

**MUSICAL THEATER
SONGWRITING CHALLENGE**

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE AMERICAN THEATRE WING.
Collaborators are Disney Theatrical Productions and
Samuel French, Inc., a Concord Theatricals company.

**SONG SUMMARIES FOR THE
2019 FINALISTS OF THE
MUSICAL THEATER
SONGWRITING CHALLENGE**

High resolution photos are available upon request.



Tessa Barcelo from Andover, MA
Queen

Queen Iana of the mermaids sings to Veida another mermaid, encouraging her to rise up and do what needs to be done—release the princess from jail. To inspire the younger mermaid to embrace her own powers, Iana relates her story of becoming the first female monarch, how she ignored what others said, that she couldn't reign supreme because she wasn't a man. Iana exhorts Veida singing "Don't let them hold you back this time. I know you've got the strength."

Emalee Flatness from Willard, MO
Bring Him Back to Carolina

During the American Civil War, a Dutch immigrant named Jacob arrives in North Carolina on the plantation of the wealthy Thomas Ambrose. There Jacob meets and falls in love with Ambrose's daughter Elizabeth. But Jacob is called to serve in the Confederate Army and after his letters from the battlefield to Elizabeth abruptly stop, she believes he has been killed. She writes a secret letter asking that Jacob's body be sent back to Carolina where he can be properly buried. Emalee was inspired to write the song from a story of her own family's history and an ancestor who emigrated from the Netherlands during the Civil War.





Makai Keur and Julian Watson from Franklin, TN
Charles' Song

Charles Williams is a soldier fighting in the Great Emu War of 1932 and living with post-traumatic stress disorder from World War I. Charles has just found out that Mavis--the woman he loves--has been with his commanding officer and "brother in arms" Major GPW Meredith. The song that begins on a reflective note quickly turns to passion for his beloved then shifts to darker thoughts of revenge. Makai and Julian say that the song's words, "were written to spotlight themes of love, hate, and brothers."



Breezy Love from Winnetka, IL
Hangin' On Life

A future beyond high school is fast-approaching for a teenager who is trying to decide whether or not to attend college. This character feels lost in life, coping with anxiety, depression, and self-harm brought on by the onslaught of the pressures of life. Finally, after months of bottling up emotions, the character bravely begins to speak up and share feelings with friends, family, and therapist. The song is about knowing when to hang on and when to let go of the things that don't serve you.



Sophia Schwaner from Staunton, VA
At Sea

The place is the ancient world and the time is the Persian Wars and the Battle of Salamis. The Greek queen Artemisia has allied herself with the Persian Emperor Xerxes and is leading his forces and ships into battle against her own people. During the fight, Artemisia is ferocious against the Greeks, singing to enemy and comrades alike about the horrors of fighting at sea. Sophia says that in the song, Artemisia is, "debating the nature of life vs. death, loyalty and alliance and the role that she and the rest of the soldiers at Salamis played in shaping and changing the world."



Akira Sky from Los Angeles, CA
I Don't Know What Happened

Time travel, Jimmy Hendrix, and a magic record player are among the touchstones in, "I Don't Know What Happened." The song is sung by a 17-year old multiracial girl named River who finds herself transported from the rare record room of a thrift store back 50 years to 1969 New York. River meets her grandmother as a younger woman and fears that their conversations may have set events in motion that would permanently alter her life and others.' As Akira notes, the song is about, "unexpectedly finding yourself in a near impossible situation, with no clue how to react."

