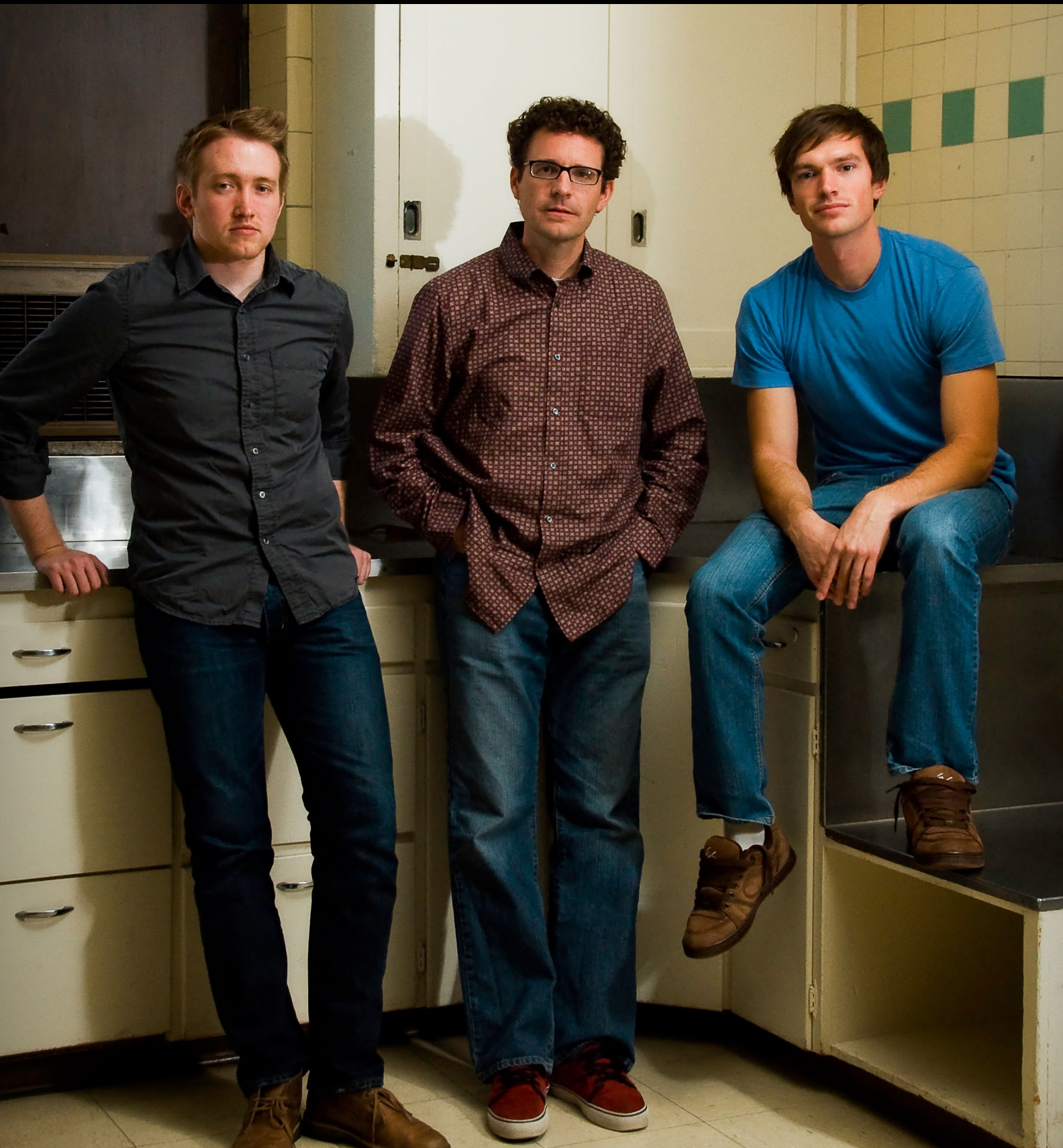


# mormonartist

ISSUE 7

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# mormonartist

COVERING THE LATTER-DAY SAINT ARTS WORLD

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

Little did I know when I started this magazine that it would be the way I'd end up meeting my wife. Meridith (Jackman, soon to be Crowder) came onboard as the Music & Dance editor earlier this year and I swiftly found myself developing an ulterior motive for having her around. I'm happy to announce that we'll be sealed on November 14. (We'll soon be launching a new section of the magazine, Mormon Artist Personals, complete with an automated matchmaking system.) (Just kidding, thankfully.)

Our imminent wedding is the main reason this issue is coming out in November instead of October, actually, and the special issue will regrettably be delayed once more, probably till early December. But it's on its way. Before we tackle another contest issue, by the way, we'll hammer out the other kinks that delayed this one for so long.

Staff changes: Effective next issue, Annie Mangelson will return as Music & Dance editor, and Meagan Brady will take over Theatre.

We've got some exciting things coming up, including an issue of the magazine devoted solely to the amazing LDS arts culture being fostered in New York City and a discussion forum on the site. Stay posted.

— Ben Crowder





# SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

## LITERATURE

PERSONAL ESSAYS, POETRY, SHORT STORIES  
NO LONGER THAN 1,500 WORDS

SUBMIT WORD/PDF TO  
[LITERATURE@MORMONARTIST.NET](mailto:LITERATURE@MORMONARTIST.NET)

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## GENERAL NOTES

WORK IN ANY GENRE IS FINE AS LONG AS IT'S APPROPRIATE FOR AN LDS AUDIENCE.  
ANYTHING YOU SUBMIT MUST BE YOUR OWN WORK.  
SIMULTANEOUS SUBMISSIONS ARE FINE.  
IF YOUR SUBMISSION HAS BEEN PUBLISHED BEFORE, LET US KNOW.

QUESTIONS?  
[EDITOR@MORMONARTIST.NET](mailto:EDITOR@MORMONARTIST.NET)





# Jack Weyland

INTERVIEWED BY HARRIS LUNT

WEB: [JACKWEYLAND.COM](http://JACKWEYLAND.COM)

**You have a PhD in physics. After spending so many years in that field, how did you start writing short stories and novels?**

The *New Era* came out as a magazine and they said they were accepting fiction. It was a youth magazine, so I thought, “Well, I’ll write a story.” I don’t think I would’ve written any more, but then the editor said, “Just keep writing stories.” So I did. Some years I wrote maybe eight stories; some they would publish, and some not.

**Who has influenced your writing?**

First of all, Brian Kelly. He was the editor of the *New Era*. When I was a young single adult, they had a goal-setting program for young adults and one of the goals I wrote down on this piece of paper was to write something for a Church magazine. By the time I wrote the story, I was already married, but I’d set the goal, so I sent in the story and they accepted it. And then Brian Kelly encouraged me to write some more. He said that he would help me. He critiqued my writing. He told me what was good and what was bad, always in a very positive way. So for him I would sometimes do maybe three or four drafts of the same story until it was in good shape. That was a great help to me. Because I was

coming from a physics background, it’s not something I would’ve picked up.

The second person who had a great effect on me was Eleanor Knowles. She was the editor of *Deseret Book* when I sent *Charly* in, and she worked with me through the various versions of the book. She would shield me from the other people who were critiquing the book. She once sent me what they had said about what I’d written and it was cruel, but she would say things like, “Well, I think maybe you should work on this.” She shielded me from their very critical comments. Those people were a big influence.

**When you start writing a novel, what are the first steps you take?**

There are two different paths. The first path is like dialogue surfing. It’s two characters talking, every line. There’s no description; it’s just bang bang bang bang bang, until I find out if I care about writing something more than that. Sometimes if I have no ideas, I just write like that for a couple days until something clicks with me, and I think, “Oh, this would be good.” In other words, I’m generating a novel based on what these two characters are saying to each other in my mind.

The second path is if I decide to do a book about a particular issue. I’ve done a book about date rape. I’ve done a book about eating disorders. In those instances, it’s usually motivated by someone who has written me and said, “I think you should write about his topic.” Then, if I choose to do so, I contact the person and do an interview, and then they act as a consultant for the book. Those are mainly the two ways I’ve done my books.

### **Your book *Brittany* deals with rape. How do you maintain a sensitive attitude as you write about these very serious topics?**

A young woman was here for EFY. She came with a friend to my office and said, “I’ve read every one of your books,” and about ten minutes later she said, “I was a victim of date rape.” I thought, if she’s read every one of my books, why didn’t I write about that so that she would know that when she was in a house alone with a guy she didn’t know very well, that probably was not a good situation to be in? Whether he tried anything or not, it’s still not a good situation.

I’m not saying you can always prevent those things, but there are some situations which you can immediately see would not be wise. I talked to this young woman. I talked to her family. I talked to her counselor. She told me what an awful experience it was, and how difficult it was, and how relying on the Savior helped her. I mean, that’s our only salvation, and it’s everyone’s only salvation. I think that’s the motivating thing.

### **What keeps you going? What keeps motivating you to write stories and complete novels?**

It’s fun. It’s really fun. And the stories I write always turn out the way I want it. Whereas if I read something, it doesn’t always turn out the way I want it. And I like the process of discovery. When I start a novel, I don’t know much about it. Occasionally I’ll have a writeout of what’s going to happen, but sometimes not.

### **What else excites you about writing?**

Getting letters or e-mails from people who say that one of my books has helped them. Now that I’m on Facebook, it happens more often, and I appreciate that. I probably get three or four Facebook messages every few weeks, so I guess that’s a good thing.

### **How do you feel when you finish a novel?**

When it comes out, I’m very happy. And then I worry. There are a few weeks where I worry because I think that nobody is going to like it or nobody is going to read it. Then when somebody says they liked it, I’m okay.

### **How did your new book, *Brianna*, come about?**

It had been a short story. Of course, I’ve written a lot of stories for the *New Era*. They’re not taking short stories much these days, so I have had three or four books which are collections of short stories, and for a while I had a short story of the month club on my website.

It’s good for me to write short stories because then I can become acquainted with characters that I’m interested in. This may sound crazy, but I was once in a Sunday School class where I raised my hand and said, “I knew this guy once,” and then I stopped and said, “Never mind.” It was a character I had created in my head.

### **How do you see your books helping to build the kingdom?**

That’s a tough question and I’m not sure I know the answer to it. I wouldn’t claim that it would do much to build the kingdom of God, because generally the things that build the kingdom of God are involved with repentance, baptism, temple work—things like that. I would say that it doesn’t do any harm. And it hopefully might make some readers more aware of the way they communicate with people they care about.

### **How does the gospel influence your writing?**

First of all, having the knowledge that every person is important and worth consideration; and second, that the Savior can help us with whatever our problems are. His Atonement can help us. I’ve written some things about hard topics and interviewed people who have gone through those hard experiences.

My book *Emily* is about a girl who got third-degree burns all over her, so she had to have skin grafts. She was in the hospital for a long time, and afterward she was wearing a compression suit while still going to college and she was ignored by her classmates. They would look and then they would look away. I said to her, “If you could go back to that Sunday when you were cooking some soup and your shirt caught on fire, and instead make yourself a tuna sandwich, would you go back?” She said, “No.” I said, “Why not?” She said, “Because of what I’ve learned about the Savior.” And that surprised me. ■



BRIANNA, MY BROTHER, AND THE BLOG  
*a novel*



JACK WEYLAND

# Brianna, My Brother, and the Blog

## CHAPTER ONE, BY JACK WEYLAND

*Wednesday, June 11*

“And this is Brianna!” my mom said proudly.

I had no idea who Brianna was or why my folks had brought her to the SLC International Airport to welcome me home from my mission.

I figured she might possibly be one of my cousins from Nebraska. The ones we never see. Except for one thing. In our family, we’re all born ugly. Only after a few years do we get better looking. This girl looked as though she’d been born beautiful and then improved after that, so obviously she couldn’t be a cousin.

She was only a couple of inches shorter than me. Her good posture made me wonder if she might be a dancer. All this, with long, straight, reddish-brown hair, thick-forest-like eyebrows and lashes, and either brown or green eyes, I couldn’t tell which.

Some girls have thin lips, but she did not. They were, well, not thin. Actually, since I was technically a missionary for at least a few more hours, I was embarrassed to have even noticed her lips.

However, what surprised me most was that she seemed so excited to see me. “Welcome home, Elder!” she shouted out. I was just going to shake her hand, but she practically threw herself at me, wrapped her arms around my neck, and gave me a big hug. I panicked and looked over to my mom for protection.

“It’s okay, it’s just Brianna,” my mom said. Everyone seemed to know what that meant. Everyone except me.

“Hopefully, she’ll be a part of our family once Robbie gets home,” my dad explained proudly.

“So little Robbie has a girlfriend?” I asked.

“I wrote you all about it, Austin,” my mom said with her familiar, slightly accusatory tone of voice.

On my mission, my mom’s letters came every week. Unfortunately, it took about that long to read them. Each one was eight to ten pages long. Reading them was made more difficult because my

mom has terrible handwriting. So, the truth is, I hadn’t always read every page.

I decided to fake it. “Oh, of course, it’s Brianna, Robbie’s special friend!” When I shook her hand, I was surprised she had such a strong grip.

“Brianna will be with us the rest of the day, but then she’ll come back on Saturday and stay overnight with us,” my mom said, “so she’ll hear your talk in church.”

“We already think of her as part of our family,” my dad said with a big, goofy grin on his face.

“What year in school are you, Brianna?” I asked.

“I’m a sophomore.”

“Good for you. What high school do you go to?”

She gave me a strange look. “Actually, I’m a sophomore at BYU.”

“Really? Well, you seem so young to be in college.”

“I’m twenty.”

“So you’re the same age as little Robbie then, right?”

“‘Little Robbie’ is now six-foot-five,” she said with a grin.

“I wrote you about his growth spurt,” my mom explained.

I wasn’t going to make that mistake again. “Right. I remember,” I lied.

We lived in Layton, Utah, so it didn’t take very long to drive home. When Dad pulled our SUV into the driveway, I spotted a big sign hanging from the front porch that read, “Welcome Home, Elder Austin Winchester!” I got out and looked around at the house, Dad’s manicured front lawn, and Mom’s flower garden. In many ways coming home was like visiting an old friend.

Our neighbor’s big ugly dog, Tornado, barked and bared his teeth at me just like before my mission. He was still chained to their big tree in the front yard. I had always believed he’d kill me if he ever broke free. Robbie had been the only one in

the neighborhood who could play with Tornado.

Mom had a big dinner ready, and after we'd eaten, I went over to the stake center to meet with our stake president. He interviewed me about my mission, gave me some counsel about education and marriage, and then officially released me. When I got home, I told my mom I was going to take a walk.

"Do you mind if I tag along?" Brianna asked.  
"No, not at all."

It took us fifteen minutes to go a block because of all the neighbors who stopped us to welcome me home from my mission. In each case I introduced Brianna as the girl who was waiting for Robbie.

Once we got outside our ward boundaries we were able to make better time.

"You didn't read your mom's letters very closely, did you?" Brianna asked.

"No. How did you know?"

"Robbie can't keep up with them either, so, since your mom sends me a copy, too, I fill him in on the most important things. I could do the same for you now."

"Maybe you'd better."

"Okay, here's what I know. Your Aunt Nancy got married while you were gone. Twice, actually. The last time just a few months ago."

"Twice?"

"Apparently a good man is harder to find than any of us imagined. But the husband she's got now is totally acceptable."

"Anything else I should know?"

"Your dad got downsized. He's now working as a sales representative for a software company."

I shook my head. "Oh, no, I messed up. That's something I should have known."

"It's okay. You were busy. I'll help you catch up."

"Thanks. Oh, I'm sorry I didn't know about you and Robbie."

"It's totally okay. It's strange. You don't know me, but I feel like I know you. He's often told me what a good influence you were on him. For that I thank you."

"Little Robbie."

"Not anymore."

"You like him a lot, don't you?" I asked.

"Yes, I do. He's always been very considerate of me."

"Actually, come to think of it, I taught him that," I said.

"How?"

"I remember when he was in sixth grade I gave him a gerbil for his birthday. When I found out he wasn't taking good care of it, I went to him and said, 'Robbie, you always need to be thinking, *What can I do for the gerbil today?* You've got to think about the gerbil, not just once in a while, but every day.'" I paused. "You obviously benefitted from Robbie's gerbil experience."

She flashed me a teasing smile. "Are you saying he thinks of me the same way he thought about his gerbil?"

"Yeah, pretty much. Oh, my gosh! He didn't put newspapers on your floor every day, did he?" I asked.

For such a classy looking girl, she had the most amazing laugh. First of all, it was a full-bodied laugh. Every part of her got in on it. To make her laugh became my new goal in life.

"You're way more fun than Robbie," she said. "He's, well, more sincere than funny."

"He learned that from the gerbil. Your average gerbil has a pathetic sense of humor."

We ended up sitting next to each other on two swings in a park. We watched the sunset together. Or, to be more truthful, she watched the sunset, and I watched her. How had Robbie lucked out to have found her?

Even so, I wasn't going to take advantage of her trust in me. I was going to play the part assigned me. I would be the trusted brother.

"We'd better get back," she said. "Your mom and dad will be wondering what happened to us."

It seemed strange, being alone with a girl, after two years of that being against the rules. But it was also ... good.

"It's been great being with you. I mean, you being a girl, and all."

She laughed for me again. "You are so observant!"

"Yes, I am. Except for the color of your eyes. Would you mind if I examined them to determine their exact color?"

"I could just tell you."

"No, that's okay. I'm kind of a hands-on guy."

"Okay, I've got to admit, that worries me just a little," she teased.

"We're talking about eyes here, okay? C'mon, give me a break."

She shrugged. "Okay, be my guest." She opened her eyes wide and leaned slightly toward me.

We made eye contact. It was awesome except for the fact that I got a little distracted. Also, I was taking much more time than one would normally need to determine the color of someone's eyes. And that did make her nervous.

"Let me just tell you, okay?" she said, moving away from me. "My eyes are hazel."

The truth is I didn't know what color hazel was, but I wasn't going to admit that. "Of course they are." I stood up. "Well, let's start back."

As we walked home, I felt a little guilty for having looked into her eyes for so long. I felt as though I needed to explain myself. "I didn't think I'd be this comfortable with a girl right after my mission, but, with you, I am. I guess it's because you're already like a member of the family."

"I feel comfortable with you, too, Austin."

After we got home, we went inside, talked for a while, and then she told us she needed to get back to BYU. I have to admit, I wasn't that thrilled about her leaving. I walked her out to her car and thanked her for coming to the airport to welcome me home.

"In about a year, I'll be welcoming Robbie home. I can hardly wait."

"Yeah, well, he's a lucky guy. I'll say that for him."

"I'll see you Saturday afternoon, okay?" she said and then got into her car, flashed me that great smile, and drove off.

The next day my dad took me fishing. Not because I'm that much into it but because he is. But it did give us a chance to talk.

He asked about my plans. I shrugged. "I don't know. Work this summer and start school in the fall. That's about it."

He told me about his new job, and he asked me

some questions about my mission. So it was good to be together, even though we didn't catch any fish.

When I woke up Friday morning, I stayed in bed for a little while, just thinking. It seemed strange not to have a companion to worry about, and I even felt a little guilty, like there was something I should be doing.

My mom took care of that, and the day was taken up working for her around the house, weeding our garden, and mowing the lawn. The reason for all this cleaning was that we were having

people over Sunday after church, and she wanted everything in good shape. That much hadn't changed. She had always been a neat freak about our house and yard.

She even asked me to clean the garage, too, but with everything else she had me doing, I didn't have time to get to that. Besides, it wasn't a project that I could do by myself. For every item I picked up I'd have had to ask her what to do with it. And what guy wants that much supervision from his mom? Not me.

Brianna came for dinner Saturday and then stayed the night. I confess, she was even better-looking than I remembered, if that's possible.

Knowing that she was my brother's girlfriend made it a little awkward to be around her, and I still felt guilty for having used some lame excuse to look into her eyes. So at first I backed off and tried to stay out of her way.

That night Brianna was staying in the guest room, directly over my head in my downstairs bedroom. I couldn't get to sleep right away because I could hear her walking around above me, and I kept wondering what she was doing. It wasn't until it was quiet above me that I eventually dozed off.





I got up at seven and went into the kitchen to work on my talk. Brianna was already up, sitting at the kitchen table reading the scriptures, wearing a pair of olive green flannel pajamas and a robe.

“Good morning,” she said.

I was noticing her eyes. They looked green to me. “Uh, good morning. Did you sleep well?”

I asked.

“Yes, and you?”

“Not really.”

“How come?” she asked.

“I’m having a little trouble adjusting. Basically, I want to go back on my mission for another couple of years.”

“What do you miss the most?”

“The people.”

“Yes, of course. I’m sure they’re missing you, too.”

“I feel like there’s nothing in my life that will ever compare to my mission.”

“I can see why you’d feel like that now. Tell me about the people you taught.”

It took nearly an hour. Me talking while we had some cereal and toast. And then it was time to get ready for church.

“I’m still not sure what to talk about,” I said.

“I think you’ve just given me your talk. People love to hear missionaries tell about their experiences, and the people they met.”

“You think so?”

“Definitely. That and your testimony.”

“Okay, maybe I’ll do that. Thanks.”

During my talk, I kept looking down in the audience at Brianna, who nodded approval that I was on the right track.

After sacrament meeting she came up to me and shook my hand. “You did a fantastic job!”

“Thanks.”

As she was telling me in detail what she liked about what I’d said, I noticed that our handshake, which had begun appropriately, was fast becoming questionable because we had quit moving our hands up and down, but we still had hand contact.

When she finally noticed the problem, she let go and pulled away.

Now I really was embarrassed. I’d forgotten I was holding her hand, that’s all. It could happen to anyone. But it needed to be addressed. “I shook your hand too long, didn’t I? Sorry.”

She got a thoughtful look on her face and pretended to be approaching this from a referee’s

point of view. “Actually, there is no rule about the duration of a handshake. Where we went wrong, I believe, is we failed to keep our hands in motion. As I understand the official rules, as long as the hands are moving, it constitutes a legitimate handshake.”

All I’d ever wanted from life was a girl who would be whimsical with me. Like what we were doing right then.

“So, what you’re saying is, if the hands are moving, it’s not a violation, right?” I said.

She nodded. “It makes sense, really. I mean, think about it. There is no such thing as a ‘hand-still,’ right?” she said.

“I suppose that would technically be called holding hands.”

“I believe you’re correct on that.”

She was amazing. She had a way of holding her eyes wide open as she considered something, and there was a bit of a tease in her. I did notice that her eyes now looked brown to me.

I wanted to tell her how much fun I was having, and how gorgeous she was, but, because of Robbie, I didn’t say anything.

On the other hand, I did feel a little guilty that I’d held hands with the girl who was waiting for my brother, even if it was only for like maybe twenty seconds beyond what most people would consider appropriate.

I stayed in the chapel talking to ward members until they all went to Sunday School and then our family went home to get ready for a luncheon we were having for relatives, friends, and neighbors.

My mom asked Brianna and me to set up chairs and banquet tables in the backyard and then to set the table.

“There won’t be as many here as there were for my farewell,” I said.

“Why’s that?”

“Most of the girls from high school who adored me got married while I was gone. Apparently they didn’t adore me two years’ worth.”

“Did you have a girl waiting for you?” Brianna asked.

“Yeah, more or less, I guess. She got married about six months ago.”

“Her loss, right?” she said with one of her dazzling smiles.

“We can always think so. Do you think you’ll wait until Robbie comes home?”

“Oh, I know I will. There’s absolutely no doubt

about that.”

I was surprised at her answer because she said it with such certainty.

“How do you know you’ll wait?”

“Because people all the time are telling me I won’t make it for two years. I don’t like being told I’m not going to achieve my goals. So I’m going to prove them all wrong.”

“Well, if it ever gets hard for you, give me a call, and I’ll come over and tell you what a great guy he is.”

“That’s a good idea. Sometimes lately, I’ve had trouble remembering what he was like.”

“I’ll get hold of some of our family pictures so you’ll know how he was as he was growing up,” I said.

“Great idea.”

“And if there were certain places you guys used to go or special memories you have of him, you and I could go there and relive those memories.”

She considered that for a moment, her eyes wide open. “Hmm. Do you think that would really help?” That’s not necessarily why I had suggested it, but I was glad she would even think about it.

By the time we finished our work, some people had arrived so I spent my time talking with them. Brianna made herself useful by helping my mom.

An hour later Brianna came up to me. “Hey, Austin. I’m going now. It was fun to see you again. Great talk.”

“Thanks, but do you really have to go now?”

She pulled a face. “Yeah, I do. I usually don’t like to study on Sundays, but I’ve got a paper due tomorrow.”

“Well, can I walk you out to your car?”

“Sure.”

“I’ll be at BYU fall semester,” I said. “Is it okay if I call you once in a while?” I asked.

“Please do. Anytime.” She gave me her number, got in her car, gave me a wave, and drove away.

I stood there on the curb, watching her drive down our street, wondering how my big oaf of a brother had gotten so lucky as to find a girl like her.

The next Sunday, in my home ward, our elders quorum president announced a stake softball league and asked how many of us could play. I raised my hand, but when I found out that all the games were on Tuesday nights, I had to cancel. I’d gotten a job working part-time for a trucking company, handling freight at night, and Tuesday was one of my shifts. After priesthood, one of the guys in the quorum said

he wanted to play but didn’t have a baseball glove.

He asked if he could borrow mine.

“Well, actually, I was going to use my brother’s glove, but I guess you can use it.”

Robbie had been a star on his high school baseball team, helping them win the state championship his senior year.

My friend dropped by that afternoon and picked it up.

Because it wasn’t actually my glove, I wrote Robbie a letter asking if it would be okay to use it. I didn’t mention that I was going to loan it out, but it would probably be several weeks before he answered me, and besides, I was sure he’d say yes.

Three weeks later I got a letter from Robbie saying I could use his baseball glove but only if I didn’t use it for softball. He explained that because a softball is so much bigger than a baseball it would wreck the pocket in the glove. He told me he planned to try to play baseball in college when he got back and would need it then. Oh, and he also told me not to loan it to anyone.

By that time, though, the season was almost over, and I decided to let my friend continue to use the glove. I knew how busy Robbie was as a missionary. I didn’t want to distract him from missionary work by writing to let him know I’d actually loaned his glove for softball. *Maybe he’ll be so spiritual when he comes home from his mission, he won’t even care,* I thought. *After all, the gospel is more important than some dumb baseball glove.*

By the first week in August, softball had ended. In priesthood I asked the guy who’d borrowed Robbie’s mitt to bring it next Sunday. He promised he would, but he kept forgetting.

The Sunday before I was to leave for BYU, he told me he had dropped it by the house during the week. “Nobody was home but the garage door was open so I just put it in there.”

Of course I should have gone out to the garage after I got home from church and returned it to Robbie’s room, but I didn’t do that. Who would have ever thought that would be important someday?

I didn’t have any further contact with Brianna until I showed up at BYU for fall semester. A few days after classes started, we saw each other on campus and stopped to talk. I asked if I could walk her to her apartment. She seemed happy for the company. I certainly was. I’d actually forgotten how

much fun it was to be with her.

“Be honest with me, okay? Do you like your roommates?” she asked.

“I’ve never even thought about it. We don’t see each other that much.”

She sighed. “That is what is so great about guys! Guys don’t even try to be close to their roommates. You’re lucky you don’t have to live in an apartment full of girls. It’s like high drama from day one.”

“In what way?”

“On the first day we were all together, one of the girls insisted on a meeting to determine where each of us was going to put our food in the refrigerator. That meeting like dragged on for forty-five minutes. One girl didn’t want to have the upper right part of the shelf because she was afraid her milk would freeze. Two girls insisted on being on the lower shelf in the center. We were almost to an agreement when one girl, who’d been quiet most of the time, got all teary-eyed and said it’s not fair. So we had to start all over again.”

“Are you serious? Guys don’t talk about things like that. Like in the morning, you see a roommate, and you say, ‘How’s it goin’?’ And he says, ‘Can’t complain.’ And then basically you’re done for the entire day as far as roommates go.”

“What’s the Guy Rule for food in the refrigerator?” she asked.

“You can eat or drink anything in there, whether it belongs to you or not, but there’s just one rule: You can’t take it all. So you’ve got to be careful. Like if I’m going to use a roommate’s milk, I can’t use so much that he’ll be out of milk for breakfast. If I need more than what I can safely take from him, I take some from another roommate’s carton.”

She laughed. “That is so reasonable! Can I move in with you?”

“Yeah, sure, no problem. Bring plenty of milk though because I’m never going to actually buy any myself.”

Gosh, I loved her laugh. For someone that beautiful to belt out a laugh because of something I’d said was for me like the highlight of my life.

“What if one of your roommates is going on a date?” she continued. “Does he keep telling you over and over again how excited he is and then ask your advice, like every five minutes, about what he should wear?”

“No, a guy roommate will never even tell us

he’s going on a date. He’ll just leave. He’ll be gone three or four hours and then he’ll come back and go to bed. He doesn’t tell us how it went and we don’t ask. The truth is, we don’t really care.”

She raised both hands high in the air. “Yes! That’s how it should be! Why do each of my roommates think they have to tell me everything? Why do I have to be shown three possible variations of what she might wear and then be asked to decide? Why do I have to be told in detail what the guy said when he asked her out? And after it’s over, when I just want to go to sleep, why do I have to be told everything that happened on her stupid date? I don’t want to know! I just want to be left alone!”

“You know what? You would fit in so well with guys.”

“I know. I totally would. But that’s not the worst. The thing I dread the most is the weekends. Each of my roommates is seeing someone, so they’ll all go on dates, and I’ll be left all alone in the apartment with only my 8 × 10 picture of Robbie. Actually, it’s his high school graduation picture. I keep getting older, but he stays the same.”

She paused as though she weren’t sure she should say what she was thinking. “You want to know something weird? Last week I realized I was starting to think of him as my nephew.”

That seemed like an odd thing to say, but it also made me very happy. “If you get lonely on the weekends, give me a call. I’ll never be doing anything.”

She hesitated and then asked, “Are you serious?”

“Totally.”

“Well, actually, I will be lonely this Friday night.”

“Okay, I’ll come over. What time?”

“I’d say eight-thirty. By then all my roommates will be gone. I don’t want to have to explain you to them.”

“What do you want to do when we’re together?” I asked.

She thought about it for a while and then said, “I think we should take a walk.”

“Yeah, sure, we’ll totally do that. Then we don’t have to explain anything to anybody. Some people don’t have cars so they have to walk all the time. Sometimes they even walk together with a friend. Nobody in the world would confuse taking a walk with being on a date.”

She nodded. “Exactly.” ■







# Jessica Day George

INTERVIEWED BY ALLISON ASTON

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## When and why did you begin writing?

When I was eleven, I decided to be a writer after reading *The Hero and the Crown* by Robin McKinley. It just seemed like such a cool thing to write stories for a living. When I was in junior high, my English teacher told me I was one of the best writers she'd ever had, and I was sold! I turned every assignment and vocabulary paragraph into a mini fantasy story.

## What writers and books have influenced you?

Robin McKinley, of course. But also Diana Wynne Jones, whose book *Dogsbody* is one of the best and most unusual romances of all time. Tad Williams' *Memory, Sorrow, and Thorn* trilogy, Bryce Courtenay's *The Power of One*, Frances Hodgson Burnett's *A Little Princess*, Guy Gavriel Kay's *Fionavar Tapestry*... I've read those over and over!

## If you had to choose, which writer would you consider a mentor?

Guy Gavriel Kay. I've loved his books for years; his writing is breathtaking. I met him when my first book, *Dragon Slippers*, came out, and he sat

me down and talked to me very seriously about being a working writer, and we've continued to email back and forth, me with questions and rants, him with very soothing advice. It's been invaluable.

## You studied Old Norse at BYU. What effect has that had on your writing?

Well, for one thing, I wish I studied harder! Also, I need to go to Iceland. But mostly, it's made the Scandinavian region and its ancient culture so much more alive. It's my default setting now, and I plan to use it again and again. I find myself thinking of names like Ragnfrid and Egil when I'm looking for character names, and legends and real people keep coming to mind as future book ideas.

## Tell us about writing *Sun and Moon, Ice and Snow*.

I was so nervous! I've wanted to write my own version of this story since I was a teenager and discovered P.J. Lynch's wonderfully illustrated version of *East o' the Sun, West o' the Moon*. It was the only book that I've done any research for—I read about reindeer herding and checked and double-checked any words and names that I used to make sure they were authentic. I went back and forth between

setting it in a semi-imaginary land called simply The North or setting it in actual Norway. I wanted to be true to the original story and hit all the right notes, but at the same time I wanted to make it deeper. Why was this happening? Who were these people? And I hope I succeeded!

### Where did you get your inspiration for *Dragon Slippers* and the other two books in that series?

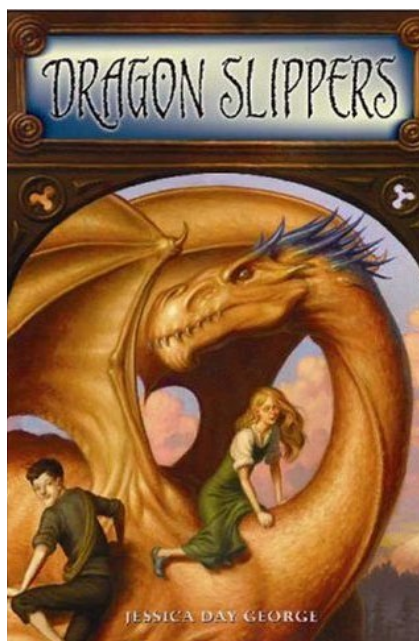
*Dragon Slippers* just popped into my head one night. The whole book! It was magical! The second one came about because my editor kept asking for a sequel, but I refused to even think about it until one day I came up with a really good idea—an entire army, mounted on dragons!—and once I got into book two, I knew I'd have to round it out with a third book to tie up everybody's stories.

### What was your creative process in writing those books?

*Dragon Slippers* was the easiest book I've ever written. It just flowed out like I was taking dictation. *Dragon Flight* was considerably harder. I had a great idea, but I wanted to make sure it wasn't too similar to the first book, and I really struggled with the characters, worrying that they would feel different from the first one. The third, again, just flowed. I knew where I wanted them to go, what to do, and by now the characters were old friends and I could let them run free!

### Tell us about the heroine of *Dragon Slippers*, Creel, and how you created her character.

Creel is a tough chick. They said, "We're going to sacrifice you to the dragon," and she said, "We'll see about that!" She's a hard worker and a natural leader who struggles when she's not in control because she doesn't know what to do. I can't take much credit for her, because she literally just popped into my head one night! The one



thing I have changed is that in the rough draft of *Dragon Slippers* she slapped a number of people, which I thought made her seem even more no-nonsense (and was also funny to me), but my editor thought it made her too abrasive. We toned her down a bit, and she just leaped off the page!

### How has the gospel influenced you as a writer?

It helps me recognize when something is inspired, like *Dragon Slippers*, which helps me to relax and just let the writing flow. It also helped me to never give up. I've had several confirmations in my life, before I was ever published, that writing was my gift and I should use it. So when the rejection letters kept rolling in (and rolling in), I just went on writing anyway, because I knew this was where I was supposed to be.

### How do you see your work building the kingdom?

I think everyone needs a good story, and my job is to supply those stories!

### What advice do you have for aspiring LDS writers?

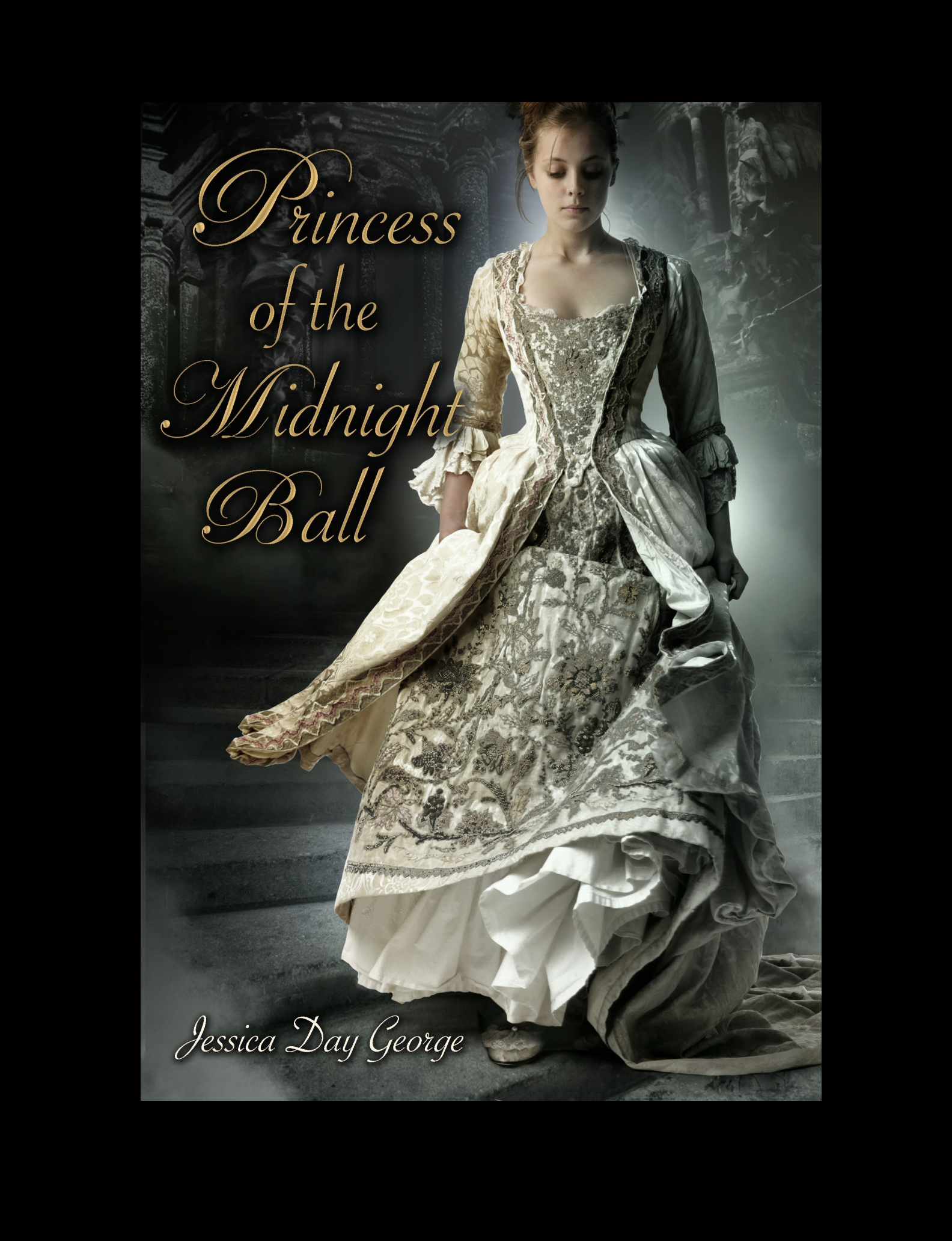
Just keep writing. No matter what your style, or your genre, writing every day is important, and persistence is important. Also, read! Read everything you can get your hands on! It improves your writing and your creativity. (Also, it makes you look smart.)

### What projects are you currently working on?

I'm in the process of editing the sequel to *Princess of the Midnight Ball*, tentatively titled *Princess of Glass*.

### What are your plans for the future?

More books! More, more, more! ■

A woman with her hair pulled back stands in a dark, stone archway. She is wearing a highly detailed, historical-style gown. The bodice is dark with intricate lace and embroidery. The skirt is voluminous, featuring a light-colored underlayer with a dark, floral-patterned overlay. The sleeves are long and puffed. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the textures of the fabric and the architectural details of the archway.

*Princess  
of the  
Midnight  
Ball*

*Jessica Day George*









# Emily King

INTERVIEWED BY BEN CROWDER

WEB: [PAPEREDGE.BLOGSPOT.COM](http://PAPEREDGE.BLOGSPOT.COM)



### How did you get started with paper cutouts?

I love modern design. When I started having kids, I was disappointed with the lack of modern affordable art for children's rooms. The paper cutout idea was so appealing to me because it involved this contrast of graphic color blocking qualities but in reality was handmade—you can see the detail in the layers of paper that meet and play off each other, dimensionally and color wise, which really turned it into fine art for me.

While getting my BFA in painting and drawing, I always loved capturing the human figure no matter the medium. This allowed me to do that and mix in a modern color palette in a childlike visual way. Each piece includes design elements of what I love and things that are such a present part of my life: childlike moments, modern unique color stories, the human form simplified yet incredibly descriptive at the same time.

### What about painting?

To me, painting is the next level of drawing—getting a good technical foundation in drawing and then being able to creatively describe something in paint. I love paintings that have a duality, where you can see the artist's technical foundation in drawing but then there are moments of creative abstrac-

tion as well. In school we had endless time drawing and painting with models. Now that my studio is at home and I have small children around, having models isn't really a viable option on a regular basis, so I have taken my painting outdoors. I *love* to paint plein air, being outside with nature and describing the landscape in paint, the atmosphere, what it feels like right there at that moment. I try to work from photographic references as little as possible but in some cases it's unavoidable.

### Why art?

My mother is an artist, and from a young age I loved to draw. I was more creatively uninhibited then and I think as a result I won several elementary reflections including a national. Looking back at my childhood creations, they were so fun. Sometimes I am envious of the artist I was then—so into the process—and the result was always secondary. I feel that that is when great art is made.

### What's your usual work process?

Process is definitely the right word. With paper cutouts I will often see an image in my head and begin drawing it out or find an image to reference for a sketch. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. Usually the drawings always work, but



will it translate to paper in an aesthetically pleasing way? Not always. I am limited with paper—I can't use light and dark as part of my vocabulary in the way I can with drawing. It becomes more about the silhouette, paper choice, and overall design composition. It's great to have those aha moments where I cut something down to its most simple form yet it becomes incredibly descriptive at the same time. Those are the moments that keep me creating.

With painting I always start with a tonal underpainting that is more like a drawing, which I use for a reference as I begin to lay in big blocks of color. I like to abstract everything into shapes and avoid looking at the detail. When I feel I have a good handle on the composition, the value and color of each big shape, I then go in for the details. It's like candy when I get to that point, sweet and fun.

### How do you balance your art with raising a family?

Finding the balance is always the hardest thing for me and requires constant attitude adjustments on my part. I often remind myself that life has seasons, and that I am in the season of raising small children. They are small for such a short period of time, and I don't want to miss those moments. On the other hand, I need to keep one foot in the art world and keep progressing, no matter how small the progress. It's a tough balance and I don't always get it right.

I read the book *Outliers* a while ago. In it, Malcolm Gladwell discusses several studies that point to 10,000 hours as the magical marker to really master a craft. The concept made sense to me but at the same time was daunting. I can't paint every day all day, so I have to make the time I do have count.

Sometimes the most important part is the doing. Right now I limit myself to working only some nights and every Thursday. For now it's a good balance. If I am playing with my kids, then I try to be in the moment with them, and then likewise with art. It doesn't always happen but that's the goal.

### Tell us about making your TWIRL piece.

I wanted to do a piece with more movement than I had previously been doing. At the time, it was one of my daughter Esmae's favorite Sunday rituals to twirl around in circles and watch the waves of fabric in her dress twirl as well. I took a point of view from above that I think really added to the composition of the piece. After I made the sketch, then I chose my paper. I love trying different color combos and working with amazing handmade Japanese paper, or even letterpress (my other love) patterned paper. Sometimes I'm not sure if it works until I get all the parts assembled. If it doesn't, it is most likely back to the paper choices, and on occasion I alter the drawing. TWIRL was just one of those pieces that flowed—everything was easy from the get-go and I was really excited about the results.

### How much of your work is commissioned?

At this point probably half of my work is commissioned from paper cutouts. I love to surprise my buyers with a few important things they have told



me about their child and family. It's an easy interpretation that becomes unique to them. I generally don't do commissions with paintings—I want the viewer to see the piece and then fall in love with it

for a certain reason, with that being their motive to purchase it. I feel if someone tells me what to do in a painting, it hinders my creative process and I don't get those spontaneous unintended surprises that can make a painting great. Although I must say that it's really hard for me to say no or turn away work.

### What do you do to get better at your craft?

I sketch in my sketchbook when I can—when I am drawing better, I am doing everything better. I also really love to do workshops with some of my old professors when I can. Being able to do art all day for a straight week, or however long the workshop is, is a real luxury for me right now.

I also love a harsh critique—sometimes when you have been looking at something for so long and have seen it evolve in all its forms, it is hard to separate yourself from it. That's when I call my husband in. He takes one look and usually says something like “the head is too big” and exits, leaving me fuming. But then I look and he is always right. Always. Even without art training, the public is actually a lot better at critiquing art than many may think.

Finally, practicing—lots of practicing combined with critiquing encourages the most progress. If you never recognize your mistakes and don't move to correct them, you're running in circles.

### How does the gospel influence your work?

First of all, Minerva Teichert is my absolute hero. I love her. She painted the Mormon story in the most beautiful way and nothing inhibited or stopped her. During a large part of her painting career she was a mother many times over. It's been said that she was often seen painting huge murals in her living room with a baby on her hip. I love that image. I'm not able to multitask quite like that, but she definitely gives me inspiration about how the gospel hugely influenced her work.

A giclée of Minerva's “Queen Esther” hangs on one of my walls at home. Sometimes when I glance at the painting I can see Queen Esther's courage and what great faith she had. It inspires me to strive for greater faith in my life.

I am thinking more about pieces with meaning, maybe subtle gospel truths portrayed in literal or symbolic ways. Something that a mother can have on her walls so when she sees it, it not only gives her visual pleasure but it reminds her to be better and to live better and that she is supported.

### How do you see your work helping build the kingdom?

I consistently ask myself this question. One of the most frequently recurring themes in my paper cutouts is children and family. I love exploring the relationships within the family by visually describing everyday moments, realizing that many of those moments are beautiful and begin to bind a family together.

The family is a central component to the gospel. One of my favorite talks is by Elder Uchtdorf, when he addressed the women of the Church on the topic of creation. He said, “The desire to create is one of the deepest yearnings of the human soul... The more you trust and rely upon the Spirit, the greater your capacity to create.” God is the greatest creator of all, and it's in *everyone's* spirit to create. I feel that so inherently and would love to one day help others discover that in themselves, too, by teaching.

### Where do you want to go with your art?

I feel like I am at the beginning of my career. I have lots of ideas and it's just going to be a matter of weeding through them. Certainly my future holds lots of failed paintings, but hopefully it holds lots of successes, too. Creating pieces that will uplift people is important to me. We already have so much heartache in this life and I think art that makes a statement is important. I am not sure *exactly* what my statement will be, but I do know that it will be for good. ■









# Upcoming Artists



"Orca & Salmon," steel sculpture by Brandon Grimshaw



*"Flight," oil painting by Rosa Dato Dall*



*"In Times of Universal Deceit," barcode by Corey Strange*



IN TIMES OF UNIVERSAL DECEIT, TELLING THE TRUTH IS A REVOLUTIONARY ACT. ~GEORGE ORWELL









# Liz Davis Maxfield

INTERVIEWED BY MERIDITH JACKMAN

WEB: [LIZDAVISMAXFIELD.COM](http://LIZDAVISMAXFIELD.COM)







### When did you first begin to play cello?

When I was four years old, my mom bought me my first cello and I started taking lessons. That stint lasted all of two months. At the time I was much more interested in headstands than music, so it was probably more of a liability than anything else.

However, even though I only played for a few weeks, it did have a lasting effect on me—over the next few years I still considered myself a musician and a cellist. When I was about nine years old, I started lessons again, and I had a little more patience and interest. (Although I still did headstands.)

### Why music? Why Celtic?

Around the time that I started playing the cello again, my family started a band called FiddleSticks. (My mom, Kira Pratt Davis, played the Irish harp; my dad, Mark Davis, plays the bodhran [an Irish drum]; my sister Becca Davis Stevenson plays the flute and sings; and my sister Kate Davis Henderson plays the fiddle.)

With performances as motivation, I gradually learned to play bass lines, then harmony parts, melodic lines, and rhythmic grooves. Because I took classical cello lessons consistently while I performed folk music regularly, I feel like I grew up equally comfortable in both traditions.

When I enrolled as a cello performance major at BYU, I really began to think about my future career as a cellist, and I came to the decision that while I will always love to *play* classical music, I would much rather *perform* folk music. With that in mind, I applied to Berklee College of Music in Boston.

### Tell us about attending Berklee.

Berklee began as a jazz school, but over the years it has branched out to include most styles of popular music. Most recently, Berklee has begun to embrace folk music, primarily bluegrass and Celtic. It was really wonderful to be a part of something so fresh and innovative there.

Many of my professors there are gigging musicians who have made names for themselves in the performance world, and many of my peers brought a lot of depth and experience that contributed quite a lot to my education.

### What were the highlights of your experience there as a Celtic cellist?

While I was at Berklee I had great opportunities to collaborate with my peers and professors in concerts, classrooms, and recording studios. I worked with a huge range of musicians—Dropkick Murphys to Eugene Friesen to Phil Ramone.

I formed a band called Folk Arts Quartet (FAQ) to explore Celtic/classical crossover in a hybrid genre we call ChamberGrass. With this group, I performed around Boston and toured in New York. It was so satisfying to create something and see it take off. I learned so much through that process.

### Tell us about your newest album.

During my last semester I recorded two albums. *Big Fiddle*, my first solo album, was a really rewarding project. Once again, it was a great opportunity to see an idea come to life. I arranged traditional tunes and original compositions to demonstrate the cello's versatility as the "big fiddle" in folk music. I collaborated with a great group of people and performed the album for my senior recital.

I also recorded an album with FAQ during my last semester. This self-titled album highlights the "folky" side of the string quartet and features compositions and arrangements from each member of the band. Through the recording process, I felt like we were able to really solidify our sound and explore ChamberGrass in new ways.

### How was creating your own band different from participating in the family band?

With the Folk Arts Quartet, I worked with three fellow Berklee students. Our musical backgrounds, as well as our approach to Celtic, varied greatly, and we tried to take advantage of the musical diversity in our group. In FiddleSticks, I knew so much about my bandmates that I could predict most of their reactions—musically or not. As a member of FAQ I learned a lot about finding ways to combine vastly different ideas together to suit the taste, skills, and personality of each member. I felt that this process was very rewarding and musically successful.



## How have you seen the gospel affect you as an artist?

The gospel has an immense impact on the way I view my career as an artist. Through spiritual experiences, I have found inspiration and comfort relating to my artistic endeavours.

Sometimes it's easy to get caught up in the *practical* implications of my membership in the Church. I don't like to play shows on Sunday, I don't drink, and I don't swear. I'm married and I'd like to have kids someday. Yes, these are the most obvious effects—or at least the ones that people comment on most often. It's kind of a shame, though. I wish that the *spiritual* implications took precedence. In the long run, I'd rather have people equate Mormonism with the plan of salvation than with scheduling conflicts and party-poopers. That being said, the

fact that I live my religion has led to conversations about spirituality with several of my colleagues.

## How has your additional technical training influenced you as an artist?

Because of my classical training, I feel at home with the cello. Because of my non-classical training, I feel at home with music. I particularly loved studying music theory at Berklee. It was taught from a jazz and popular music perspective, and the ideas I learned there have really helped me as a composer, arranger, and performer.

## What are your plans now after completing your bachelor's degree?

Shortly before I graduated from Berklee, I was awarded a Fulbright grant to study Irish music at the University of Limerick in Ireland. Under this grant, I will write and publish a method book on Irish music for the cello, and I'll receive a master's in Irish traditional music performance from the University of Limerick.

After the completion of my studies I plan to continue composing, performing, recording, and teaching, as I aim to expand the folk cello world.

## What do you look forward to most with your move to Ireland?

I've just started classes at the University of Limerick, and I am so excited for this opportunity. I really look forward to immersing myself in this style of music and exploring new ways to use the cello. Because the cello hasn't been used in Irish traditional music, I look forward to collaborating with high caliber musicians and exposing more people to the cello's potential in folk music.

## How do you see your music help build the kingdom?

Although I am not pursuing a career in Mormon art, I hope to help build the kingdom by exposing more people to the goodness of the gospel. By living my religion I can be an example of stability and integrity. By being upfront about what I believe and how it affects my life, I hope I can inspire others to consider spirituality as a source of happiness. ■













# Jer3miah

## Jeff Parkin and Jared Cardon

INTERVIEWED BY DAVEY MORRISON DILLARD

WEB: JER3MIAH.COM

*The Book of Jer3miah is a web series created by BYU students in the Winter Semester of 2009. Based on a concept by BYU Media Arts faculty member Jeff Parkin and recent BYU Media Arts graduate Jared Cardon in an effort to produce something through BYU Broadcasting to appeal to a younger demographic, it follows the adventures of Jeremiah, a BYU freshman, as he begins to learn of his unknown heritage and becomes embroiled in a conspiracy that will threaten his life and the lives of those he loves. Described by Parkin and Cardon as a “spiritual thriller,” the series, based on an outline by its two creators, was written by and stars BYU students. Members of a class taught by Parkin and Cardon worked together to shoot and edit each episode every week. Made up of twenty episodes and running about two hours total, the first season concluded over the summer. To date, Jer3miah has had over 80,000 hits in 88 countries.*

**Season 1 ends with a lot of cliffhangers and a lot of unresolved questions. What’s the plan for future seasons?**

JEFF: Jared’s teaching the class. It’s about transmedia, on *Jer3miah*. We’re talking about ways we could further the story with more trans-media elements. We’re looking for funding and

BYU Broadcasting has expressed interest. Right now they’re probably number one, but there’s also somebody else who’s expressed interest, who really likes the show a lot and would actually like to do at least one more season. There’s also talk of a third season. We’re working on outlining the show right now. We’ve been spending a lot of time on that and I think we’ve got the first episode of the season kind of figured out. It’s really awesome. I think it’s gonna be great. It opens with a really cool action sequence—a chase with a horse and a motorcycle.

JARED: Jeremiah spent the whole first season just trying to figure out what the heck was going on. The first season’s kind of his discovery—there’s people trying to kill him and there’s this box. And the second season focuses more on Jeremiah coming to learn what his calling is.

JEFF: There’s the whole idea too of this theme of identity. Jeremiah’s figuring out who he is, who his father is. And we’re all trying to figure out who we are, and what does that mean if we really do believe we’re children of God?

**That was actually a moment where I thought, “I’m surprised this is working for me, but it is.”**

JEFF: I felt the same thing! There were a number of places like that, when we were writing them,











where we thought, “I don’t know what this is.” But I feel like it worked because it all addresses Jeremiah’s character and so it’s not designed to be preachy or anything else.

It’s designed to be a turning point for him—a moment where he has a little epiphany. And for us that’s also about the way the gospel can do that for us.

JARED: The show’s not a missionary tool; it’s a story. So when those things come as answers for those characters it’s okay, because we want the characters to figure things out. It’s not like, “Hey, audience, this is for you.”

JEFF: So the next season is about Jeremiah trying to figure out what his gifts are. There is, of course, a larger conspiracy now, and that’s cool. Somebody dies.

**This is sounding like Harry Potter.**

JARED: There’s lots of cool stuff.

JEFF: We’re really, really excited about it. The writing is a really fun part of the process. Actually, everything about this process has been fun. Someone asked us the other night what we would change about the show, and honestly, there are little technical things I’d like to change. But on a larger scale, I wish we could have done more transmedia. But, oh my goodness, the transmedia we *did* do...

JARED: The students developed a lot of extra stuff that doesn’t fit within the box of the show.

JEFF: But I honestly can’t think of much else I would’ve changed about the process. I just think this show is really cool. And I say that not because we really had anything to do with that, but just stepping back and looking at it, I think, “What a weird, cool, funky, moving kind of thing this is.”

JARED: And I feel lucky to have been a part of this. Everything that we needed to make it



happen happened. The last shot of the show—Jeff had talked a long time before we shot it about the kind of shot we needed to end on.

JEFF: A crane, a horse, the valley—

JARED: And we could hardly schedule two hours to shoot in this building on campus—

JEFF: Let alone drive down to Manti. Get all this equipment down there—

JARED: So I get a call when we were halfway through the season from a guy I knew when I was in the animation program and he said, “Hey, I’m watching this show. It’s really cool; I really like it. Is there anything I can do to help?” And this friend works at a really big visual effects house in L.A.—very prominent. And at the time he was the environment lead—he builds these virtual environments, set extensions.

So I said, “Well, actually, there is something.” So that last shot of the show is actually shot in the LDS Motion Picture Studio parking lot. The crane goes up, and we just see a bunch of cars and buildings. But then we hand it off to him and he just makes that shot happen. Again, that was just one of those moments where we were really blessed.

JEFF: We needed these horses.

JARED: We were working with no budget and we needed to have a horse chase.

JEFF: We made a couple of calls and this guy says, “Yeah, I’ll bring up my horse trailer, load up my horses, drive up onto the side of a mountain, and I’ll do it for free.” And the last shot, that whole last scene of the last season, we had the horses for four hours. And we had to shoot that opening crane shot of that episode where the horses were tied up there, then we had to shoot Claire riding on a horse, then we had to shoot Jeremiah and Ammon coming out. So for that last shot we had ten minutes left before the horses had to go. And it was a crane. And I thought, “We are screwed. This is not gonna happen.” And it was a challenging shot because the crane’s moving that way and the horses are coming this way and then the crane comes and moves this way and goes up—it’s a hard move.

JARED: And the horses were cranky—

JEFF: And Jared Shores, who plays Jeremiah, had not really ridden horses before, and so I just



thought, “We’re not gonna get it. The horses are going to have to go away.” So we had take one, two, three, four, five, six. And then on seven—we were now like three minutes before the horses had to leave—and the horses did exactly what we needed them to do. We put the horse out there and he walked and the move got it and the focus worked and everything was there. So there were just a lot of really miraculous things that happened in the making of the show. There was a lot of opposition, and then at the same time there were just all these blessings that would come. When we needed stuff it would just show up there—permission for the music, this space. We were able to decorate two rooms upstairs and they were standing sets for Jeremiah’s room and Brian and Simon’s room.

JARED: It was great; we could go shoot whenever we needed to.

**Jer3miah is a really interactive experience—you have the web series, but you also have these other websites with clues, and people trying to solve things, and stuff on Facebook...**

JEFF: Taylor Rose, who also did all our motion graphics, sort of handled the ARG [Alternate Reality Game] stuff. And it was great to have somebody we could trust. He knew the show, and he would come and pitch ideas to us. When we first started



we were looking at ways to use Facebook—now all the characters have Facebook pages. Then we started to get people playing the alternate reality game, and at one point we created these packets that went out. We got people's addresses from their Facebook pages and then in the middle of the night we went and slid these things under people's doors.

JARED: So there were people who were playing the ARG who got this packet, but there were also some people where we just randomly stuck it under their doors, too.

JEFF: So what they got was a clue that led to the plaque in front of the Indian statue on campus. And if they put the page right down on top of it, and then they rubbed it, there were letters that came in, and those letters were a clue that helped them figure it out.

JARED: They accessed a website, I think.

JEFF: The crazy thing is that the guy who solved it on the internet lives in Logan, and so he searched for the words [on the sheet of paper].

JARED: He found the picture on Flickr, and then he lined it up, so he didn't even have to be at BYU.

JEFF: And in Episode 4, Jeremiah gets the text on his phone that says, "You have to earn the right to regain the box." On the top of that we put in just a little three-digit code.

JARED: It was WM344, or something like that, which stands for Waymark, which is a way of notating GPS. And so that GPS coordinate then took people to a place where there was a flash drive.

JEFF: And then they got the flash drive and there was a video on it. They uploaded the video to the Davenport Papers.

JARED: Also, on one of those Davenport interviews there was a blip in the audio, and it was actually a message sped up like 300 times and played backwards. So somebody took that blip, slowed it down, played it in reverse, and there was a message in there. I mean, I'm still amazed that people found that stuff.

JEFF: And one of the great things about the ARG is that community kind of formed with people starting to talk to each other, saying, "Hey, did you see this episode? I saw this and it's this many minutes in"—and then they started creating a glossary of different things. But it was all user-generated. So that was a cool piece of it.

JARED: To see a community grow up out of nothing with people who don't even know each

other—this idea of collective intelligence, that someone's bringing this piece of knowledge, and this piece of knowledge, and this piece of knowledge, and together they're able to solve this stuff. That's one of the goals that we had when making the show to help people start to become accustomed to using the internet as that sort of tool.

**I just watched the whole show a couple weeks ago and I looked at the Davenport Papers and Zooby News and the Facebook profiles, all after the show had been broadcast. It was interesting following the discovery process in the comments and posts from viewers.**

JEFF: We thought, "You know, it'll be really cool someday, when a couple of guys are talking about their college days and they're saying, 'Remember the Davenport papers and the Book of Jeremiah and how we played that? Like, how we solved all those clues?'"

JARED: "And we woke up one morning and there was an envelope under our door?"

JEFF: It's great to create memories that bring you together and help you feel connected, and hopefully get you think a little bit. So those were kind of the transmedia elements.

JARED: That's the thing. Telling a transmedia story is not just me putting online something I would've made for TV. It's much more than that in terms of how the show can impact the audience and then how the audience can impact the show. They'd participate in the game, they could write messages on the Facebook pages of these characters and the characters would respond back to them—so they're interacting with these made-up people. It's very interactive. The audience has a lot of power now in affecting the way those things happen.

**The show is very different from a two-hour feature cut up into five-minute segments and put online. There's a real handmade quality to the show that I think really adds a lot to it. It isn't always really polished. It's sort of a hybrid between some of the best of student film and then stuff that looks like what a bunch of college kids might throw together and put online in a week.**

JEFF: I think one of the things that makes it interesting is that the people who were working

on the show were doing it because they loved it. I think you can feel that in the show. There's an energy and a passion you can feel coming from the show. For me, one of the reasons it does work is because of the passion that everybody brought.

JARED: You say "handmade," and I think that's cool. In a way it's like when I get a greeting card from somebody that they bought from the grocery store versus one they made for me. There's a special

quality to it that sometimes transcends whatever limitations are in there because there is love in it.

We really had an amazing group of super dedicated students. I think about trying to do some of the stuff they did, while they had classes and they had other things going on and, honestly, there's no way that anyone would've done this kind of stuff—we included—if we didn't feel like we really loved it, like there was a really good reason to do it. ■









# Eric Jensen

BY ALLISON ASTON

WEB: [THEOBT.COM](http://THEOBT.COM)



Performing has always come naturally for Eric Jensen. Ever ready and willing to perform for a crowd, Jensen relished opportunities to speak in church as a kid, and in high school it wasn't long before his fellow student body officers began having him write and direct skits for their pep assemblies.

His college years found him taking acting more seriously—studying Shakespeare and acting methods, among other things—and after serving a full-time mission, he did a couple of plays with some friends.

That led to the creation of a brand new theater, the Deseret Star Theater in Murray. There Jensen worked for a time, doing just about everything that needed to be done—writing, directing, props, and plenty of help with producing the plays they performed there.

He thought he'd gone about as far as he could go in the theatre industry. Then a friend pointed out that the only thing he hadn't done yet was to personally own a theater. Jensen pushed the idea away. It'd never happen, he thought.



A couple of years later, however, it did happen, when he and some of his friends opened the Off Broadway Theatre (OBT) in downtown Salt Lake. Jensen had been asked to put on a medieval play for an Arts in the Park program in Layton, Utah. He wrote a piece called *Robin Hood* for the outdoor performance.

When opening night came around, a mere thirty people showed up, but the next night sixty came, and the actors noticed people in the park stopping by to see what was happening, especially when the crowd was roaring with laughter. That Saturday, the audience had grown to about 150 people, and by closing night a few days later, almost four hundred people were watching. Jensen learned an important lesson that night:

*Theater can be done simply and relatively cheaply anywhere you want to do it. What you need to have is a good story and good actors telling that story.... It's nice to have great costumes, it's nice to have great effects, it's nice to have good lighting and good sound and everything else, but really, if you have a good story, and you have really good people telling that story, you've got a good show.*

After *Robin Hood*'s success, Jensen and the other cast members wanted to keep performing the play for a wider audience, specifically families, and it wouldn't hurt if they made a dime or two off the show, either.

So they found the building where the OBT is currently located—272 South Main Street in Salt Lake City—and got a lease on a week-to-week basis. Eventually those leases turned into six-month contracts, and now the theater has put on shows every week for the past fifteen years.

For the first few years, Jensen and his wife ran the theater along with two other couples, but other job opportunities have led the others in different directions, and now the Jensens run the theater by themselves.

The OBT is known for its improv group, Laughing Stock, which performs every Friday and Saturday night. Since they needed something to pay bills during the off months while plays were being rehearsed, they decided to go with improvisational comedy because it was easy to prepare and lots of fun:







*You simply need to know what the games are, practice them, and get good at them. Then you perform a made-up scene in front of people who are happy to see it. And when you do it, it's amazing, because it's the first time that people have ever seen that, and now they're in on a private joke that you, the audience, and the actors have together.*

After fifteen years of doing improv every weekend, Jensen says, the members of Laughing Stock are on a par with other improv groups around the nation, including those that perform in larger cities like Seattle, Chicago, and Las Vegas. Jensen's theory is that once you get to a certain point in your improv ability, you can play just about anywhere, because funny is funny no matter where you are.

Most of the plays produced at the OBT are parodies. "We're not going for dramatic effect. We're not trying to change people's lives. This is a haven

for rest and for stress relief—for building families, because you can laugh at things together." Jensen's goal is to make plays that will appeal to audiences of all ages and backgrounds.

When writing parodies, he looks for legendary, bigger-than-life tales, and once he finds one he thinks will work, he starts pulling on it, trying to find ways to twist it or weave it into something a little different. That's the recipe for comedy, he says. For example, take his play *Utahoma*, which played at the OBT during this past June and July. Jensen took the format of the classic musical *Oklahoma!* and reworked it into a story of how Utah became a state. Some of his characters, like Timpanogos, Father Escalante, and Brigham Young, were based on fact and used to move the story along, whereas the fictional characters usually ended up being the comedic relief.

Being an LDS actor and writer, Jensen tries to be very Mormon-friendly, but he tries to create plays that attract both those in and out of the faith,



not just to appeal to a larger audience but also so non-Mormons and Mormons can come together and enjoy watching something in the same room. But “not everything is a joke about Mormons,” he says. “We do a couple of shows like that, but most of the time I try to make it so people can come and see that we’re laughing more at Utahns in general or laughing at some idea we’re portraying.” Our history of persecution for religious beliefs has some Mormons hesitant to laugh at these jokes, he says, especially when they might feel they’re being made fun of, but:

*What I’ve tried to do is make something that both non-Mormons and Mormons would be comfortable watching, and hopefully they’ll gain greater respect for each other, and hopefully they’ll have a greater love for each other.*

Jensen’s advice to aspiring Mormon actors and comedians is threefold:

First, remember our pioneer forefathers and the amazing things they did.

Second, make sure our art reflects our beliefs. “Although Mormon showpeople may be naïve about the wicked things of the world that other comedians often use as subject matter, we do have knowledge about endowments, covenants, and eternal families,” Jensen says, “and this knowledge should influence how we act.”

Third, we should be proud of our abilities and put them to good use. One way Jensen does that is by teaching others his craft, and in doing so, he passes on the gift of entertainment and laughter to many other people.

No, he is not a doctor, and no, he doesn’t provide services absolutely necessary to life, but even so, Jensen’s work is vital: he gives families opportunities to gather and to laugh together. ■





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