show from the fire observation tower upon Lafayette County’s Thacker Mountain. According to Howorth, the 700-foot elevation of Thacker Mountain would equal the modest beginnings of the program. On October 15, 1997, the first Thacker Mountain Radio Hour was broadcast from Off-Square Books.

In an effort to expand the audience, TMRH collaborated with the University of Mississippi’s School of Journalism and New Media. Together, the executive director of TMRH, Kathryn York, and the University created an Integrated Marketing and Communications course in 2016. The objective of the course was to teach students the necessary steps for producing and creating a children’s music and literature program. Elements of coursework included fundraising, budgeting, marketing, social media, contracting and casting performers, community outreach, and content creation. The course culminated in the first Thacker Jr. children’s program. After three years and changes in staff at TMRH, Thacker Jr. needed to take a new direction. The partnership dissolved with the School of Journalism and New Media; however, the Board at TMRH wanted to continue producing the Thacker Jr. program to expand its audience to include young families and to promote arts and literature among the youth of Lafayette County.

In 2017, executive director of TMRH, Kate Teague, contacted Professor and Creative Director of The University of Mississippi’s Living Music Resource™ (LMR), Nancy Maria Balach. Teague mentioned to Balach that she was looking for a partnership with the University to collaboratively produce the “4th Annual Thacker Jr.” With Professor Balach’s
mentorship, I was given the opportunity to be the Executive Director of Thacker Jr. in August of 2018.


The show featured 11 children (ages 6 – 16) from the LOU community performing roles as hosts and musicians. Additionally, I contracted Dr. Gloria Burgess, author of Pass It On!, and invited Mayor Robyn Tannehill as special guest speakers on the program. The hour-long production filled Nutt Auditorium for a free live show, was live streamed via the Living Music Resource™, and rebroadcast on WUMS Rebel Radio 92.1. Following the success of my first Thacker Jr. production, I was asked to direct the program again. On January 25th, 2020, the “5th Annual Thacker Jr.” expanded on the prior year by featuring 12 students (ages 7 – 18) from the LOU community and including author and artist, Sarah Frances Hardy, and Mississippi Teacher of the Year, Hannah Gadd Ardrey.

The following pages detail my experience as Thacker Jr. Executive Director to provide greater insight into the steps for managing a non-profit children’s music and literature program; to define the value of educational and arts-related youth programming; and to serve as a guideline to build upon for future Thacker Jr. Executive Directors.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES.......................................................................................................................... viii

CHAPTER I: ADAPTING THE PROGRAM ......................................................................................... 1

CHAPTER II: DETERMINING THE AESTHETIC............................................................................. 9

CHAPTER III: DETERMINING THE SOUND.................................................................................... 12

CHAPTER IV: SPREADING THE WORD............................................................................................ 14

CHAPTER V: MANAGING THE MONEY........................................................................................... 25

CHAPTER VI: SELECTING THE CAST ............................................................................................ 31

CHAPTER VII: RESULTING SUCCESS............................................................................................. 43

BIBLIOGRAPHY............................................................................................................................... 48

APPENDIX........................................................................................................................................ 49

4TH ANNUAL THACKER JR. PROGRAM AND SCRIPT................................................................. 58

5TH ANNUAL THACKER JR. PROGRAM AND SCRIPT................................................................. 62
## LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1</td>
<td>Thacker Jr. Set</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2</td>
<td>Wide View of the Stage</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3</td>
<td>Bombelli on Marimba</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4</td>
<td>Maximum Number of Facebook Connections</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5</td>
<td>Host Auditions</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 6</td>
<td><em>Dress Me!</em></td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 7</td>
<td>Coverage Pattern for WUMS – FM</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I:

ADAPTING THE PROGRAM

Becoming Executive Director

My journey to becoming Thacker Jr. Executive Director began in the Spring of 2016 when I was temporarily assigned to Professor Nancy Maria Balach for studio voice lessons. Throughout the semester Balach and I worked closely together, and I grew tremendously as a vocalist. However, the greatest reward of our semester together was the invitation she extended to join the Living Music Resource™ Dream Team. Balach became an incredible mentor to me and exposed me to the music industry in new ways. Under her guidance, I developed skills in music technology, live streaming, content creation, and graphic design. Through LMR, I interacted with music professionals, and I learned about arts administration.

I was immediately drawn to the administrative branch of the music industry. Arts administration combined both my passion for music and the performing arts with my skillset for management. Though I enjoy performing myself, my true passion is to provide others with opportunities to showcase their talents. In arts administration, I could create exciting musical performances; manage a team; engage with the community; and develop practical business skills such as budgeting, fundraising, and marketing.

In my second year as an LMR Dream Team member, I took on a leadership role in the organization. I learned how to communicate with my team effectively and, most importantly, how to operate and problem solve with rationality, patience, and a calm demeanor. Balach noted the leadership skills I possessed, and when I pitched my arts
administration-oriented Capstone idea, she informed me of the opportunity to collaborate with TMRH. I accepted the opportunity to direct the *Thacker Jr.* program knowing that it would be the perfect chance to refine my leadership style and stretch myself professionally.

Additionally, *Thacker Jr.* offered the unique opportunity to adapt a program from another individual’s design. As a future music educator, I will likely accept a job in a school with a previously established music program, and I will be tasked with making the program my own. *Thacker Jr.* allowed me to learn what it means to build upon the foundation already in place and expand the established program. Through *Thacker Jr.*, I have learned both the advantages and challenges of adopting another individual’s entity to manage and grow into fruition.
Advantages of Adaptation

Taking on the *Thacker Jr.* program presented several advantages. Access to the TMRH brand and audience was incredibly advantageous to the production. TMRH has been well-established in the LOU community for 22 years, and it boasts a large audience and platform. The association with TMRH gave *Thacker Jr.* immediate credibility, collaborators, and audience. TMRH also provided a template for the program’s content. Each TMRH show features a house band, The Yalobushwhackers, two guest musical artists or ensembles, and one author. *Thacker Jr.*’s program needed to mirror its “big brother” in content and show design.

For the prior *Thacker Jr.* programs, York established a relationship with Roxford University. Roxford University offers private instruction in various instruments including guitar, bass, piano, drums, and vocals. In addition, Roxford features a group program in which students perform and rehearse together in rock bands. The mission of Roxford parallels that of the *Thacker Jr.* program. “Rox U believes the most exciting way to learn music is to involve performance” (Wilkes). Owner Tad Wilkes believes “playing in a public rock show inspires and motivates students, helping maintain and buoy their enthusiasm. It also develops their confidence leaps and bounds beyond solitary instruction” (Wilkes). As of 2020, our collaboration with Roxford University has provided five *Thacker Jr.* house bands.

Thanks to the documents and social media accounts that were passed on to me from the previous director, I was gifted with the benefit of established social media followings and a brand. Though the following was limited, I was grateful for my foundation, and I began to build upon it. Thanks to the supportive culture of arts organizations in LOU; we were able to tap into the networking platforms of Yoknapatawpha Arts Council, J.D. Williams Library,
Oxford Public Library, SquareBooks Inc., and Visit Oxford’s January initiative “Pop Up Oxford.” Our promotional reach also increased thanks to WUMS Rebel Radio 92.1. Due to TMRH’s long standing relationship and rapport with the station, Rebel Radio promoted *Thacker Jr.* by interviewing myself and a participating host (2019) and by airing commercials. Furthermore, Rebel Radio has rebroadcast the *Thacker Jr.* show the past two years.

Lastly, the financial documents passed on to me proved to be useful for budgeting purposes. Though the final budget differed greatly from the budgets of previous years, I gleaned insight from the data present in the financial documents. I realized it would take innovative thinking, collaboration, fundraising, and large contributions from LMR to grow the *Thacker Jr.* program. Despite the challenges that presented themselves throughout the project, I learned the intrinsic value of adopting another individual’s project and transforming and expanding it into something truly valuable.
Goals, Challenges, and Learning to Adapt

When TMRH and LMR decided to collaboratively produce *Thacker Jr.* a Letter of Commitment (Appendix A) was drawn to define the roles and responsibilities of each organization. At the beginning of the process, Balach and I were excited and full of ideas. We quickly discovered, however, that our plans would move forward much more slowly than anticipated. Due to the nature of TMRH Inc., all decisions, in particular financial and marketing decisions, must be approved by the Board of Directors. As unfamiliar territory, the need for board approval proved to be a great learning experience for me. I drew up content ideas, budgets, marketing ideas, and fundraising plans; and I presented my goals for *Thacker Jr.* to the board.

The goals for the program were, first, to expand the audience of *Thacker Jr.* and thereby expose more individuals to TMRH. I aimed to accomplish this goal by hosting the live event in Nutt Auditorium at the University of Mississippi. We would broaden the reach of *Thacker Jr.* by broadcasting the show on WUMS Rebel Radio 92.1 and by live streaming it via LMR’s YouTube channel. Additionally, collaborative efforts from local music educators, the public-school system, and other arts and community organizations would help to market the event and expand the reach of the program.

My second goal was to make the program more student driven. Familiar with the age-old cliché, “You can be whatever you want to be...,” I have found that the statement carries a weighty and often unsaid stipulation, “...when you grow up.” So, I began to ask questions. How often are children given opportunities to be whatever they want to be before they grow up? Why do children have to wait until they grow into adults? Why not have educational and impactful experiences in their childhood?
There are some obvious issues, of course. I am not suggesting that an eight-year-old girl with dreams to be a doctor perform surgery or that a thirteen-year-old boy should play as a defensive lineman for a professional football team. However, children should be given opportunities to practice their passions in explorative, educational, and age-appropriate manners. Music provides a practical mode for engaging with young students and facilitating positive and impactful experiences. The benefits of music education include increased empathy, self-confidence, focus, emotional resilience, and language skills (Royal Conservatory of Music 2014). For these reasons, I wanted the program to allow students to perform in both the musical and host roles on the program. In this way, students would have responsibility over their performance.

My third and final goal was to create a program that would benefit the LOU community. We wanted to provide an opportunity for individuals of diverse backgrounds to rally around their children, support the arts, promote literature, and engage in relevant, intriguing discussions. We would follow the template of TMRH’s regular show with musical guests and a featured author; however, I also wanted to include a guest speaker by inviting a significant local figure who makes contributions to the LOU community on the show. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, Mississippi has an estimated illiteracy rate of 16%. Lafayette county’s estimated rate of the population who reads at level below basic prose is 12% (National Center for Education Statistics 2003). Knowing these statistics, promoting reading among children and offering an opportunity to engage with an author was important to my mission for Thacker Jr. After presenting my ideas to the board and making progress toward my goals, I had proven my ideas to TMRH, and Balach and I began to move forward with enthusiasm.
When beginning a new partnership, it is wise to expect some challenges to arise. “Challenges related to power sharing, clashing cultures, communication, resistance to change, technical and logistical complexities, or sustaining relationships ... is an inevitable—even a natural—component of interorganizational collaboration, even when partners have congruent missions” (Follman, Cseh, Brudney 2016). The LMR and TMRH collaboration faced similar challenges. However, communication proved to be the most challenging aspect of the executive director role.

According to an article by Reinout E. de Vries, there are seven main communication styles: expressiveness, preciseness, niceness, supportiveness, verbal aggressiveness, emotional tension, and argumentativeness (de Vries 2010). By managing the program and collaborating with TMRH, I found that my typical style of precise communication needed to be more balanced and versatile. I learned to allow my communication style to reveal my intention for correspondence and match my audience. For example, when communicating with TMRH directors and the board I aimed for precise and professional communication. However, when communicating with children and parents I adopted an expressive tone, filled with support, inclusion, and direction.

Other challenges presented themselves when working with children and parents. I wanted to make the program as accessible as possible for children and stress-free for parents. I aimed to accomplish this by communicating precisely and promptly. Upon selecting the cast, I emailed the parents a letter of congratulations (Appendix C) with specific details regarding dates, attire, and promotion. Email proved to be an effective means of communication for all except one parent in 2020. I reached out via text after a week of silence, and then one day before the production the parent informed me that her
child would no longer participate on the program. Though a frustrating situation, we had to be flexible and quickly problem solve. Sixth grader, Lainey Schuesselin, one of the other hosts, took on the extra responsibility and performed both host roles. I was truly impressed by her resilience and professionalism as she stepped up to the task.

When managing an event that incorporates a multitude of individuals with various lifestyles, ages, and personalities, one should expect problems to arise. However, it is important to remain flexible and communicate transparently; one should also be conscious of and sensitive to others’ lives and the hurdles they may be facing personally. Despite the challenges, *Thacker Jr.* allowed me to become a more flexible and versatile leader. Also, I learned the intrinsic value of adopting another individual’s project and transforming and expanding it into something truly valuable.
CHAPTER II: 
DETERMINING THE AESTHETIC

One of the greatest assets to the show that LMR provided was Nutt Auditorium. As an entity of the University of Mississippi Department of Music, LMR provided free booking of the auditorium for the event, rehearsal time, and one day audition and offered 395 comfortable seats from which audience members could enjoy the hour-long production. In previous years, *Thacker Jr.* was held at the Oxford Community Market, an open pavilion that serves primarily as a farmer’s market. While a functional space, an outdoor pavilion did not provide the glamour that a spotlight on centerstage offered.
Additionally, the indoor venue offered better acoustics and equipment for projecting the sound at the live event and recording the sound for the live stream and radio broadcast.

However, the new space required a new aesthetic. Suddenly, Thacker Jr. was no longer a small gathering for children involved in the local Leapfrog program; it was a full production. Nutt Auditorium provided a beautiful venue that would present the program in a professional setting. I wanted to create a set design that would meet the functional and aesthetic needs of the newly reenvisioned Thacker Jr. production. The program called for a space that could feature multiple instrumentalists while also offering a comfortable space for the interview segments. To meet the goal of making the production more student driven, I wanted a set that highlighted the performers rather than distract the audience’s attention from them. Using my budget and space wisely, I repurposed resources from LMR’s interactive talk show series LMR LIVE. LMR LIVE’s set pieces consisted of two brown leather chairs, a matching futon, and three wooden tables adorned with a modern lamp and atop a patterned rug. Garnishing the brown, leather seating with a new blue lamp and brightly colored rug the LMR LIVE set was reborn. It was placed centerstage before a projector screen used for sponsorship logos and visuals during the interview segments.

We needed to carefully arrange the stage to accommodate the various musical performances adequately, so we used the entire stage and were grateful for the space Nutt offered. Our house band occupied stage right, and the tremendous grand piano settled on stage left. The design worked perfectly for the 4th annual program; however, the 5th program presented a new challenge. Where would we squeeze in a five-octave marimba? To maintain uninterrupted flow, I wanted the entire stage to be set prior to the start of the show. Moving instruments on and off stage would either be a tumultuous distraction for
the live audience or produce awkward prolonged silences during the live stream and radio broadcast. The solution landed the marimba stage left in front and parallel to the piano. The set design resulted in a seamless production that successfully accommodated the various genres represented on the program. Additionally, the beautiful simplicity of Nutt Auditorium established the student performers as the focal points while allowing them the opportunity to perform on a professional-level stage. By designing the Thacker Jr. set, I learned the transformative properties of a new rug; the value of using your resources wisely; and how to notice my surroundings and create an attractive and functional performance space.

Figure 2 Wide View of the Stage; House band equipment stage right, Marimba and piano stage left
CHAPTER III:
DETERMINING THE SOUND

Figure 3 Bombelli on Marimba; Oxford High School student, Mario Bombelli plays “Pure Imagination” on marimba

As aforementioned, I was handed the template for Thacker Jr. from the start. The show content required both music and literature. In previous years, the show format sported various combinations of student musicians, adult musicians, student hosts, student authors, and adult authors. Though prior years established Thacker Jr. as a show “for kids,” I desired to create a program “by kids.” I determined that the sound of the program would be created by students, and I set no requirements on genre or instrument. The music performed on Thacker Jr. has a young and pure sound, a sound of humanity
and a sound of joy. It is imperative that Thacker Jr.’s sound is always composed of the musical passions of children.

When choosing the content for the program, the team strives to select performers that together create a mosaic of contrasting genres and styles of music. The program is not designed to exclude any child from performing on the program due to the instrument or genre preferred by the child. Instead, Thacker Jr. welcomes children to express themselves musically in the form and style they feel most comfortable. Additionally, Thacker Jr. strives to expand the musical palates of audience members by exposing listeners to a variety of sounds. The most recent production featured music of popular country singer, Eric Church, followed by a piano solo from impressionistic composer, Claude Debussy. Over the past two years, other artists and composers whose music was featured on the program include Queen, Tom Petty, Chuck Berry, Led Zeppelin, Leslie Bricusse and Anthony Newley.

For the 2020 program, listeners were especially fortunate to hear local percussionist, Mario Bombelli. Bombelli plays the marimba in Oxford High School’s marching band. For the Thacker Jr. program, Bombelli performed a mesmerizing rendition of “Pure Imagination” on solo marimba. The unique performance was one example of the diverse musical experiences an audience member can encounter at Thacker Jr. I am proud to say Thacker Jr. offers the LOU community a venue at which a young, classically trained musician such as Bombelli can play alongside a rock band comprised of teenage boys. I believe the motley crew of performers found on a Thacker Jr. program is what makes the production truly unique and an entertaining night for a crowd of diverse audience members.
CHAPTER IV: SPREADING THE WORD

The music domain was comfortable to me; however, navigating public relations was new to me. To bridge the gap and begin reaching the community, partnerships with local organizations assisted in spreading the word. The most significant support came from the University of Mississippi’s Department of Music and generated contributions ranging from press releases to printing services. Visit Oxford’s “Pop Up Oxford” promoted the event on posters, social media, and their website. Additionally, other entities such as Roxford University and Yoknapatawpha Arts Council contributed significantly by sharing graphics and posts via social media.

I had minimal experience designing posters and social media graphics for LMR through the design software, Canva. Canva offers various templates such as flyers, posters, presentations, and social media graphics. It became my most useful tool in creating content for social media pages and posters for the events. Though I have very limited graphic design skill I have found that these three rules serve as my guide for design:

1. Consistency: When creating content for event promotion, I wanted to keep the branding consistent with TMRH. The color scheme for TMRH’s logo is a rich red, cream, and a faded denim. To preserve brand identity, I created images with color pops of red, blue, and white, or cream. Additionally, I added the Kid’s Hour logo to every promotional image.
2. Priority: After a few failed attempts at posters, I learned that the biggest, boldest letters on the page should not result in a catchy tagline or attention grabber. Your brand name is the attention grabber. Put the logo or event name at the top where it immediately catches the eye and identifies the purpose of the advertisement. Also, use a clearly readable font to inform the public of the date, location, and admission costs of the event. Play with letter spacing and font size to reduce the aggressive nature and increase the readability of capitalization.

3. Simplicity: Though *Thacker Jr.* is a program designed for children, I wanted the marketing to look professional. While the previous programs were successful for their purposes as a classroom project, I wanted to refine the narrative of *Thacker Jr.* As a program founded on music, literature, and community engagement, I wanted to present it as a sophisticated, established program. The goal was for participating students to feel selected for a “professional” role in the program. To translate this narrative to the public, I chose clean and simple fonts. The color scheme ventured only into the shades of red, blue, and white established by TMRH. I created graphics that were simple and uncluttered yet eye-catching and direct.

Considering print media, we used posters and flyers to promote the event. The most effective strategy for promoting *Thacker Jr.* was to disseminate flyers into the take-home folders of local elementary students. Using the printing resources provided by University’s Department of Music, 1,500 flyers were printed and distributed to students at Oxford Elementary School and Della Davidson Elementary School the Thursday
before the *Thacker Jr.* event. Both years, I designed the official graphic and printed 20 posters through Office Depot. Posters were displayed one week prior to the event date, and they were distributed across campus including the Music Building, Honors College, J. D. Williams Library, and Lamar Hall. Additionally, posters were strategically placed at popular locations around the city of Oxford including the Square; the Public Library; the SquareBooks Inc. bookstores; and coffee shops such as Starbucks, Uptown, and Cups. Both the black and white image for the flyers and the official colored poster for the “5th Annual *Thacker Jr.*” are included below.
THACKER JR. RADIO HOUR

Featuring LOU
Child Hosts and Musicians

Literary Guest: Sarah Frances Hardy,
Author of Dress Me!

Special Guest: Hannah Gadd Ardrey,
Mississippi Teacher of the Year

Presented by
Thacker Mountain
Radio Hour &
The Living Music
Resource™

SATURDAY, JANUARY 25TH
6:00 PM
NUTT AUDITORIUM
FREE ADMISSION

FOR MORE INFORMATION - EMAIL THACKERJRRAADIOHOUR@GMAIL.COM
Literary Guest:
Sarah Frances Hardy

Saturday, January 25th
6:00 PM
Nutt Auditorium
FREE Admission

Featuring LOU
Child Hosts and Musicians

Presented by
Thacker Mountain Radio Hour &
The Living Music Resource™

Special Guest:
Hannah Gadd Ardrey,
Mississippi Teacher of the Year
Digital media included posts to social media outlets such as Instagram and Facebook. Posts to Facebook were similar in nature to Instagram posts. However, society recognizes Facebook as a platform for sharing detailed information while Instagram attracts the eye with creative images and short blurbs of information. The Instagram account was driven toward attracting a younger audience. I hoped to attract middle school, high school, and college students through the Instagram page. I updated the account to a business profile to offer viewers quick access to the email account, direct messaging, and the live stream link. Additionally, a business account will track the weekly activity and visibility of the account. New to public relations and social media campaigns, I posted a mere three times for the 2019 program. However, I posted eight images to promote the 2020 program. Unfortunately, Thacker Jr.’s Instagram following grew only minutely in the two years I directed the program. The Instagram account has a small following of only 160 followers (current March 2020) and averages approximately 9 – 14 “likes” per post. Unfortunately, the potential of Instagram as an effective platform for connecting with the LOU community has yet to be reached. However, Facebook has proven a useful tool for promoting the Thacker Jr. program.

On Facebook, Thacker Jr. received more activity. The Facebook page was created in the Fall of 2017, and since that time Thacker Jr. has been directed by multiple individuals. In an effort to create a Facebook business page without attaching the page to an individual’s personal account, the Thacker Jr. page was created under a phantom personal account. While effective for easily passing on access to the account, the set up presents challenges regarding connecting and expanding the audience. The organization
gains following via “likes” rather than “friends.” Unfortunately, this means that I cannot tag individuals in posts who do not “like” the page.

Most business pages self-promote on Facebook through “invitations” to like the page from the account holder to friends of the account holder. The phantom account has zero friend connections, so invitations to like the page must come from my personal account or the accounts of my team members. As students, my team and I have limited connections with the community of parents in Oxford. Many of the new connections made in the past two years were initiated through Prof. Nancy Maria Balach; sought out by parents who saw our print media; or discovered through collaborative efforts with other local arts organizations such as Rebel Radio, Roxford University, Yoknapatawpha Arts Council, or Visit Oxford.

The Facebook feed features informative posts, introductions of the program cast, promotion for our sponsors, and shared posts from collaborating organizations and news platforms. According to Facebook’s insights of the Thacker Jr. page for the 2020 production, the reach of our posts range from 33 to 1.5k connections. The Figure 4 displays the maximum number of Facebook connections for four types of posts: general informative posts, individual student introductions, band promotion, and special guest promotion.
Informative promotional material reached an average of 262 connections with the number of connections ranging from 33 – 657. Excluding the band, each student cast member receives an introductory post featuring a headshot, brief biographical information, and a fun fact. The band receives a joint post in which each member is introduced. Authors and special guests are promoted with an introductory post featuring a brief biography and professional headshot. For the 2020 program, the student introductions averaged 57 connections per post excluding an unusual outlier of 455 connections. The band’s post reached 1,510 Facebook users, and the author/special guests posts ranged from 601 – 1,294 total connections (Facebook Insights).

Another key for promoting the program is the collaboration with Rebel Radio. Rebel Radio has a close relationship with TMRH and has kindly agreed to rebroadcast the Thacker Jr. program the past two years. Rebel Radio supports Thacker Jr. by advertising
the program over the radio. The station runs a commercial on air in the week leading up
to the event. In 2019, Rebel Radio offered an incredible opportunity for myself and a
sixth grade participant, Mary Cile Meagher. Mary Cile and I were briefly interviewed
live on air to promote the program. The opportunity allowed me to practice my public
speaking skills and learn how to present ideas clearly. For Mary Cile, the experience gave
her an inside look into a radio station and recording studio. Like myself, she gained first-
hand experience in public speaking and interviewing on a live program. The
collaboration with Rebel Radio not only helps to promote the *Thacker Jr.* event and
expand the audience, it also supports the mission of providing children with practical
performance opportunities and development.
Public Relations Checklist:

1. Create an initial promotional image for the event to begin boosting interest. Post in early to mid-December. Incorporate photography from the previous year’s production into the post.

2. Create an image to announce the auditions on social media. Keep the post simple, and include only essential information (e.g., date, time, location). Post at least one month in advance of the audition date.

3. Contact local music instructors and organizations to seek musical guests.

4. Contact local after-school programs, leadership initiatives, churches, and children’s organizations to seek hosts.

5. Create another social media image to promote auditions. Use more detailed language in the caption to provide viewers with information regarding the audition process. Post at least two weeks in advance of the audition date.

6. Contact Roy Frostenson at Rebel Radio; ask for Rebel Radio to promote the show with an interview segment including the Executive Director and a child performer and/or advertising (Appendix E).

7. Post on social media headshots and brief biographies of the special adult guests to promote their involvement on the program.

8. Post on social media headshots and fun facts of the children performing on the program. Use only first names and encourage parents to tag themselves and share the post.

10. Write a press release.

11. Create an official color poster to be printed and disseminated in local hot spots (e.g., The Square, coffee shops, the Honors College, and libraries).

12. Create a black and white flyer to be disseminated to the local public elementary schools.
   a. Heather Lenard, the Oxford School District Public Information Officer, must approve the flyer prior to distribution.
   b. Print the flyer on colored copy paper using the Music Department’s printing facilities.
   c. Arrange the image so that two flyers fit on each sheet of paper in the landscape view. Cut the sheets of paper in half to maximize paper resources.
   d. Folders are taken home every Thursday, so the flyers must be distributed to the schools by Thursday morning the week of the program.

13. Encourage parents and children to invite friends and family to the show. Word of mouth advertising is free, and personal invitations are the most effective means for boosting event attendance.
CHAPTER V:
MANAGING THE MONEY

Budgeting and Expenditures

One of the greatest challenges of the *Thacker Jr.* project was budgeting and funding the production. After accepting the role of Executive Director, Kate Teague passed on financial documents from the previous productions. According to budget reports, in the Fall of 2018, the amount of funds earmarked for *Thacker Jr.* totaled $881. Though the documents provided general information regarding spending and fundraising, the information provided was vague. It was unclear what services were provided for each payment, and it was obvious that if I wanted to expand the program the budget would need to increase significantly.

In 2017, *Thacker Jr.*’s production cost totaled $275. The production costs for the program I directed totaled $1,572.24 (2019) and $786.35 (2020). The dramatic increase in production costs for the 2019 program rested largely in the honorarium granted to Dr. Gloria Burgess. Additionally, considerable funds were necessary to purchase the *Thacker Jr.* set pieces. Dr. Burgess’s honorarium proved to be an item of miscommunication between the LMR team and TMRH. Most authors contracted by TMRH are granted a $300 honorarium. The $300 includes payment for their services as well as travel and accommodation expenses. When contracting Dr. Burgess, LMR was unaware of the $300 standard for TMRH honorariums and granted Dr. Burgess $1,000 for her participation on the program and expenses. Though the large sum gave rise to concern from TMRH, Professor Nancy Maria Balach and I felt that the sum was a fair price for such an
accomplished author. We desired to raise as much publicity about the production as possible, so we felt that an esteemed author such as Dr. Burgess would drive interest in the event.

After the success of the 2019 show, we wanted to design the 2020 program as a celebration of the arts in Oxford, MS. I contracted local author and artist Sarah Frances Hardy and granted her an honorarium of $300 for her participation on the program. The program reused the set pieces purchased in 2019, and the expenses for the program decreased by half.

Another substantial expenditure was the cost for sound engineer Jeffrey Reed. Before the collaboration with LMR, Mr. Reed received $50 for his services. However, based on current rates for post-production editing, the LMR team felt Mr. Reed deserved a more substantial payment. An average hourly rate for audio engineering and post-production editing ranges from approximately $18 - $21. Mr. Reed attends the dress rehearsal, records the live show, and edits the recording for archival and the radio rebroadcast. If Mr. Reed spends approximately six hours at the initial meeting, rehearsal, and live show and an additional three hours in post-production editing, he commits nine hours to Thacker Jr. Multiplying nine by an hourly rate of $21, Mr. Reed’s time costs $189. We rounded his total payment to $300 for the use of his own recording and editing equipment and for the rushed turn-around for the final recording. Rebel Radio needed the edited recording of the show at least 24 hours in advance of the rebroadcast, so Mr. Reed had only two to three weekdays to complete the editing process.

I encourage future directors to research the hourly rates typical for services such as guest speakers or sound technicians. In this way, you can offer a competitive yet fair
price for the work they provide. Additionally, you present the *Thacker Jr.* program as a professional organization which requires professional level services rather than services of an amateur or volunteer skill level.

Additional expenditures include copies of the featured book for the hosts of the program. Books are purchased through SquareBooks Jr. to support the collaboration between SquareBooks and TMRH. Print media contributes to a significant cost. The past two years, 18x24 posters have been ordered through Office Depot, and it costs roughly $30 to print 18-20 posters on semi-gloss paper. To produce the flyers for the take-home folders, I purchase at least 800 sheets of colored copy paper. Other printing resources are provided at no charge through the Department of Music.
Raising the Funds

Because of the wealth of research supporting the benefits of musical study, many programs exist to give children the opportunity to engage with their musical passions; however, most, if not all, programs come with a financial cost. According to an article published by *USA Today*, “Private lessons are beyond the reach of many families and even music programs at public schools can come at a price. Students in elementary, middle and high school can expect to pay at least $300 in instrument rental or related costs” (Olsen 2017) Depending on the expertise of the instructor, the average costs for private lessons range from $15 – 60 per hour. The lessons themselves do not include the added expense of repertoire books or sheet music, sound equipment, and the instrument, itself. Because of the financial strain music education can place on families, I wanted *Thacker Jr.* to be a free opportunity for students to display their musical skills. There is no charge to participate in the program. Additionally, there is no admission charge to limit family and friends from supporting the performer. Therefore, the opportunity to perform on the *Thacker Jr.* program can be accessed by any child from any socioeconomic background.

Without charging admission or participation fees, the funds for *Thacker Jr.* had to be collected through fundraising efforts. According to data regarding the fundraising efficiency of non-profit, arts organizations in the United States, 501 c (3) organizations, like TMRH, raise approximately 41% of funds from private donations (Song 2011). I compiled a list of potential sponsors from local businesses, arts organizations, and university organizations. Then, the current TMRH executive director approved the list of potential sponsors to ensure that the entities and individuals contacted to sponsor *Thacker
were not current financial supporters of TMRH, or “Thacker Backers.” After approval, entities were contacted for sponsorship.

Please note, private donations are most effectively procured through personal relationships, phone calls, and on-site visitations. The university’s Winter break and the holiday season may create challenges to the fundraising plan. However, it is important to use your resources wisely and delegate tasks to the LMR team.

According to the fundraising template I created, donors should give a sum of $500 to be recognized as one of six official Thacker Jr. sponsors. For their generosity, sponsors are promised promotion through the Thacker Jr. social media platforms, a display of their logo at the live event, and announcement of their business or organization’s sponsorship via the livestream and radio broadcast. Though $500 dollars may seem like a large sum to charitably give to a local children’s arts program, the funds necessary for covering program expenditures are raised quickly and efficiently. Rather than using resources to solicit for ten $100 donations, a sum of $1,000 can be raised through the generosity of only two donors.

We decided upon the $500 base giving amount from the 2019 budget. We set a fundraising goal of $3,000 to cover the costs for the program and raise funds to save for following years. If each sponsor donates $500, we can reach our $3,000 goal with only six sponsors. By calling for six official sponsors, we give sponsorship of Thacker Jr. an air of exclusivity. Additionally, the hosts can acknowledge the sponsors on the program quickly without spending precious airtime listing countless names of local businesses.

Though we set $500 as the base giving amount, the executive director or team member should make it known to donors that Thacker Jr. will accept any monetary
donation. A sum as large as $500 may stave off new donors who are wary of contributing to *Thacker Jr.* for the first time. However, after seeing the value in *Thacker Jr.* contributors may be willing to increase their monetary donation the following year.

**Fundraising Checklist**

1. Compile a list of potential sponsors and seek approval from TMRH director.
2. Research the phone number and/or email address for the potential sponsors.
3. Call, send emails, and make on-site visits to the potential sponsors. Use the Sponsorship template as a guide for connecting to donors. (Appendix D)
CHAPTER VI:
SELECTING THE CAST

Auditioning

The first step to holding auditions is determining the date and booking the venue. In 2019, we chose a Monday afternoon two-weeks prior to the program date. I wanted to give the parents and students as little time to fret over the performance as possible while permitting time for parents to prepare, for promotion of each child’s participation, and for rehearsal. Monday afternoons tend to be more flexible with students’ schedules as Tuesday thru Thursday is often booked for after-school extra-curricular programming and church. While we had a great turn out at auditions, students came in sporadically throughout the process. It was not clear in the original audition guidelines to arrive at the designated start time. Unfortunately, we found that holding the auditions immediately after school worked against us by causing students to arrive late. The previously established order quickly became chaotic as the team re-set the stage frequently to accommodate performers with different instrumental and technical needs. Consequently, auditionees and parents were forced to stay longer due to the inefficient usage of time. To avoid the issue of after-school late arrivals, we set the 2020 audition date for a Saturday morning. Unfortunately, dangerous weather conditions poorly affected the quantity of students who auditioned. To remediate the low number of auditionees, we opened the auditions up to video submissions to be sent via email by the following evening at 5 o’clock. This change was posted via Facebook Live video.
The location of the auditions is equally as important as the date. I booked Nutt Auditorium to maintain consistency with the event venue and to associate Thacker Jr. further with the University’s Department of Music. Applying classroom management techniques learned in my choral methods classes, I wanted to facilitate a safe and inviting environment in which children would be introduced to the stage initially and could begin to feel comfortable with the performance venue before the dress rehearsal. Author and educator Bridget Sweet writes in her book *Growing Musicians: Teaching Music in Middle School & Beyond* about the influence of the physical space on a student’s behavior. “Many environmental factors will influence the concentration and achievement levels of adolescent music students, which in turn affect motivation, participation, and behavior” (Sweet 2016). By allowing students to step onto the stage for the first time at the audition, students could begin to alleviate shyness and stage anxiety. Also, I could gauge students’ personalities in addition to their musical talents. While the goal of the program was to provide an avenue for confidence building via live performance, I needed to test students’ ability to perform under high-stress situations.

Promotion is vital to the success of the audition process. In 2019, our goal was to generate conversations about the program through the audition process. We designed an open call audition in order to encourage as many students to engage with Thacker Jr. as possible. I posted information about the auditions on social media portals. I contacted local music teachers of both the public schools and private lessons. Tad Wilkes at Roxford University campaigned for us among his students. I reached out to local children’s programs such as the Leapfrog organization and Mayor Robyn Tannehill’s Mayor for the Day and Girl’s EmPOWERment programs. Additionally, Dr. Gloria
Burgess’s sister, Annie McEwen informed me of the TOMB religious event at which organizations will pass out flyers for upcoming events, so I created a flyer and Ms. McEwen and friends promoted the auditions.

The following year, we decided to approach the auditions by asking music teachers for student recommendations or “nominees.” We hoped to raise the caliber of musicianship through this approach; however, I was only contacted by the parent of two students studying under a local piano instructor. So, we decided to widen the scope of potential auditionees by posting about the auditions publicly and contacting more individuals and organizations.

Regarding the audition method, I advise holding an open call event and promoting the event both on social media and by directly contacting instructors, educators, and organizations. As the program itself garners credibility, potential talent will recognize the caliber of performer desired for the program. It is imperative to establish clear expectations for the auditions publicly so that parents and children will know what to anticipate. Additionally, as evidenced by the 2020 auditions, challenges outside of the director’s control may present themselves. I advise to remain flexible to offer the best possible audition experience and to make the auditions available to the largest possible audience.
For each audition, auditionees were asked to fill out a photography waiver and an information form (Appendices F & G). Additionally, students who were interested in auditioning to be a host were provided with a mock script for a cold reading (Appendix H). Auditionees were called to stage by name. Each child auditioning for a musical guest role introduced his or herself, introduced the musical piece, and performed the selection. Children auditioning for a host position introduced his or herself, performed the mock script, and provided answers for questions included at the bottom of the mock script handout. The questions include: “If you could ask an author one question, what would it be? Why?” and “What do you want to be when you grow up?” To evaluate potential hosts’ interview and improvisation skills, hosts were paired and asked to pretend as if
they were meeting each other for the first time. Students were prompted to ask introductory questions about their partner and respond appropriately. The questions and mock interview are designed to gauge the personality of each student and also to serve as a basis for the program’s script.

When selecting students for the cast, Prof. Balach and I sought students who possessed a number of criteria. Foremost, we desired to cast the most talented musicians. Showcasing the musical ability of children in the LOU community was my highest priority for the program, so it was essential to cast students who demonstrated both technical skills and expressive musicality. Performing on a live program is considerable responsibility for a young child. The students who were selected would need to present themselves professionally and demonstrate adequate preparation for the auditions. For example, auditionees who did not prepare an accompaniment or backing track were not casted for the show. As a show dedicated to showcasing and building confidence among young performers, auditionees who did not speak or perform confidently were not selected. Hosts, particularly, needed to demonstrate a dynamic personality that would captivate the Thacker Jr. audience. The final consideration for casting was diversity. Aligning with the mission of both TMRH and the University of Mississippi, we desired to create a program that represented multiple races, genders, and socioeconomic statuses.

For both the 2019 and 2020 programs, we selected performers with incredible musical and speaking skills. Additionally, we presented programs that not only celebrated the children of the LOU community but also demonstrated the diverse population of the Oxford area. The 2020 program also featured two students who have been diagnosed with
autism. *Thacker Jr.* is proud to celebrate the talent of a myriad of students to demonstrate the ability of all children to create music and enjoy artistic expression.
Audition Checklist:

1. Pick a date.

2. Book Nutt Auditorium through Amanda Fliflet.

3. Hire a collaborative pianist for auditionees in need of accompaniment.

4. Establish expectations for the audition:
   a. All auditionees arrive promptly at the designated start time of the audition.
   b. Parking is provided in the band parking lot or across the street at the Ford Center. Auditionees should enter through the front doors of Nutt Auditorium.
   c. Students play or sing one song in its entirety. The song performed at auditions will be the song performed at the live event. Or, students auditioning as hosts will perform a cold reading of a script, answer a few questions, and perform a mock interview with another student. See Appendix H.
   d. A parent/guardian must be present with the child at all times.
   e. Technical, instrumental, and accompaniment provisions include microphones, a piano, percussion instruments, and a collaborative pianist. Audio tracks must be .mp3 files and emailed to thackerjrradio@gmail.com or brought on a flash drive to the audition.

5. Create a promotional flyer advertising the audition.

6. Contact local private music instructors, music educators, leadership programs, and after-school programs for promotion.
7. Promote auditions via social media platforms at least 1 month in advance. Clearly state the expectations for the auditions on all promotional material.

8. Promote the auditions two weeks before the date and again the week of the auditions. Additionally, reach out to the local music teachers as a reminder and to gauge possible turnout.

9. Print the informational form (Appendix G) and the photography release form (Appendix F).

10. Confirm set up and technical needs with Amanda Fliflet and Team.
Contracting Guests

Figure 6 Dress Me!; Sarah Frances Hardy invites audience members to join her in reading Dress Me!

For each TMRH production, a featured author showcases his or her book, and TMRH host, Jim Dees, interviews the author for approximately ten minutes. The model needed to be replicated for the Thacker Jr. program. In keeping the Letter of Commitment, Prof. Balach and I met with Lyn Roberts and Jill Moore at SquareBooks in the Fall of 2018. After pitching my desire for the program to be primarily kid-driven, Moore suggested contracting the author and motivational speaker, Dr. Gloria Burgess.

Dr. Burgess was a native of Oxford, Mississippi, and her father, Ernie, worked as a janitor at the University of Mississippi. Dr. Burgess’s children’s book, Pass it On!, tells
the story of Mr. Faulkner’s kindness toward Burgess’s father. Mr. Faulkner paid for Ernie to study at the University. Dr. Burgess recalls,

“Faulkner helped Ernie attend college, paying for his tuition and expenses with no strings attached. His generous financial gift allowed Ernie to go to college, move out of the South, and eventually emerge from poverty. Ernie made a better life for his family, who continue to live a legacy of life-long learning and service, passing on their blessings to the next generation and the next, creating a ripple effect that will bless generations to come” (Burgess 2018).

The message of Dr. Burgess’s book, *Pass it On!*, fit perfectly into the theme Balach and I were developing. As a motivational speaker Dr. Burgess would perform well speaking publicly and elaborating freely on topics to carry the interview if anxiety crept into the child hosts. Additionally, Dr. Burgess is a jazz saxophonist, so as advocate for the arts, she was a perfect fit for the program. Prof. Balach met with Dr. Burgess via video chat and contracted Dr. Burgess for an honorarium of $1,000.

Prior to contracting Dr. Burgess, Balach and I had been in contact with Oxford Mayor Robyn Tannehill in the hopes that she would make an appearance on the program to speak about her mayoral children’s initiatives. Mayor Tannehill began two programs the Girl’s EmPOWERment program to build confidence and professional skills in 5th grade girls and the Mayor for the Day writing program for 4th grade students. Mayor Tannehill’s initiatives supported the idea of extending educational to all and passing on kindness and love in our community. Suddenly, the program took on the theme to “Pass it on.”

In 2020, Balach and I desired to design the program as a celebration of the LOU community. We hoped to maintain the model developed in the prior year of featuring both an author and a community guest. As Mississippi Teacher of the Year, Lafayette
High School’s choral teacher, Hannah Gadd Ardrey, was the indisputable choice for community speaker. As an advocate for M.U.S.I.C., or “Motivating, Understanding, and Sculpting Independent Citizens,” Ardrey empowers children through music and inspires them to success daily.

To uphold the celebration of LOU, Balach and I contracted local author and artist, Sarah Frances Hardy. Before pursuing a career as an author, Hardy worked as an attorney. Her career change demonstrates that children can pursue multiple dreams and need not resign themselves to only one passion. Hardy’s book, *Dress Me!,* tells the story of a little girl who explores many career options. Hardy writes,

“A young girl makes her way through a variety of career possibilities—dancer, doctor, superhero, plumber—in a variety of costumes. She can be graceful, creative, brave, caring, silly, and even scary... The story is simple and yet suggests infinite, limitless opportunities and the little girl’s right to choose who and what she wants to be. The message is one of exploration, choice, and self-expression. And ultimately another option for the little girl is to be ‘just me’” (Hardy 2015).

Hardy’s children’s book was a beautiful and creative representation of self-expression and imagination. The message beautifully aligned with Thacker Jr.’s mission to give children the opportunity to explore their passions and be fearlessly themselves. To maintain consistency with TMRH’s budget for contracted authors, we granted Hardy an honorarium of $300.

Derived from *Dress Me!* And Ardrey’s M.U.S.I.C. mission, the theme for the “5th Annual Thacker Jr.” was to “Be just me!” The program celebrated self-expression through literature, art, music, and sports. Oxford High School senior football player, John Michael Meagher made a special guest appearance on the program to celebrate Oxford’s 6A football state championship and to demonstrate the performing arts’ ability to
positively impact other domains of life and culture. Together, Ardrey and Meagher compared the choir to football and demonstrated the power of music to motivate individuals; express emotions; and unite individuals around a single cause.
CHAPTER VII:
RESULTING SUCCESS

The first goal for the program was to expand the *Thacker Jr.* audience. A large crowd of audience members was present at both the 2019 and 2020 live events. At the 2020, live event approximately 90% of the 395 seats in Nutt Auditorium were filled by guests of varying age groups, genders, and cultural backgrounds. Additionally, both the 2019 and 2020 productions were rebroadcast on WUMS Rebel Radio 92.1. According to Roy Frostenson, Rebel Radio’s Assistant Director, the station’s coverage map boasts a radius of approximately 55 miles reaching neighboring cities as far Tupelo, MS. Figure 6 shows the coverage for WUMS 92.1.
Figure 7 Coverage Pattern for WUMS – FM, Rebel Radio’s coverage of North MS

According to the Letter of Commitment established between LMR and TMRH, LMR was to provide live-streaming services for the event. Both the 2019 and 2020 productions were live streamed via livingmusicresource.com, and they are permanently archived and accessible via the Living Music Resource YouTube page. According to YouTube analytics, the viewership as of March 2020 of the 2019 program reaches 523 while the 2020 program reaches 237 views with viewers in states including Mississippi, Georgia, California, and Pennsylvania. In 2020, non-LMR subscribers made up 96% of the viewership. According to Dana Edwards, mother to Mac, a guitarist and performer on both the 2019 and 2020 program, the livestream connected Mac to not only the LOU community but also to family members living in different states. Because of the livestream, these family members were able to hear Mac perform onstage for the first time (D. Edwards, personal communication, March 13, 2020). Ms. Edwards’s statement alongside the data from YouTube demonstrate the success of the livestream in expanding the audience of Thacker Jr. and the larger TMRH entity. However, accomplishment of the goals for expansion could not have been possible without the collaboration of both Rebel Radio and the Living Music Resource™.

The second goal for the program was to provide children with opportunities to demonstrate their passions and talents and to grow their interest in the performing arts. The “4th Annual Thacker Jr.” featured 11 children in the program. Twelve students participated in the “5th Annual Thacker Jr.” program. Another parent of a Thacker Jr. participant, Beth Ann Fennelly, confirms the positive impact the program has had on her
son, Thomas, as it has introduced him to musical study and provided a stage on which he could perform. Thomas performed as host on the “4th Annual Thacker Jr.” program, and he loved meeting and interacting with Roxford’s house band, A Gust and the Septembers. One year later, Thomas returned for the “5th Annual Thacker Jr.” as the newest member of the Roxford band. Since being exposed to the band in 2019, Thomas has found a new passion for the bass guitar and loves to make music with his bandmates. Fennelly states that the program “allows them [children] to believe that they can create and shape a vision” (B. Fennelly, personal communication, March 21, 2020). Her statement supports Thacker Jr.’s goal to give students ownership over their performance.

The final goal for the program was to create an event that would benefit the community through entertainment, education, and engagement. Thacker Jr. is a free event that allows families of all socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds to encounter a live musical experience. In a world so saturated with technology, opportunities to engage in live experiences are sometimes inaccessible due to location or high admission costs. The accessibility of Thacker Jr. makes it a valuable and unique program for the LOU community. Additionally, the program’s content is positive and inspiring as it engages the audience in relevant topics such as passing on kindness to others, love for one’s community, self-expression, and exploring the arts. Thacker Jr. is unique in that it provides a platform for discussion of sensitive topics that might typically be shielded from children. However, Thacker Jr. invites children to be inquisitive and fosters safe, positive, and educational discussions of topics such as race relations and gender roles. The educational aspects of Thacker Jr. also reach beyond community and self-awareness to promote both literature and the arts. As outlets for communication and expression, arts
and literature encounters such as *Thacker Jr.* provide opportunities for children to navigate the world around them and discover their place within the world.

My experience as *Thacker Jr.* Executive Director was the most defining experience of my collegiate career. It allowed me to reach personal goals and develop as a future educator and leader. As *Thacker Jr.* Executive Director, I handled auditions and casting, creative and content decisions, promotion and marketing, budgeting and fundraising, and communication with the Thacker Mountain Radio Hour Board and director. This experience allowed me to develop skills that make me marketable in my field, while also shaping me in ways I never anticipated. I developed a variety of useful skills in managing liability, graphic design, and public speaking. Most impactfully, I now have a model for a performing arts and literature program to present to a building principal at a future teaching position.

Additionally, the experience taught me how to adapt a program that was established previously by another entity; how to expand upon that foundation to grow the program; and how to collaborate with other arts entities professionally. Through this role, I discovered and defined my own leadership and communication styles, and I learned how to collaborate with individuals who demonstrate contrasting styles of leadership and communication. Before taking on the role of Executive Director, I would describe my leadership style as “task-oriented.” Though I did not exhibit an aggressive communication style typical to task-oriented leaders, my communication was often reserved and precise. I relied heavily on planning, processes, and goal setting when facing a project. However, through my time as director, I found that frequent yet purposeful communication is most effective when corresponding with other arts
collaborators and parents. I discovered that communicating with charisma demonstrates my passion for the project, others will be attracted to the passion and positive energy. Children, especially, respond well to energized and positive direction. I also learned the importance of flexibility. Plans are not always strictly followed, and goals are not always met when dealing with multiple entities, leaders, and, most importantly, children. As a future educator, I need to be fluent in flexibility to meet students where they are; to collaborate with other professionals; and to direct parent involvement. Thacker Jr. has stretched me as an educator to develop not only practical skills but also to refine me as leader. Now, I am still a task-oriented leader, however, I balance my direct communication styles with my own form of charisma to motivate others and reach my goals for the program.

To conclude, Thacker Jr. has not only made a positive impact on my life as a growing music educator and artistic director but also on the lives of each child who has performed on the program. The LOU community benefits from free, live events such as Thacker Jr. that offer musical entertainment, encounters with literature, and opportunities for community engagement. Personally, I am fulfilled in knowing that Thacker Jr. allows children to shine and has a great impact in our community, and I am proud that the content of these two Thacker Jr. shows focused on how to share kindness and the importance of being true to oneself. I look forward to observing the growth of the Thacker Jr. program in the coming years, and I hope that this narrative serves as a foundation on which Executive Directors to come may build.
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LETTER OF COMMITMENT

Thacker, Jr. 2019 | Letter of Commitment

FUNDING: Thacker, Jr.’s Executive Director/Living Music ResourceTM assistant, Ava Street, will raise funds for the production that will be earmarked to cover costs. All funds raised for Thacker, Jr. 2019 will be placed in the Thacker, Jr. account for future Thacker, Jr. programming in coordination with LMR. If TMRH, Inc. should end the partnership with LMR, the funds collected during 2019 by Ava Street will be split between TMRH, Inc. and LMR. All funds raised previously by Thacker, Jr. will remain in the Thacker, Jr. account. Ava Street and Nancy Maria Balach will work closely with Kate Teague to ensure Thacker, Jr. neither over-asks previous Thacker, Jr. funders nor double-asks existing TMRH donors. Proposed donors will be submitted to Kate Teague and board for approval before soliciting.

FINANCING: Overall budget will be agreed upon between both parties. LMR will put any expenditures that exceed this amount before the Treasurer of Friends of TMRH, Inc. to ensure alignment and fiscal responsibility. All reimbursements will be made using the Thacker Mountain Radio, Inc. check request form.

PRODUCTION/FORMAT: Kate Teague, Jim Dees, and Lyn Roberts of Square Books (at minimum) will be engaged to guide and safeguard production value. Kate Teague will relay all potential Thacker, Jr. guests to Jim Dees for his input. Square Books will be asked to be involved in whatever way they feel most comfortable. Thacker, Jr.’s format will mirror TMRH, scoped down in time and content to address 1st-5th graders.

MARKETING: As previously executed, any marketing materials (aside from the existing Thacker, Jr. logo) will be put before the Marketing Committee of Friends of TMRH for approval before being shared externally. LMR’s first three social media posts will be sent to the marketing committee 1 week in advance. All further social media posts will be made under LMR’s discretion. All press releases will be sent to Jim Dees for review before distributing.

PARTNERSHIPS: Thacker, Jr. will continue partnerships with established entities (i.e., Teresa Adams at Leap Frog, Boys and Girls Club, and LOU Reads) and will also cultivate new partnerships with other community entities to garner an audience and support.

FOLLOW UP: Thacker, Jr. will conduct all follow up from donations and partnerships (thank you notes, etc.).
Friends of Thacker Mountain Radio, Inc. is a non-profit, tax-exempt organization under the Section 501 ©3 of the Internal Revenue Code. The FEIN for Friends of Thacker Mountain Radio, Inc. is 26-0236344.
Dear ________________:

I am _________________, the Executive Director of Thacker Jr. and an undergraduate assistant for the Living Music Resource™. I am writing to invite you to be a part of the _th Annual Thacker Jr. Radio Hour. On Saturday, January __th at 6:00 PM, the _th Thacker Jr. program will take place in Nutt Auditorium. The upcoming production will mark the _ year Thacker Jr. will be co-produced by Thacker Mountain Radio Hour and the University of Mississippi’s Living Music Resource™.

We often tell children they can be whatever they want to be, but how often are children given the opportunity to be who they want to be now? The goal for Thacker Jr. is to give children the opportunity to shine as the star of the show. Thacker Jr. features children of the LOU community as hosts of the program, as the house band, and as musical guests at no charge to participate!

I would like to invite you to act as our community guest speaker for the program. Here is a link to last year’s production to give you an idea of the program: ___________________. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at thackerjrradiohour@gmail.com. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Thacker Jr. Executive Director
Living Music Resource™ Undergraduate Assistant
University of Mississippi Music Education Major
Hello,

I want to begin by thanking you for allowing your child to audition to be on the Thacker Jr. program. We were thrilled to have such a talented turnout of students!

I am excited to announce that your child has been selected as one of our _________ for the _th Annual Thacker Jr. Radio Hour! I will send a script to you in the coming days. Would you please send me a picture of your child to be posted on social media as well as a fun fact (something s/he would like everyone to know), her/his age, and year in school by __ day, January __th? We will only list your child’s first name, but please feel free to tag yourself and share. This event is free and open to the public, so please encourage all of your friends and family to join us for this amazing event. The program will also be rebroadcast on Rebel Radio and live streamed at https://www.livingmusicresource.com.

We look forward to seeing you at the dress rehearsal on ___ day, January ___th from 4-6:30 p.m. in Nutt Auditorium and the day of the program on Saturday, January ___th from 5-7:30 p.m. in Nutt Auditorium. A parent or guardian should accompany your child on both of these days. Appropriate options for attire include a nice dress, a skirt or pants paired with a blouse, or dress pants or khakis and a collared shirt. The couches on the set are quite low, so a longer dress or skirt would be best! Most importantly, your child should wear something s/he feels confident wearing!

Please, feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns at thackerjrradiohour@gmail.com. Follow us on Facebook at Thacker Mountain Jr. and Instagram @thackermountainjr!

Thank you,

Thacker Jr. Executive Director
Living Music Resource™ Undergraduate Assistant
University of Mississippi Music Education Major
On Saturday, January __th at 6:00 PM the _th Annual Thacker Mountain Radio Hour Jr. program will take place in Nutt Auditorium. Since 2019, Thacker Jr. is co-produced by Thacker Mountain Radio Hour Inc. and the University of Mississippi’s Living Music Resource™. The show is part of Pop Up Oxford 20__, free and open to the public, and will be broadcast on the radio and live streamed. This year, our program will feature literary guest, ________________ and special guest, _________________.

We often tell children they can be whatever they want to be, but how often are children given the opportunity to be who they want to be now? Each year, Thacker Jr. features children of the LOU community as hosts of the program, as the house band, and as musical guests at no charge to participate. This year will be no different!

We are reaching out to a handful of select organizations that we believe will want to sponsor Thacker Jr. as it enriches the lives of students and our community and expands in new and exciting ways. I invite ____________ to take part in making this year’s Thacker Jr. incredible. We would be honored to have your support. Please let us know if you will commit $500 (tax deductible) and become one of six official Thacker Jr. 2020 sponsors. We look forward to showcasing the ________________ on social media outlets, at the live event on January __th, and via the livestream and radio broadcast!

Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Donations can be made via cash or check (Thacker Jr.) and mailed to Friends of Thacker Mountain Radio, Inc. P.O. Box 2196 Oxford, MS 38655.

Sincerely,

__________________________
Executive Director – Thacker Jr.
Undergraduate Assistant – Living Music Resource™
REBEL RADIO ADVERTISEMENT

The Thacker Mountain Radio Hour gets younger this week with the _th annual Thacker Mountain Radio Hour Junior show this Saturday, January __ at 6pm at Nutt Auditorium, located on University Avenue across from the Ford Center on the Ole Miss campus. Put on in conjunction with the University of Mississippi’s Living Music Resource the Thacker Jr. show will feature special guest author ______________, special guest ______________, and a host of talented LOU youth.

If you can’t make the Thacker Jr. show or better yet if you go and then just want to hear it all again Rebel Radio will be rebroadcasting the Thacker Jr. show on Thursday January __ at 7pm following our regular live broadcast of that week’s Thacker Mountain Radio Hour. Celebrate the youth of our area with Rebel Radio, Thacker Mountain Junior, and the Living Music Resource!
5th Annual Thacker Mountain Radio Hour Jr. Release Waiver

Name: ____________________________________

Emergency contact information (please list two):

Name, relationship, and phone:
________________________________________

Name and phone:
______________________________________

Waiver

This waiver gives permission for the use of name, images, pictures and recordings of my child by Thacker Mountain Radio Hour Inc. and the University of Mississippi’s Living Music Resource™ without compensation except as may be agreed in advance for certain projects, this permission is being a waiver as to all recording functions.

Parent Signature: ___________________________

Date: ___________
APPENDIX G

5th Annual Thacker Jr. Auditions

Please completely fill out the attached form and hand it in before your audition.
When auditioning, state your name and song selection.

Name: ________________________________________________________________

Age: _________________

School You Attend:_____________________________ Grade: _________________

HOST or MUSICAL TALENT (circle one)

Previous performance experience:

Accompaniment:
Piano Track A Capella Other:____________________________

Parent/Guardian Name: ________________________________________________

Parent/Guardian Email: ________________________________________________

Parent/Guardian Phone #: ______________________________

Performance Contract: I, ____________________________, understand that if
selected to perform in the 5th Annual Thacker Jr. program (January 25th, 2020 at
7:30 p.m. in Nutt Auditorium) I am responsible for performing my act at the event
and coordinating appropriate accompaniment for my act. By signing this form, I
comply to all conditions stated above.

Signed: __________________________ Date: __________________

56
AUDITION SCRIPT

“Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen! My name is *insert your name* and I will be your host for the evening!

I would like to begin by thanking Thacker Mountain Radio Hour and the University of Mississippi’s Living Music Resource for presenting tonight’s program.

Tonight, we have quite the show for you! You will hear from some of the stars of our great LOU community including performers from Roxford University. Our program will include author, ________________, and special guest, ________________!

Welcome to the 5th Annual Thacker Mountain Radio Hour Jr.!

Questions:
1. If you could ask an author one question, what would it be? Why?

2. What qualities do you think make for a great teacher? Why?

3. What do you want to be when you grow up?
4TH ANNUAL THACKER JR. PROGRAM AND SCRIPT

Live Stream Link:  https://youtu.be/BH1v1I6r6TQ

Show Order:
1. Thacker Jr. Jingle
2. Intro - MC & DJ
3. Zeppelin - A Gust & the Septembers
4. Tannehill Segment
5. Elsie James
6. Noah
7. Thomas & Becca
8. Gloria Segment
9. Captain
10. Mac
11. Closing - Thomas & Becca
12. Chuck Berry - A Gust & the Septembers
13. Goodnight!

Script:

Thacker Jingle - A Gust and the Septembers

Mary Cile and DJ Enter

“Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen!
Welcome to the 4th Annual Thacker Jr. Radio Show!
My name is Mary Cile Meagher, and I will be one of your hosts for the evening!

I’m Darrick Stribling Jr. but you guys can call me DJ! We are so excited to see all of you here tonight! Thank you for coming to the show!

I would like to kick-off the night by thanking Thacker Mountain Radio Hour and the University of Mississippi’s Living Music Resource for presenting tonight’s program.

Tonight, we have quite the show for you!
You will enjoy music from our very own Oxford-Lafayette children!
Hear from Oxford’s Mayor, Robyn Tannehill!
AND Tonight’s show will also feature renowned author and speaker, Gloria J. Burgess!

Now without further adieu, join me in welcoming our house band for the evening, A Gust and the Septembers!”

Mary Cile and DJ Exit

Opening Song – A Gust and the Septembers
Mary Cile and DJ Enter

Wow! Aren’t they incredible? Give another round of applause to Roxford University’s AGust and the Septembers!

Hey Mary Cile, what do you want to be when you grow up?

*Mary Cile answers*

Why do we have to wait until we grow up? What if we could be astronauts and doctors and rockstars and mayors right now? As kids!

Actually, we can be mayors as kids! And I know just the person to help us!

Ladies and Gentlemen, help me to welcome Mayor Tannehill!

*hold for applause* and welcome Mayor

How do you balance being the Mayor of Oxford, being a mom, and being a wife?

What is your favorite thing about being the mayor?

How can we, as kids, make differences right here in Oxford?

Can you tell us about your mayor for the day program?

How do you become a mayor for the day?

Tannehill brings out Lainey. Lainey reads her story.

Now let’s get back to the music!

Welcome to the stage Elsie James Bridgers singing Close Your Eyes!

Followed by pianist, Noah Garneau playing Linus and Lucy.

Mary Cile and DJ stay seated for music w/ Tannehill

Elsie
Noah

Noah, Mary Cile, DJ, Tannehill, Lainey exit

Becca and Thomas Enter
Give them one more round of applause! Ladies and gentlemen.

Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Thomas Franklin.

And I’m Becca Cohen!

Thomas, I think a Love Bomb is a great idea. What do you think?

Well I don’t know about all that pink (hold for laughter) but I like the general idea.

I think we can all do a better job of passing love and kindness along.

I agree! That reminds me… Help me welcome to the stage our literary guest, Ms. Gloria J. Burgess, author of Pass It On!

*enter Gloria*

It’s such a pleasure to meet you!

Are you from Oxford, MS?

What motivated you to write Pass It On?

There are many great lessons in your book! One of my favorite lessons is… but the main lesson is about passing it on, can you talk about that?

What are some ways that each of us can Pass it on a little each day?

Would you read a some of your book to us?

When I heard … so I really want to know if you are planning to write more children’s books?

Can you tell us a little about the work you do today?

Now let’s welcome our next two musical guests Captain Alexander on the piano and Mac Edwards!

Becca and Thomas stay seated w/ Dr. Burgess

*Captain plays*
*Mac sings*

A Gust enters
Well folks, what a night! We are so glad y’all were here to join us!

Before we go, we would like to thank our sponsors: The University of Mississippi’s Department of Education; Kappa Alpha Order; and Sneed’s Ace Hardware!

Thank you for “passing it on!” and giving us the opportunity to take the stage tonight!

Thank you to our guests Lainey Schuesselin, Elsie James Bridgers, Noah Garneau, Mac Edwards, Mayor Robyn Tannehill, and Gloria J. Burgess!

And a very special thank you to Roxford University and our talented House Band, A Gust and the Septembers! *gesture towards band*

Closing Song - A Gust and the Septembers

That was Captain Alexander on bass, Nathan Woo on the drums, and Tyler Heurtas on lead guitar and vocals! A Gust and the Septembers!!

Ladies and gents we are signing off! Thank you and goodnight!!

*Applause*
ALL Enter to bow. Say goodnight!
5TH ANNUAL THACKER JR. PROGRAM AND SCRIPT

Live Stream Link:  https://youtu.be/FGeS67ig1l8

Show Order (55 min.)

1. Thacker Jingle (1)
2. Welcome (1)
3. Captain & the Sailors (3)
4. Introduction and Sponsors (3)
5. Sarah Frances (10 - 15)
6. Linda Zhang (1)
7. Mac Edwards (3-4)
8. Hannah Gadd (10)
9. John Meagher (5)
11. Bombelli (3-4)
12. Captain & the Sailors (3-4)
13. Closing (1)

Lines: Nora, Lainey, Becca
Script:
Preset onstage: House Band, Nora, & Lainey

*Ava Welcomes the Audience*
*Ava exits*

Thacker Jingle - Captain and the Sailors

“Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen!
Welcome to the 5th Annual Thacker Jr. Radio Show!
My name is Nora Lynch, and I will be one of your hosts for the evening!

I’m Lainey Schuesselin! We are so excited to see all of you here tonight! Thank you for coming to the show!

I would like to kick-off the night by thanking Thacker Mountain Radio Hour and the University of Mississippi’s Living Music Resource for presenting tonight’s program!

Tonight, we have quite the show for you!
You will enjoy music performed by children from right here in Oxford!

Be inspired by author and artist Sarah Frances Hardy!

AND Tonight’s show will also feature Mississippi Teacher of the Year, Hannah Gadd Ardrey!
Now without further adieu, join me in welcoming our house band for the evening, Captain and the Sailors!*

*Hosts stay seated during song.*

**Sound Kitchen - Captain and the Sailors**

Wow! Aren’t they incredible? Give another round of applause to Roxford University’s Captain and the Sailors!

*Band exits during applause*

*Nora pauses until Band exits*

Hey Lainey, what do you want to be when you grow up?

*Lainey answers*

What if I want to be more than one thing when I grow up? Can I be more than just one thing?

Yes, Nora, you CAN be more than just one thing! In fact, I know someone who has many roles in her life!

**Ladies and Gentlemen, help me to welcome local author and artist, Sarah Frances Hardy!**

*hold for applause as Hardy enters from stage left*

It’s such a pleasure to meet you!

Are you from Oxford, MS?

What motivated you to change careers from attorney to author and artist?

I understand that you illustrate your own books. When you write a story do you start with a picture first or a plot?

What inspired you to write the book *Dress Me!*?

Would you read some of your book to us?

Which of your books is your favorite?

My main take away from the story is that you should always be yourself! What does “being yourself” mean to you?
Do you express yourself through your writing? Or your art?

We actually have a few images of some of your artwork. Audience, would you like to see Ms. Hardy’s artwork?

Will you tell us a little about your artwork?

What is your favorite medium?

You recently took a trip to the United Kingdom. Would you tell us a little about your trip?

And you made some sketches during the trip. Will these sketches inspire any new children’s books soon?

Well, I sure hope you write some more books!

Ms. Hardy, thank you so much for modeling what it means to be yourself and to do what you love!

Now, let’s get back to the music!

Welcome to the stage pianist, Linda playing “Dangerous Journey”!

*Linda enters stage left.
*Linda plays
*Applause and Linda exits stage left
*During applause Mac’s chair and mics are set stage right

Returning back to the Thacker Jr. stage is Mac, and tonight he is treating us to a little country with Eric Church’s popular hit “Some of It.”

*Mac enters stage right
*Mac plays
*Applause and Mac and Nora exit stage right. Sarah Frances exits stage left.
*Nora gives microphone to Becca as Becca enters stage right and joins Lainey on the couch*

Give them one more round of applause, ladies and gentlemen!

I’m Rebecca Cohen! And I’m taking over!

Lainey, what do you think about what Ms. Hardy shared when she said you can be more than one thing?
*Lainey answers*

But I also think it's important to be the best in everything you choose to do!

That reminds me… Tonight we have a special guest who holds an award for doing her best everyday at her job! Please help me to welcome Mississippi’s Teacher of the Year, Ms. Hannah Gadd Ardrey!

*hold for applause as Ardrey enters from stage left*

Ms. Ardrey, it is a pleasure to meet you! Would you tell us a little about what you do?

Have you always loved music?

What inspired you to become a music teacher?

What is your favorite part of being a music teacher?

Earlier with Hardy, we talked about the importance of being yourself. How do you encourage your students to be their best selves?

What are some of the benefits of studying music? I heard that music is one of the only subjects in school that engages all parts of the brain. Do you find that students engage their brains and use a variety of skills to make music in your classroom?

So, if music incorporates many other subjects, can other areas of our lives incorporate music?

But, what about people who aren’t musicians? How is music incorporated into their lives?

Let’s invite to the stage someone who is not a musician but knows the value of music, John Michael Meagher!

*hold for applause as John enters from stage left*

John is a senior at Oxford Highschool, and he recently helped his team to take home the 6A football state championship! Let’s give him a hand!

So, John, even though you aren’t a musician do you feel like music plays an important role in your life?

How about on the football field? Do the stand tunes played by the marching band affect your attitude on the field?
Do you have to work together as a team in football?

What would you say is the key to working together as a team?

Ms. Ardrey, what role does teamwork play in choir?

So, just like you have to work as one unified team in football you also have to work together to create a unified sound in choir!

What does the phrase “be yourself” mean to you?

How about another round of applause for our guests! Thank you, John, for being a positive role model for young kids like me!

And, Ms. Ardrey, thank you for inspiring students everyday to be the best they can be!

Now let’s welcome our next musical guest Luke playing Debussy’s Clair de Lune on the piano!

*Luke enters from stage left*  
*Becca, Lainey, Ardrey, and John stay seated through music*  
*Luke plays*  
*Applause and Luke exits stage left*

Wow! Wasn’t that beautiful?  
Help me to welcome our final musical guest, member of the Oxford Highschool marching band, percussionist, Mario!

*Mario enters stage left followed by Hardy*  
*Mario plays*  
*Applause and Mario exits stage left*  
*During applause Captain and the Sailors and Nora enter from stage right*

Well folks, what a night! We are so glad y’all were here to join us!

Before we go, we would like to thank our sponsors: Sneed’s Ace Hardware and Pi Beta Phi Sorority!

Thank you for your support and for giving us the opportunity to take the stage tonight!

Thank you to our guests Linda, Mac, Luke, Mario, John Michael, Sarah Frances Hardy, and Hannah Gadd Ardrey!

And a very special thank you to Roxford University and our talented House Band, Captain and the Sailors! *gesture towards band*
Closing Song - Captain and the Sailors

That was Thomas on the bass, Captain on keyboard, Nathan on the drums, and Tyler on lead guitar and vocals! Give them another round of applause!

Ladies and gentlemen, we hope you enjoyed the show! Thank you and goodnight!!

Thacker Jr. Theme Song

During theme song ALL Enter to bow/dance to the song!