Program Note for *Love and Information* by Caryl Churchill, 2019 (~ 200 words)

Today, in a time of social media, alternative facts, and wearable technologies, the eternal question "What is the meaning of love?" comes with an additional clause: What is the meaning of love in the Digital Age? With hoards of high-speed data available at our fingertips, how do we define love? And where can we access it? These, and many other questions, are raised by Caryl Churchill's experimental play. Comprised of seven sequences and sixty-plus scenes with no set order, delineation of conventional character or narrative, the play unfolds around us as partial and anonymous conversations we witness in passing. It's a bit like scrolling down through a digital thread and pausing on a section of comments. In the Digital Age, our devices are meant to aid our communications and awareness of the world around us, but in our digital words, we may find we are in fact more disconnected than ever before. What happens when you search for "the meaning of love?" Are you satisfied with the answer? Such a lofty question puzzles even the Internet, but *Love and Information* guides us toward where we may find it: in each other.

Program Note for *Endgame* by Samuel Beckett, 2017 (~275 words)

The world of *Endgame* is a world both familiar and unknowable. This is sometimes an unsettling place to be - because nothing is certain. Life, Beckett observed, is often more complicated than our language can acknowledge or allow.

Realizing this, Beckett used the limitations of language to explore this uncertainty within his plays. He believed what was said was as important as how it was said. He believed humans are more than their words - they take up space, they move, they breathe, they love, they end. And how terrifying it is that we will end, perhaps without knowing what it all meant.

We spend most our lives trying to mean something. And yet, our meanings are constantly limited by labels - individual, relational, societal, historical. But here we are in *this* endgame, in *this* moment, together, in a small room, with four figures asking the same questions you are likely to leave with - and like them, you cannot leave until this moment has ended.

And you will leave with many questions. And the answer to all of them may be that there is no one answer. There is no one thing to mean or to feel. Whatever your interpretation, it's valid; whatever your happiness, it's valid; whatever your misery; it's valid. You may feel one, all, or nothing. All of it is real. And "nothing," said Beckett, "is more real than nothing."

The meaning, the importance of our life, our love, our end, our hope in the face of ending is surely unknown to us. All we can know for sure is that, in this moment, it's not over. We're not over. Yet.

Program Note for *Proof* by David Auburn (~300 words), 2017

Euclid's Proof of the *Infinitude of Primes* (c. 300 BC) states that Prime Numbers, figures only naturally divisible by One and Themselves, are endless in quantity. The smallest Prime, which was likely confirmed by the Ancient Greeks, contains a single digit: the number 2. According to the University of Tennessee at Martin, the largest known Prime Number was discovered by mathematicians in January of 2016; it contains an impressive twenty-two million, three hundred thirty-eight thousand, six hundred eighteen digits. Two millennia after Euclid proved that prime numbers are infinite, mathematicians still search for more unfathomable numbers: Research assistants lose sleep; professors fill notebooks; computers whirr and hum in the dark – seeking something they ultimately may not find. Yet, they do uncover new Primes every year; the search continues – and will never cease.

What may be at times a possibly fruitless attempt to contain and quantify the infinite is distinctly human – and so is the practice of writing mathematical proofs. Proofs are not held together by numbers and facts, but with remarkably vulnerable language and reasoning. Proofs rely heavily on shared assumptions, on a mutually decided set of rules, on the faith that others will follow and agree with what you believe to be true. However, truth is increasingly relative. Relative truth has the power to deeply divide us as individuals and communities as we continue to consider our personal opinions with finality and resolve. Auburn's *Proof* illustrates the dissonance of a family's desperate need for objective truth and the difficulty in accepting that such a thing may not be knowable.

If you find yourself filled with questions after this performance, I invite you to visit http://uaproof.wordpress.com, where you will find dramaturgical resources such as a glossary and an index of topics mentioned in the play. Who knows what kind of ideas you will come up with when you settle down and get to work…

Program Note for *The River* by Jez Butterworth, 2017 (~300 words)

The River is saturated with imagery from Celtic Mythology, though much of it lies just beneath the surface of the play. The Song of Wandering Aengus, a traditional Irish folk song based on the poem by W.B. Yeats, is a touchstone throughout the text. The song describes Aengus' endless search for a woman who had transformed from a small, silver trout. Aengus, the Celtic God of Soulmate Love (in Old Irish, Aengus means "one choice"), can alter love in and out of animal forms. For example, Aengus turns the Horse Goddess into a woman to love her. Aengus is also able to shape his kisses into birds; traditional depictions of Aengus show singing birds circling his head. Aengus is the illegitimate child of the Irish God of Fatherhood and the River Goddess Boann. To hide Boann's pregnancy, Aengus' Father makes the sun stand still for nine months; Aengus is conceived, gestated, and born within one day. Aengus lives in the River Boyne, which he tricks his father into giving him. Aengus asks his father if he can stay in the river for "a day and a night," to which his father agrees.

Program Note for *The River* by Jez Butterworth, 2017 (continued)

However, in the Irish language, there are no indefinite articles; Aengus asks his father to stay "day and night," or in other words: for all time. In his dreams, Aengus sees a woman and immediately falls in love with her. His mother, the River Goddess, helps him search for this woman for years. Finally, Aengus finds a lake where one-hundred fifty women are paired together by chains of gold. Every year, the women transform into swans. If Aengus can identify the woman of his dreams in swan form, the two would be allowed to marry. Aengus walks out into the lake and calls to the woman. When Aengus finds her, he transforms himself into a swan. Aengus, the woman, and the other woman bound to her with the golden chains, all fly away together.

Program Note for *Eurydice* by Sarah Ruhl, 2018 (~600 words)

Eurydice is an adaptation of myth familiar to many, and yet, upon experiencing this play, you may find that it is not at all what it seems. In *Eurydice*, Sarah Ruhl has captured the essence of not only the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice but of the nature of myth itself. Myths, however widely known, are generalized stories based on beliefs or ideas which may or may not be true. The elements composing a myth are often exaggerated and tend to vary wildly between versions; their events and characters are changed, rearranged, or omitted altogether. Over time, the certainty of these stories has become increasingly questionable. Certainty - in these stories and in life - is sometimes fictitious, usually idealized, and never guaranteed.

There are many things in life we consider to be certain; take, for example, the following statements: Your body is in this space; the time you are in is now; the words you are reading have definitions with meanings which are fixed and that you understand. But, as Orpheus might say, words can mean anything. Take, for another example, the word "interesting." What does that *mean*? Does it mean any *one* thing? The lack of specificity of this word is unnerving (though other people, like Eurydice, may find this exciting). Instead of linguistic clarity, someone like Orpheus relies on physical realities to find what is certain. So what happens, then, when the physical world around us falls apart? What happens when we lose the people and the things that fill our lives with meaning? What happens when we no longer know where or who or what these things are? And when these things are gone, who are we?

Lockean Memory Theory, derived from discourse within and around John Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* explores human identity as a certainly powerful and fragile thing. Our identities may be first shaped by thinking, or our awareness of things around us; this awareness leads to consciousness, or an awareness of ourselves; an awareness of ourselves in and over time leads to memory; our accumulated memories shape our identities, which in turn inform how we think. Both Memory and Identity live in a delicate balance of language and the body, of between intangible thought and the physical real, of ever-evolving systems of expressing ourselves through contrast, comparison - of our understanding of what is

Program Note for *Eurydice* by Sarah Ruhl, 2018 (continued)

certain. However, something deeply profound happens when our modes of thinking are disrupted, when we lose our awareness of others, of the world around us, and of ourselves. What happens when our identities shift, or when we don't retain our memories? Who do we, and those we have lost, become?

In retelling this myth, Ruhl has placed these impossible questions within something familiar, even if not entirely known. *Eurydice* gives us something to stand on when we find ourselves following someone through the dark, or releasing an unrequited message into the ether, or waking up in a world where something or someone that used to be one thing is now entirely another, or perhaps just no longer is. *Eurydice* gives and asks us many "interesting" things, but at its core, the play encourages us to consider what and how we communicate, to reconsider how we listen to one another, and to allow uncertainty into our lives. Perhaps by doing so, we may discover something about who we really are.