

SNOWCATCHER  
a new play by Becky Boesen  
co-commissioned by the Lincoln Arts Council  
and the Historic Midwest Theatre

Directed by Robin McKercher  
Produced by BLIXT  
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SECTION ONE

Hattie sits in or near a chair, asleep as the house opens and audience enters. The wind violently howls. The chair is in a room, although the room is not really there. She is a six year-old girl, dressed in well-worn clothes...part prairie pioneer, but also different. Her hair is unruly. She has deep pock marks near her left eye, the only remnants of smallpox from her early childhood. Her chair is wooden, sturdy, austere. In her hands she clutches a cloth doll, well worn, well loved. She is entirely still. Suddenly, she takes a sharp breath and shoots out of the chair, wide awake. The howling stops:

HATTIE

No! Takoda, run! Run!

She fights an imaginary predator and then stills. It's quite a fight. She looks into the audience, slowly taking them in.

HATTIE (CONT'D)

Oh. Oh, hello. Hello.

She catches her breath. As much for herself as the audience:

HATTIE (CONT'D)

It will be alright. You musn't be afraid. Dreams are dreams and here with me now is here with me now and that is that. That is that.  
Goodbye, Snowcatcher.  
Goodbye, Snowcatcher.  
Goodbye, Snowcatcher.

HATTIE (CONT'D)

Eliza?

Quickly, Hattie searches the area for her doll.

HATTIE (CONT'D)

Eliza? Oh, Eliza, you naughty girl! Why are you hidin' from your Hattie, now? That's not very nice!  
Eliza?

She is silent and listens for Eliza to answer. She hears something.

HATTIE (CONT'D)

Sometimes, if you are very, very quiet and you listen very much when the wind blows, you can hear voices from the past.

The wind:  
Whooooooooooooooooooooo....

She stops.  
Do you hear them? Whooooooooooooo.

Suddenly.  
Stop.  
I am in a lot of trouble, I think.  
Oh, where is my Pa?

She spots Eliza.

Eliza! What are you doing on the ground? It's snowing outside! You know what happens to a little girl who lays down on the ground in a blizzard!

Sing songy:

HATTIE (CONT'D)  
Don't lay down, don't lay down,  
don't lay down.  
A child musn't ever lay down in the snow, for surely, she will freeze to death! I will not lay down.

Hattie dances.

HATTIE (CONT'D)  
Tra-la-la!  
Too-ra-loo!  
Tra-la-la!  
Not-layin'-down!  
Tra-la-la!  
Tra-la-la! Tra-la! Tr-la! Trapped!  
TRAPPED!

A beat.

I want to dance but I cannot. Too cold. Too cold, I think.

She clutches Eliza.

HATTIE (CONT'D)  
Oh, Eliza, you took quite a spill there, din't you?  
This is my dolly Eliza. She is very small and very special and once she was white like the snow, but that was when I was wee, not big like now. I'm six!

HATTIE stretches out as big as she can make herself.

HATTIE (CONT'D)

I was not supposed to take to Eliza to school today. It is my fault she is here.

To Eliza:

I am so sorry, Eliza.

To audience:

Eliza is a special dolly my Mommy made for me before the sickness came. That is...it is the reason for this...this here on my face. No one knows why mommy got sick and I got sick by my Pa did not. No one knows why the sickness took my mommy but it left me. My mommy died. Last winter, I think. Or maybe the one before. She has been dead a very long time. I can remember some things about her, but not all things. She had big, blue eyes. She held me when I slept and got me drinks of water from the well. She had freckles on her nose. These are the parts of mommy I remember, but other parts of mommy are fading. My mommy sang a song to me. A special song. I don't remember the sounds anymore. I don't remember the sounds at all! I miss my mommy. I miss her very much.

HATTIE must change the subject.

HATTIE (CONT'D)

Mommy made Eliza from strips of her very own apron while she and my Pa were travelin' in the old wagon to Nebraska. I was very little and tiny and terribly wee, and I did an awful lot of cryin' because I did not like the bumpiness! And that wailin' I did was real hard to listen to on such a long trip!

HATTIE (CONT'D)

"Wahhhhhhh!!!!" That is how I cried as a baby on that wagon.  
"Wahhhhhhhhh!!!"

She freezes, sees something in the distance. Total beat change. She reaches out:

Ohhh!!!! Oh, wait...I...I think I saw my mommy!

Joyous:

Mommy! She must have heard me. My mommy must have heard me.

She runs in s circle.

Mommy, ma-mommy, ma-mommy-ma-mommy-ma...Mommy, why are you here?

A realization:

My mommy **is** dead, though. Frozen now. Frozen in the ground. Frozen. In. The. Ground. She is coming closer, her. I do not know what to do. Dreams are dreams and here with me now is here with me now. What is happening!!!?

Beat change.

Hi, mommy!

MOMMY

Hattie? Hattie, girl, is that you?

HATTIE

Yes, it is me! It is your little Hattie.

MOMMY

Hattie my darlin', why're you making such a ruckus, hmm? Calm down child.

HATTIE

Where did you come from, Mommy? I thought you were...

MOMMY

Yes...?

HATTIE

Mommy, I saw you in a box after the sickness came. Was that you, mommy? What is happening?

MOMMY

Shhh, quiet down, child. Quiet down and hold your dolly, love. There you are, dear. Hold onto your little dolly, and I will hold onto you as if you were my own little dolly and soon we'll be to our new home. Doesn't that sound mighty fine, Hattie?

HATTIE

Mommy, her name is Eliza. You remember Eliza, don't you?

MOMMY

Shhhh. Close your eyes and rest. You will feel so much better and then you will come with me.

To audience:

HATTIE

Is this a dream? Dreams are dreams and here with me now is here with me now and that is that. And I do not know which is which! My mommy has been gone and now she is here.

MOMMY

My love, let me hold you.

To Mommy:

HATTIE

O-o-okay, mommy. Mommy, maybe will you sing your song? Your special song to me? I so want to hear it. Mommy. Please.

A beat.

Mommy?

MOMMY

Later, Hattie. Rest. Shhhh. Rest.

HATTIE sinks in the chair.

HATTIE

I am very tired.