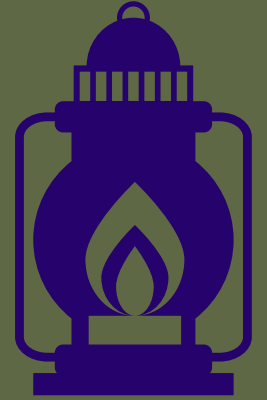
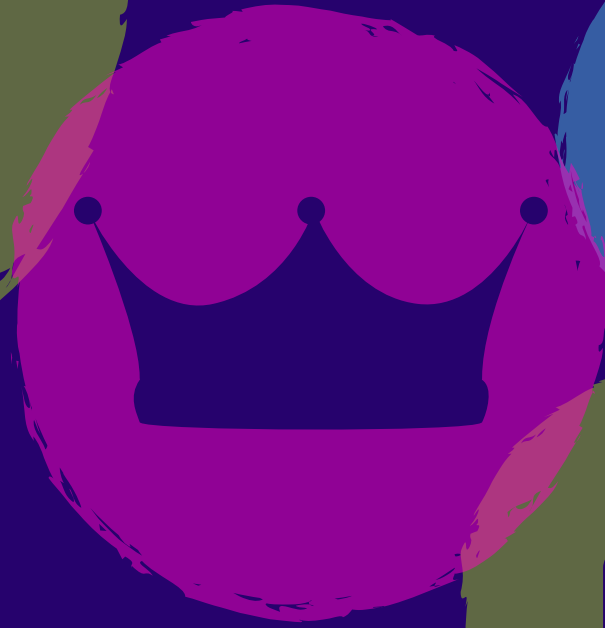
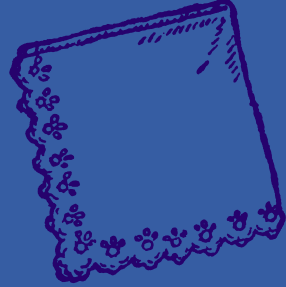




**ABLE**

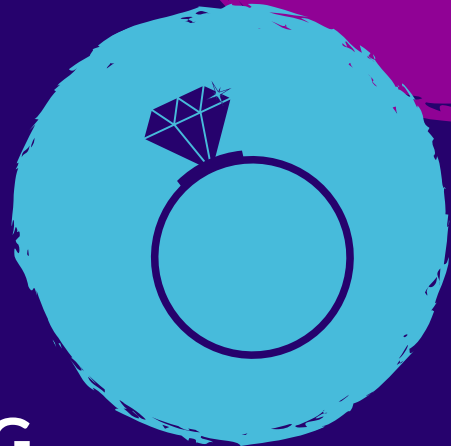
artists breaking limits & expectations



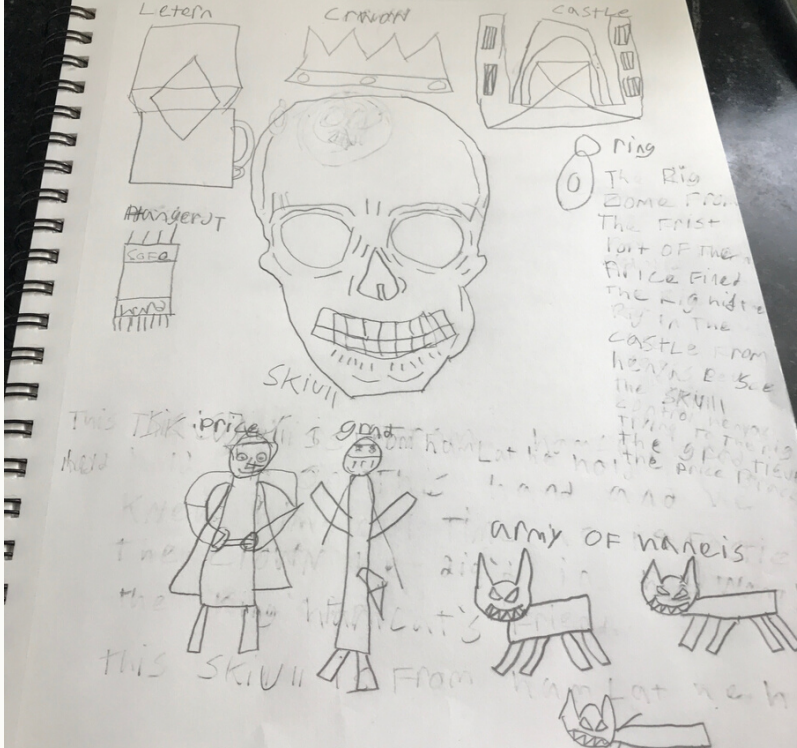
# 0 FOR A MUSE

original stories inspired by  
Shakespeare's famous props

**VOLUME 2 OF 5**



**THE RING  
AND THE MERMAID IN LOVE**



Our Stories sketch by Sam Radinsky

## LET US ON YOUR IMAGINARY FORCES WORK...

### What can we make together?

After the success of ***O for a Muse: Part 1*** in the winter of 2019, A.B.L.E.'s adult ensemble was excited to devise a theatrical event inspired by a new batch of iconic Shakespearean props - a crown, a ring, a lantern, a handkerchief, and a skull. The ensemble was 3 weeks into rehearsals when the COVID-19 pandemic up-ended our lives in Chicago, and lives of people around the globe.

We found ourselves in a brave new world, without a rehearsal room, without a theatre, but with a lot of hope. In the weeks since, our entire team has tested our resiliency, learned new ways to work together, and remained determined to share our stories.

When the world feels topsy-turvy, that's when the arts are the most valuable. It can lift your spirits to connect with your community, to know you have something to contribute, and to create something new. That is what A.B.L.E. has always been about. And it's in that spirit that we forged ahead with a new vision for ***O for a Muse***.

Each volume of our short story collection features an original story and illustrations by our ensemble of actors with Down syndrome and other developmental disabilities. In these pages, you'll also find an opportunity to use your imagination and create something yourself. We believe everyone is A.B.L.E. to connect, to contribute, and to create. And that includes you, dear reader.

Whether onstage or on the page, our stories cannot come to life without an audience. Thank you for reading.

KATIE YOHE

Founder & Executive Artistic Director

# O FOR A MUSE

SHORT STORY COLLECTION

VOLUME 2 OF 5

## FEATURE

**The Ring and the Mermaid in Love**  
page 2

## CREATE YOUR OWN

**Madlibs**  
page 12

**Illustrations**  
page 14

## BEHIND THE SCENES

**Our process**  
page 16

**Meet the ensemble**  
page 20

**Credits**  
page 22

**For other stories and exclusive content, visit:**

[www.ableensemble.com/muse](http://www.ableensemble.com/muse)

# THE RING AND THE MERMAID IN LOVE

Story & Illustrations by The A.B.L.E. Ensemble

Every morning at 8am Becky would get ready for work. Becky was a maid. She grabbed her bucket, brass polish and feather duster. And then she put on her uniform - a white wetsuit, a tight mask, and red fins, and headed out to her boat. **You see, Becky was a scuba diving maid. And she worked deep under the sea off the coast of Florida.**





(top) Sea Creatures by Benjamin Collins  
(middle) King Triton by Martin Conway  
(bottom) The Ocean by Sam Radinsky

Every day, Becky dove 10 fathoms below to the castle of the sea king, King Triton. She had worked for King Triton for 21 years. In that time, she got to know the sea creatures very well. Becky knew the starfish and the king sharks and the Normal Whales all by name. Even though she wasn't one of them, they made her feel like she was part of their world.

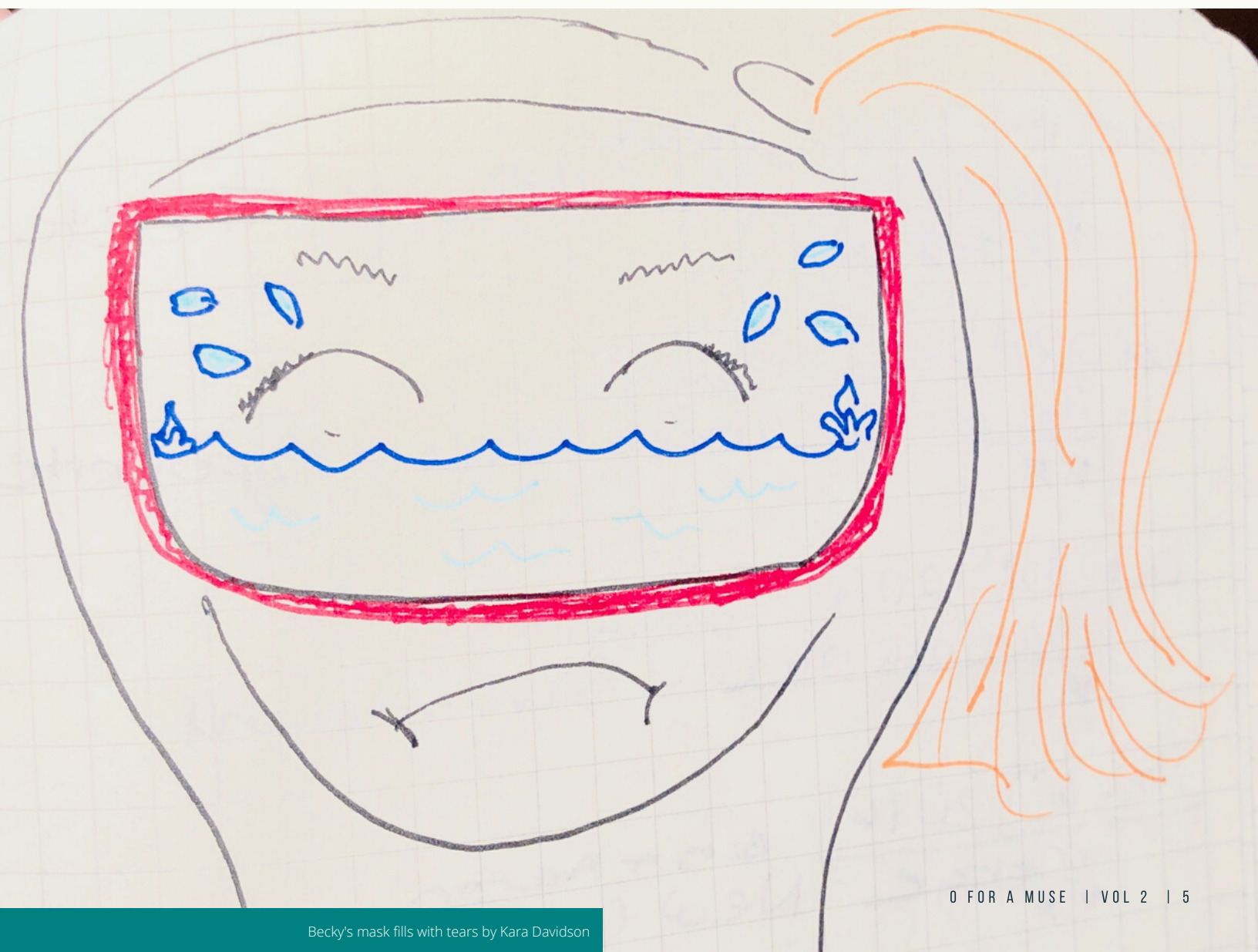
**All except for King Triton's eldest daughter, a mermaid named Popcorn.**





Popcorn picked on Becky constantly. She played tricks on her. She dipped Becky's clean mop in the mud. She ate Becky's snacks, and called her names like "Dumbo."

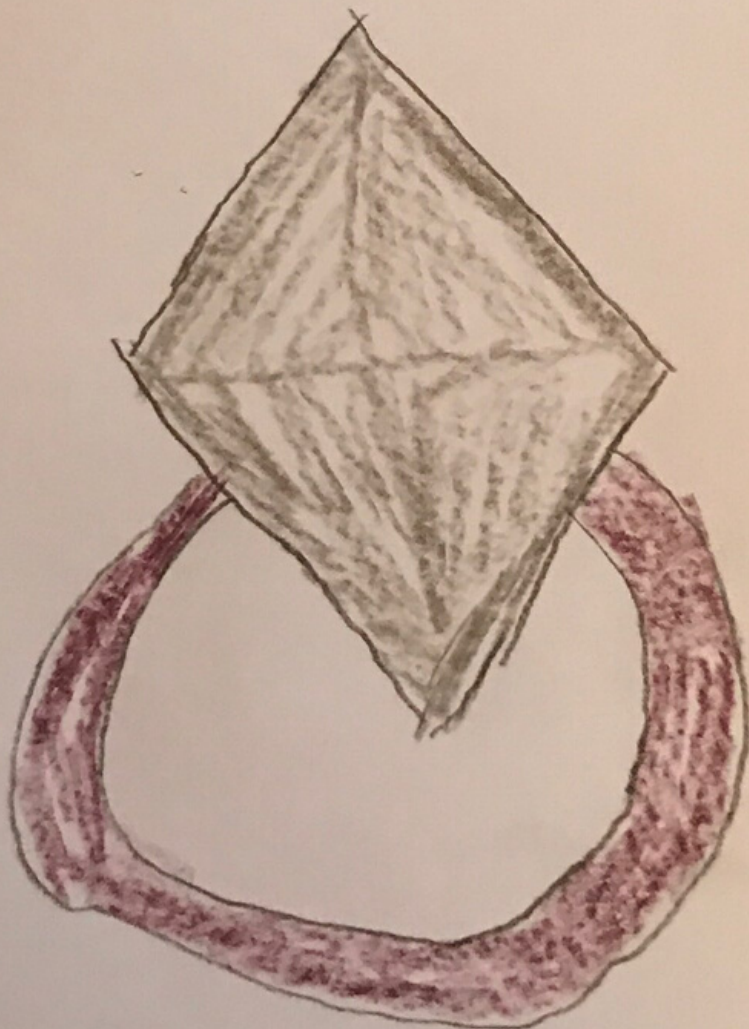
**Sometimes Becky cried so much her scuba mask filled up with tears. Even though the sea was beautiful, Becky thought mermaids were ugly!**



One day, after Popcorn called her “jerk dick”, Becky swam into King Triton’s private chambers where she could compose herself.

**It was there she spotted a beautiful ring in a box hidden in the bedside table.**

The ring was mesmerizing. It was made of gold, fishbones and blue cute fish scales. It sparkled under the water.





Sebastien the crab by Sam Radinsky

"Beautiful isn't it?" asked a voice behind her. It was Sebastien, the crab. "That ring has been passed down through generations of merpeople. It was made over 100 years ago in 1925. But soon it will leave our ocean."

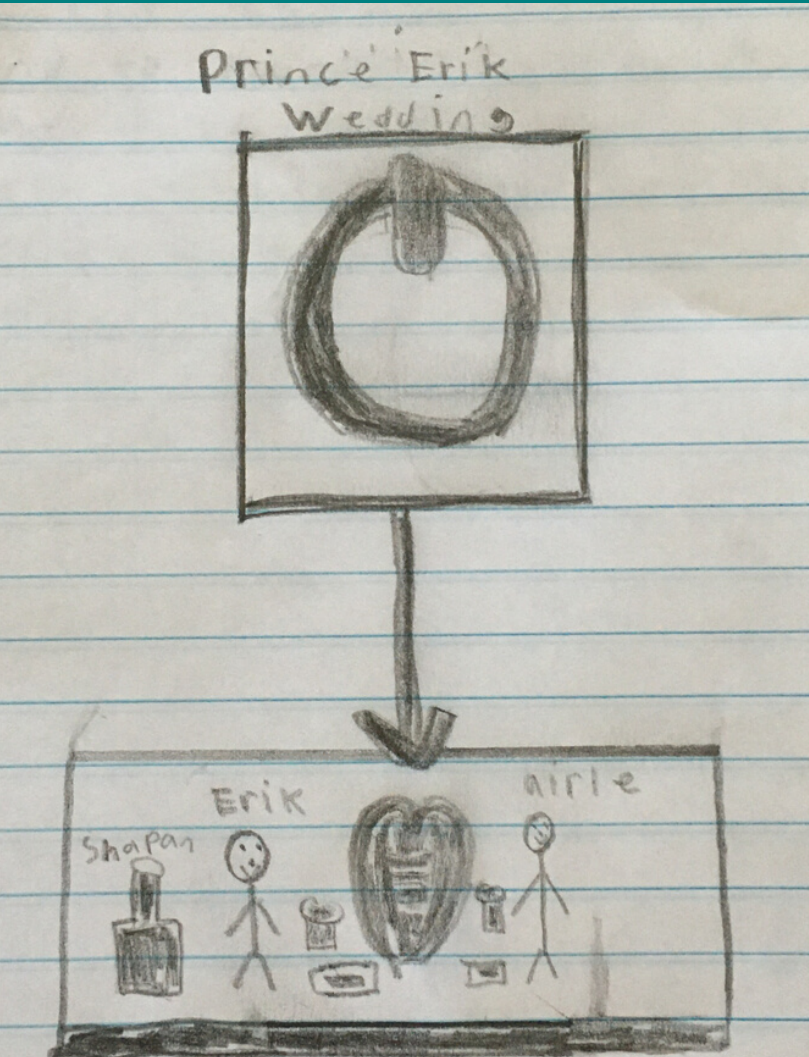
"Why would you ever part with it?" Becky wondered aloud.

"The King's youngest daughter Ariel is to be married. That will be her wedding ring." Sebastian informed her.

"I don't understand," said Becky. "She's a mermaid, isn't she? Why would the ring have to leave the ocean?"

**"Haven't you heard?" asked Sebastian. "Ariel is marrying a human. She is marrying Prince Eric and going to live on land."**

Sebastian scuttled away, leaving Becky in shock.



Wedding plans by Matt Danaher



**After enduring so much abuse, Becky was sure all mermaids must be mean. And now Prince Eric - the prince of her human kingdom - wanted to marry one? Becky couldn't let that happen! She tucked the ring in her wetsuit and swam to the surface.**

---

Becky scrambled into her boat and steered it towards the cove. Everyone in the kingdom knew Prince Eric liked to hang out at the cove and play fetch with his dog. As she got closer to the shore, she could see him there, teaching his dog to play dead.

Becky confronted the Prince. "You can't marry a mermaid! If you want to get married, you should marry my friend Mary! She's practically perfect in every way!" Becky exclaimed.

"I'm sure it's a jolly holiday with Mary," Prince Eric said. "But I'm in love with Ariel."

Becky explained the torture she'd endured at the fins of King Triton's oldest daughter. "All mermaids are mean!"

"That's not true!" Prince Eric said. "Some mermaids are mean. But some of them are amazing. Did you know mermaids can sing? Mermaids do nice things like save people who jump in the water, and **I'm madly in love with a mermaid who is a princess, thoughtful and she's great! I can't wait to be a merman!**"



Becky could see Eric really was in love, and she didn't want to stand in the way of true love. She pulled the ring from her wetsuit and handed it to Prince Eric.

**She said, "I hope you live happily ever after."**

**They did.**





**And Becky learned some mermaids  
could be great friends.**



# CREATE YOUR OWN MADLIBS

## How do you think the story should go?

*Work with a friend, or by yourself to write your own version of The Story of the Ring by filling in the blanks below.*

Every morning at **(what time?)** \_\_\_\_\_ Becky would get ready for work. Becky was a maid. She grabbed her bucket, **(what do you use to clean?)** \_\_\_\_\_, and **(what else do you clean with?)** \_\_\_\_\_. Then she put on her uniform - a **(pick a color)** \_\_\_\_\_ wetsuit, a tight mask, and **(pick a different color)** \_\_\_\_\_ fins, and headed out to her boat. You see, Becky was a scuba diving maid. And she worked deep under the sea off the coast of **(where does Becky live?)** \_\_\_\_\_.

Every day, Becky dove **(pick a number)** \_\_\_\_\_ fathoms below to the castle of the sea king, King Triton. She had worked for King Triton for **(how long? days? weeks? years?)** \_\_\_\_\_. In that time, she got to know the sea creatures very well. She knew the starfish and the **(name a sea creature)** \_\_\_\_\_, and the **(name a kind of fish)** \_\_\_\_\_ all by name. And even though she wasn't one of them, they made her feel like she was part of their world.

All except for King Triton's oldest daughter **(what is Ariel's sister's name?)** \_\_\_\_\_. She picked on Becky constantly. She played tricks on her like **(what is a mean thing to do to someone?)** \_\_\_\_\_ and called her names like **(what is a mean name?)** \_\_\_\_\_. Sometimes Becky cried so much her scuba mask filled up with tears. Even though the sea was beautiful, Becky thought mermaids were ugly!

One day after being called **(what is a mean name?)** \_\_\_\_\_, Becky swam into King Triton's private chambers where she could compose herself. That's when she spotted a beautiful ring in **(where did King Triton keep the ring?)** \_\_\_\_\_. The ring was mesmerizing. It was made of **(what is the ring made of? Shells? Gemstones? Coral? Diamonds? Something else?)** \_\_\_\_\_. It sparkled under the water.

"Beautiful isn't it?" asked a voice behind her. It was Sebastien, the crab. "That ring has been passed down through generations of merpeople. It was made over 100 years ago in 1925. But soon it will leave our ocean."

"Why would you ever part with it?" Becky wondered aloud.

"The King's youngest daughter Ariel is to be married. That will be her wedding ring." Sebastian informed her.

"I don't understand," said Becky. "She's a mermaid, isn't she? Why would the ring have to leave the ocean?"

"Haven't you heard?" asked Sebastian. "Ariel is marrying a human. She is marrying Prince Eric and going to live on land."

Sebastian scuttled away, leaving Becky in shock. After enduring so much abuse, Becky was sure all mermaids must be mean. And now Prince Eric - the prince of her human kingdom - wanted to marry one? Becky couldn't let that happen! She tucked the ring in her wetsuit and swam up to the surface.

Becky scrambled into her boat and steered it towards the cove. Everyone in the kingdom knew Prince Eric liked to hang out at the cove and play with his dog. As she got closer to the shore, she could see him there, **(What was Prince Eric doing at the beach?)**

\_\_\_\_\_.

Becky confronted the Prince. "You can't marry a mermaid! If you want to get married, you should marry my friend Mary! She's practically perfect in every way!" Becky exclaimed.

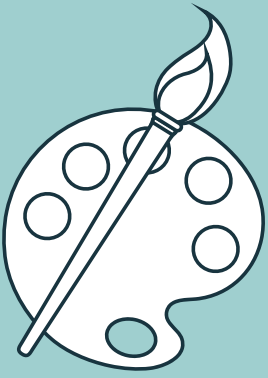
"I'm sure it's a jolly holiday with Mary," Prince Eric said. "But I'm in love with Ariel."

Becky explained the torture she'd endured at the fins of King Triton's oldest daughter. "All mermaids are mean!" she shouted.

"That's not true!" Prince Eric said. "Sure, some mermaids are mean. But some of them are amazing. Did you know mermaids can **(what is an amazing talent?)** \_\_\_\_\_. Mermaids do nice things like **(what is something nice you can do for someone else?)**

\_\_\_\_\_. And I'm madly in love with a mermaid who is **(pick a word to describe Ariel)** \_\_\_\_\_, **(pick another word to describe Ariel)** \_\_\_\_\_, and **(pick one more word to describe Ariel)** \_\_\_\_\_."

Becky could see Eric really was in love, and she didn't want to stand in the way of true love. She pulled the ring from her wetsuit and handed it to the Prince. She said, "I hope you live happily ever after." They did. And Becky learned some mermaids could be great friends.

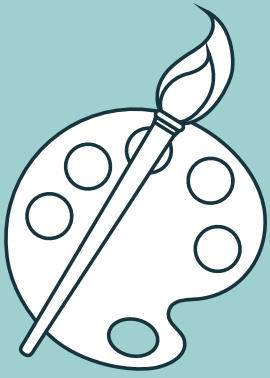


# CREATE YOUR OWN ILLUSTRATIONS

**What is your favorite moment from this story?**

*Grab some crayons, colored pencils, or markers and use these blank spaces to put your imagination on paper.*

A large, empty white rectangular area intended for drawing or writing.



# Need some inspiration?

Here are some ideas from our ensemble

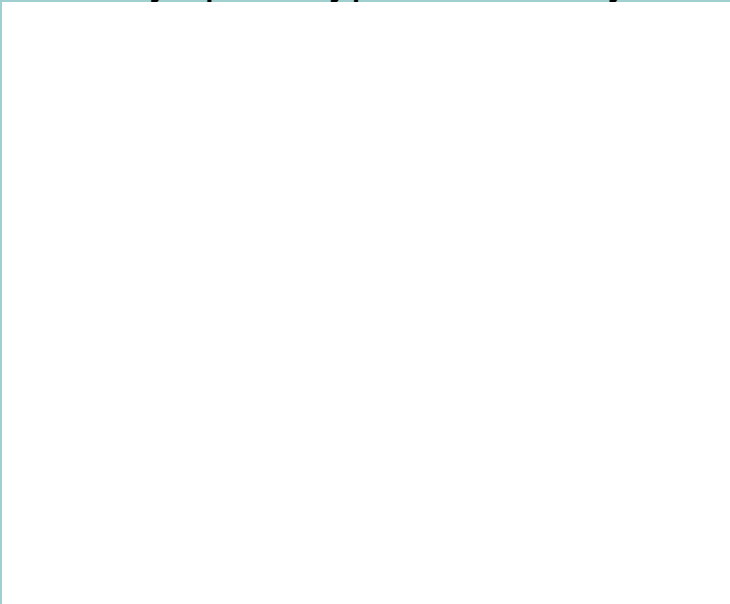
**Draw: your favorite ocean animal**



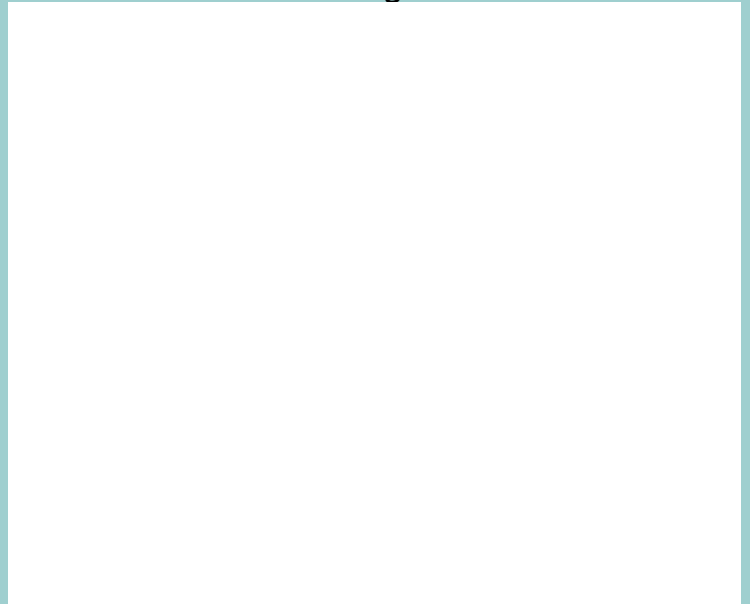
**Draw: King Triton and some merpeople**



**Draw: Becky's "practically perfect" friend Mary**



**Draw: Prince Eric with his dog**



**We want to see what you've created!**

Snap a photo of your artwork or your madlibs  
and share on social media using the hashtag #ableensemble and #oforamuse



@ableensemble



# MAKING OUR STORIES

*A look at A.B.L.E.'s devising process*



## IN PERSON

Before Chicago's shelter-in-place order went into effect, A.B.L.E.'s adult ensemble had 3 in person rehearsals at The Menomonee Club Drucker Center. You can see photos from our time together on pages 18 and 19.

**In Week 1**, actors focused on **ensemble building**, and basic **improvisational skills**. As with all A.B.L.E. sessions, the group developed teamwork, listening, and creativity.

**In Week 2**, actors **devised** the basics stories for our 5 Shakespearean objects. Objects were spread around the studio with a facilitator and a big piece of paper at each station.

Actors broke into pairs or trios and rotated around the room, with each group answering a different question about each object (*see next page*). Each actor had a chance to answer one question about each object, so these stories truly belong to everyone.

**In Week 3**, actors dug deeper into the stories by creating **tableaux** of the primary locations and improvising short interactions between **characters**. They also played with **scenes** from some Shakespeare plays including *Richard III*, *Macbeth*, and *Hamlet*.

## ONLINE

A.B.L.E. shifted to **weekly online rehearsals** via Zoom on March 17th. Zoom rehearsals keep the same format as in-person rehearsals, with a **dance party, warm up, and ample time for ensemble games**.

With the basic structure of each story in place, actors played **madlibs** (*see pages 12-13*) to add details and life to each story. The ensemble worked on 2 stories each week, and used the time between classes to draw pictures of their favorite moments.

In addition to focusing on the tales, actors also practiced **on-camera acting skills** by filming Shakespeare monologues and group activities. You can see these film projects across A.B.L.E.'s social media channels on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.



# DEVisING QUESTIONS



**WHO** does this object belong to?



**WHERE** did this object come from and **WHERE** does our story take place?



**WHEN** was this object made and **WHEN** does our story take place?

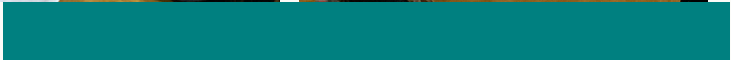
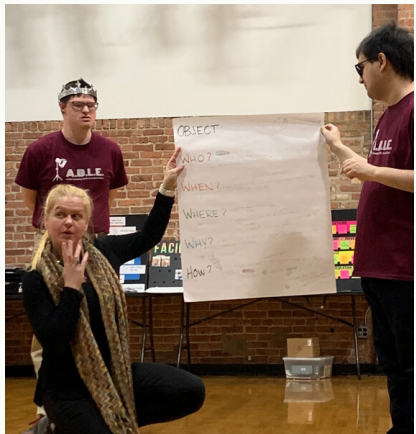


**WHY** is this object special?



**HOW** does our story end?

# OUR TIME TOGETHER



# DEVISING AND IMPROVISING



# MEET THE ENSEMBLE



photo by Mariana Gongora

## **A.B.L.E.'s adult ensemble meets every Tuesday afternoon.**

Supported by a team of teaching artists and volunteer facilitators, ensemble members work together to create theatre and film projects while strengthening lifelong skills including communication, confidence, and cooperation.



**BEN**

**My catchphrase is,,,**  
"What the heaven?!"



**MARTY**

**I would like to go...**  
To Los Angeles to be a famous actor. I will have a house with a swimming pool.



**MATT D.**

**My catchphrase is,,,**  
"Seriously?"



**PETER**

**I would like to learn...**  
how to play an instrument.



**ANDREW**

**My catchphrase is...**  
"Are you ready?"



**EMILY K.**

**Something special to me...**  
pictures of me with my family and my sister Anna.



**MATT L.**

**I would like to go...**  
To the future to see myself and know that it's going to turn out okay.



**EMILY L.**

**I would like to learn...**  
How to talk to animals.



**MADDI**

**Something special to me...**  
I have a statue of the Eiffel Tower from my trip to Paris.



**JUSTICE**

**Something special to me...**  
A statue of a mother and baby elephant. I love elephants and my mom.



**SAM**

**I would like to learn...**  
to speak fluent sign language.



**JAKE**

**I would like to go...**  
to the movies, diners, shopping and entertainment when we get back to normal.



# A.B.L.E.

artists breaking limits & expectations

A.B.L.E. - Artists Breaking Limits & Expectations - is a Chicago-based nonprofit that creates theatre and film for, with, and by individuals with Down syndrome and other developmental disabilities. A.B.L.E.'s mission is to provide performing arts opportunities through which individuals with these disabilities can share who they are and all they are A.B.L.E. to do. Through its core teen and adult ensembles, specialized workshops, and outreach programming, A.B.L.E.'s actors strengthen lifelong skills including communication, focus, creativity, and teamwork. A.B.L.E.'s ensembles have staged 20 plays ranging from original works to classics from Shakespeare, Dickens, and Gilbert & Sullivan, and have premiered 2 feature films which have been recognized by several local and international festivals. By promoting practices that place participants with disabilities in the spotlight, and giving them ownership over their experiences, A.B.L.E.'s work strives to shift societal preconceptions, and build more inclusive, empathetic communities.

## CONNECT WITH A.B.L.E.



[www.ableensemble.com](http://www.ableensemble.com)



[facebook.com/ableensemble](https://facebook.com/ableensemble)



[@ableensemble](https://@ableensemble)



[bit.ly/abletube](https://bit.ly/abletube)



[admin@ableensemble.com](mailto:admin@ableensemble.com)

### 0 FOR A MUSE: VOLUME 2

#### THE RING AND THE MERMAID IN LOVE

RELEASED MAY 29, 2020

#### THE ENSEMBLE

BENJAMIN COLLINS, MARTIN CONWAY, MATT DANAHER,  
PETER GRZESLO, ANDREW KOSNIK, EMILY KWIDZINSKI,  
MATTHEW LACHAPELLE, EMILY LAVIN, MADDI PEREZ,  
JUSTICE PETERS-FARRELL, SAM RADINSKY, & JAKE  
SOLWORTH

#### TEACHING ARTISTS

LAWRENCE KERN & KATIE YOHE

#### FACILITATORS

NETTE ANGELINI, CLAIRE CHRZAN, KARA DAVIDSON,  
ARIN MULVANEY, & BEN RAANAN

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CHICAGO SHAKESPEARE THEATER  
KATIE MANN AND 4TH WALL THEATRE COMPANY  
THE MEMOMONEE CLUB DRUCKER CENTER

#### OTHER VOLUMES IN THIS COLLECTION

THE ABUNDANT CROWN PRINCE  
THE LANTERN: GOOD DEFEATS RIDDLE  
JUSTICE FOR GREASY KING LEAR  
ONCE UPON A HYENA TIME: THE STORY OF THE SKULL

We believe everyone is A.B.L.E.  
to connect, to contribute, and to create.  
Help us bring more projects to life.  
Visit [bit.ly/giveable](https://bit.ly/giveable) to make a donation.

A.B.L.E. -Artists Breaking Limits & Expectations is a registered 501(c)3 nonprofit  
EIN 81-2667531