



The Lord of the Underworld wore a pinstripe suit and a fedora as he tempted a barefoot girl with a string of pearls. The Fates, three children in formal wear, observed the action and offer their insight and commentary. And Persephone, winter queen of this criminal scene, led a group of underworld dancers in a lounge number. It wasn't a strange dream - it was Bards of Birmingham's production of "Orpheus Goes to Hadestown", which premiered on April 25 and played through May 5 at The Edge of Chaos.

"Orpheus Goes to Hadestown" tells the story of the Greek myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, but with a key twist - it's set in Depression-era America. Hades is the king of a criminal underworld run out of a mining town. Orpheus and Eurydice are two broke teenagers trying to scrape a life out of nothing. When Hades comes into town to fetch his wife, Persephone, for the winter, Eurydice is tempted by the promise of food and warmth to return with Hades to his underworld.

A key dimension to this re-telling is that, consistent with the mission of Bards of Birmingham, the leading roles were played by actors aged 21 and younger. Bards of Birmingham's stated mission is to empower young people and build community through theater, and, since its inception in 2010, Bards has staged 9 productions in realization of this goal. "Orpheus Goes to Hadestown" was the 10th play, and was written and directed by Executive Director Laura Coulter.

"Orpheus Goes to Hadestown" utilized the media of dance and film to assist in rendering the story. Because of the unique creative requirements of the production Bards sought out a collaborative partner, and found one at The Edge of Chaos. The Edge of Chaos is a unique conceptual space at Lister Hill Library at the heart of UAB which was designed to catalyze innovation and cross-disciplinary collaboration, with the central mission of addressing "Wicked Problems" - thorny problems with no obvious solutions.

"The Edge of Chaos is a very natural collaborative partner for this play," said Pam Walston, President of the Bards Board of Directors. "The link between performative art and addressing social problems has a strong history. And this play deals with the intersection of poverty and ethics. The Edge of Chaos is a unique partner. We are delighted to be able to stage our production here."

