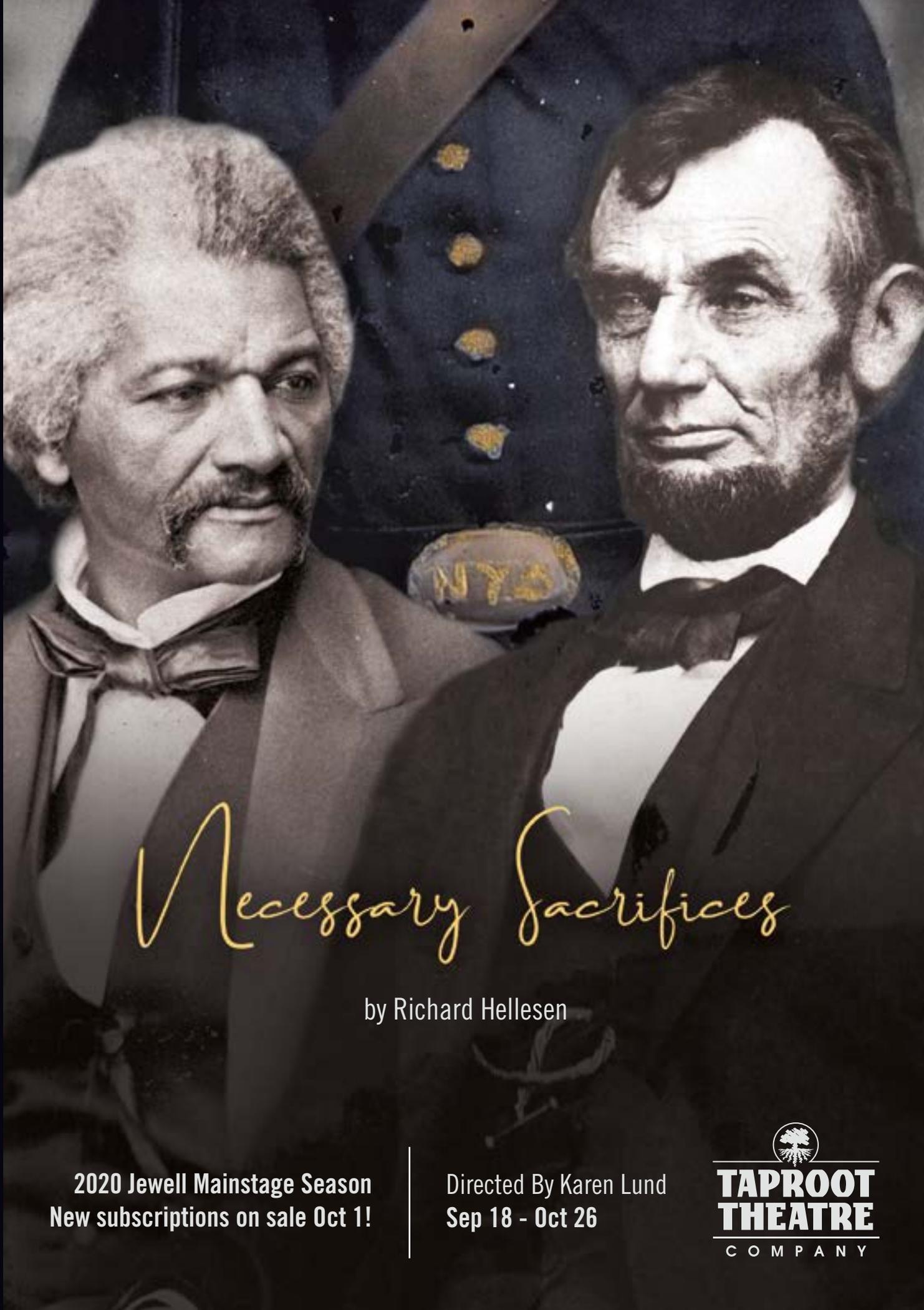


SEPTEMBER 2019



# Necessary Sacrifices

by Richard Helleesen

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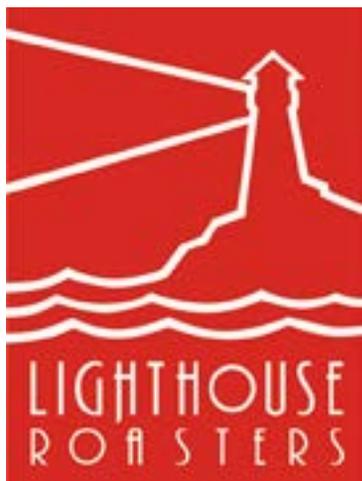
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September 2019 | Volume 16, No. 1

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Encore Stages is an Encore arts program that features stories about our local arts community alongside information about performances. Encore Stages is a publication of Encore Media Group. We also publish specialty publications, including the SIFF Guide and Catalog, Official Seattle Pride Guide, and the Seafair Commemorative Magazine. Learn more at [encorespotlight.com](http://encorespotlight.com).

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# The State of Deaf Theatre in Seattle

by DANIELLE MOHLMAN

According to the 2010 United States Census, an estimated 2.4% of the Washington population identifies as Deaf. And while estimations surrounding the size of Seattle's own population vary widely, it's clear that the Deaf community here is vibrant and engaged. So how are the region's theatres providing accessible performing arts experiences for the community?

According to Deaf Spotlight's accessibility index, The Paramount Theatre (as part of Seattle Theatre Group and Broadway at The Paramount), The 5th Avenue Theatre and ACT Theatre all offer long-term commitments to providing captioning, American Sign Language (ASL) interpretation and other accessibility services to their Deaf and hard of hearing audiences. And while these three theatres seem to be leading the way in Deaf accessibility, Seattle Repertory Theatre and Sound Theatre Company also provide captioning and ASL interpretation during select performances.

Over the last couple of years, both The 5th Avenue Theatre and

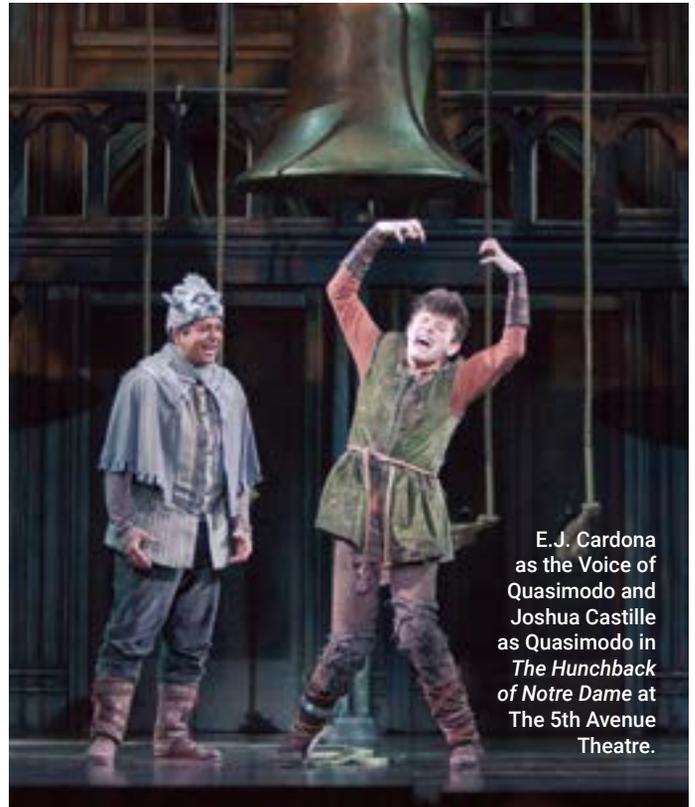
ACT Theatre have embraced the talents of actor Joshua M. Castille. In 2017, Castille made his Seattle debut playing Billy in ACT's production of *Tribes* by Nina Raine. He returned in 2018 to play Quasimodo in 5th Avenue's production of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, a role traditionally played by a hearing actor. His performance in the titular role of this new Disney musical was augmented by actor E.J. Cardona, who sang on Castille's behalf. Earlier this year, Castille returned to Seattle to portray yet another titular role: Romeo in ACT's production of *Romeo and Juliet*.

"Deaf theatre rarely happens, because it's rare that we get to direct or produce a show from

our lens," Castille explained. He clarified, saying that all of the roles he's performed in Seattle lean more toward what he calls "theatre including the Deaf."

"I wouldn't consider *Romeo and Juliet* 'Deaf theatre' because its primary audience isn't Deaf, it's hearing," Castille said. "It's all about the intended audience." Deaf West Theatre's production of *Spring Awakening*, the show that gave Castille his Broadway debut, was a blend of the two.

Castille identifies as an activist, an identifier that he picked up from Andrea Moore, executive director of The Wayfaring Band. Castille was struck by the way Moore uses art to mobilize her



E.J. Cardona as the Voice of Quasimodo and Joshua Castille as Quasimodo in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* at The 5th Avenue Theatre.



Howie Seago and Joshua Castille in ACT's *Romeo and Juliet*.

Denver community to create change in the world.

"Artists make observations on life," Castille said. "We explore and encourage ideas. It's so powerful that it would be silly not to be conscious about the sociological effects of our work."

Reflecting back on *Romeo and Juliet*, which closed in March 2019, Castille said that the decision to cast two Deaf actors in the production—Howie Seago played Friar Lawrence—was intentional. Director John Langs had noticed that this young tough guy, Romeo, was visiting the priest a lot. "Why?" Castille asked. "What motivates Romeo to go to the priest? Because they are the only two people who speak that language and share that experience. This is similar to real life. We often find Deaf families to participate in or find a Deaf role model to latch onto."

It's a casting choice that sent ripples through the rest of the text, including the second half of the play when Romeo is left out of a major communication loop regarding Juliet.

When asked what keeps him coming back to Seattle, Castille was quick to bring up the Deaf community and the strength he witnesses every time he comes

back to work. "I love how Deaf Spotlight fosters Deaf artists," Castille said. "I'm so blown away by their mindset and the events they produce. They are supportive and loving."

Actor Howie Seago, who played the aforementioned Friar Lawrence role, said that he identifies as a Deaf person first and a Deaf actor second. "Most any role can be adapted to be performed by a Deaf actor, but I believe I cannot exclude my deafness as part of the makeup of the character," Seago said. "It is always there."

Seago has worked all over the world—with Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Edinburgh Festival, Amsterdam Opera, Seattle Children's Theatre, Intiman and most recently at ACT. Seago grew up in Tacoma and it was important to raise his two sons in the Pacific Northwest, surrounded by family. He and his wife decided to call Seattle home because it's a theatre town full of innovative artists.

After ACT's production of *Tribes*, it was clear to Seago that the theatre was inspired to include Deaf talent and ASL in future productions. It was clear they were willing to put in the work.

"Other theatres in town can start to consider how they might

adapt roles for Deaf talent," Seago said. "Having a Deaf actor portraying a role and utilizing some aspects of the Deaf experience might add another layer of depth to the message of the play." In *Romeo and Juliet*, a flashing light signaled the end of the school day in Friar Lawrence's class. Friar John, the often forgotten second friar in William Shakespeare's classic, was given a much larger role as Lawrence's interpreter. And, as Castille pointed out, the shared deafness of Romeo and Friar Lawrence strengthened the bond between these two characters.

Seago encourages Seattle theatres to broaden their Deaf talent to include those behind the scenes as well. "The next step after offering more performance opportunities to the Deaf talent community would be to sponsor playwriting workshops for the Deaf and hire Deaf directors—either as the main director or an assistant director," Seago said. "Having a 'Deaf eye' will ensure Deaf culture accuracy, proper ASL translations and clear sightlines for Deaf audiences."

Patty Liang, the executive director of Deaf Spotlight, is grateful for the mentorship she received as a Ceramics student at the University of Washington. It was her ASL interpreters who suggested she seek out Deaf non-profits in town.

"There are not many Deaf POC arts administrators," said Liang, who identifies as Chinese American. "I hope my efforts encourage other Deaf female and POC artists and arts administrators in my field. There isn't enough visibility and representation right now."



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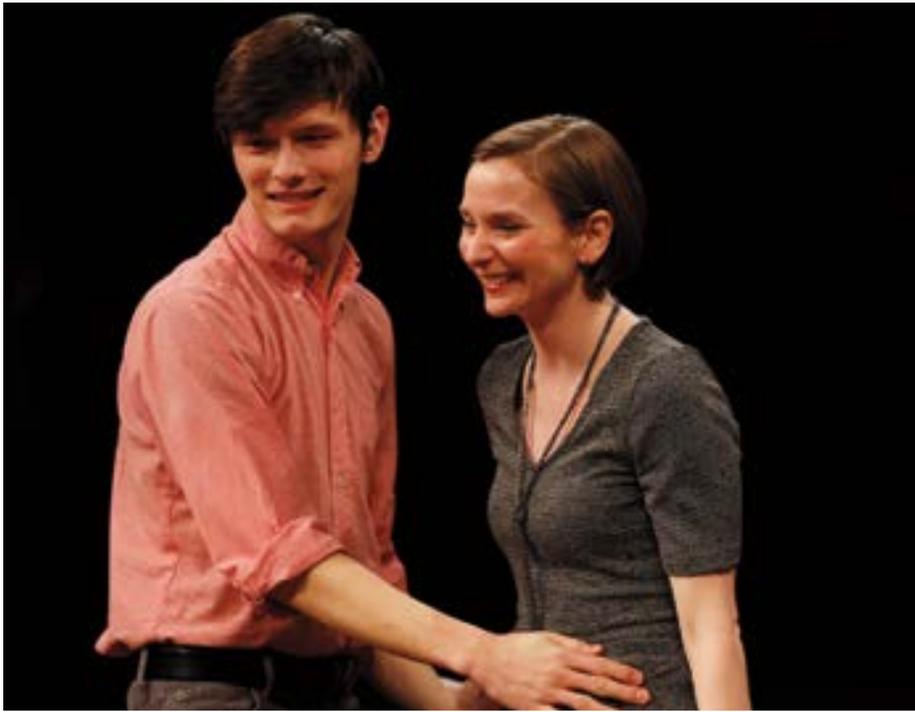
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Joshua Castille and Lindsay W. Evans in ACT's *Tribes*.

Liang's artistic background is in visual art, but her advocacy work through Deaf Spotlight extends to theatre and other performing arts. Liang said that she'd love to see a more inclusive effort from Seattle's theatres, hiring Deaf talent on all levels of production. "Right now, theatres only offer opportunities for Deaf talent as actors, performance interpreters or directors of ASL," Liang said. "I especially want to see more works by Deaf directors. They will certainly bring different perspectives and resources, reframing each play in a different light."

Part of Deaf Spotlight's programming is a biannual Short Play Festival. Earlier this year, Deaf Spotlight partnered with ACT Theatre, producing the festival during the 2019 ACTLab season. Deaf Spotlight hired six playwrights, three directors, eleven actors—all Deaf. "That's Deaf theatre right there," Liang said. "We don't often get the opportunity to have a Deaf- and ASL-centric space, especially a creative space. I treasured these moments of banter and collaboration. It's what made the festival such a success."

Rob Roth, who identifies primarily as an audience member despite being a founding member of Deaf

Spotlight, shared that he and his husband used to be subscribers to Seattle Rep. They're both retired now and enjoy traveling, so it's been difficult to fit captioned and ASL-interpreted shows into their schedules. "Our ability to attend captioned and ASL-interpreted shows is limited, as they are on specific nights and cannot easily be exchanged for another performance unless it is also captioned or ASL-interpreted," Roth said. "ACT now has captions available for any performance, so this has expanded our options considerably."

Thinking back on the shows he's seen recently, Roth cited *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* at 5th Avenue as his most joyful experience as an audience member. "The production threaded deafness and ASL into the production wonderfully, and Joshua Castille in the title role was wonderful to watch," Roth said. Roth also enjoyed seeing *The Music Man* at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in 2009, starring Howie Seago as Professor Harold Hill's friend Marcellus.

When I asked what Seattle theatres can do to be more accessible to Deaf audiences, Roth had a list at the ready. "Accessibility excellence would be obtained when

all performances are captioned, like they are at ACT, and when at least two performances—or more!—are ASL-interpreted, so that Deaf audiences have more choices," Roth said. "It's important to note that ASL-interpreted performances should not be dropped in favor of captioning. For many Deaf persons, English may not be their first language."

Roth enjoys seeing performances at ACT, Seattle Rep, The Paramount and 5th Avenue. He says that Sound Theatre has also captured his attention.

Audience member Ian Aranha identified himself as a human being first and foremost. "I may be Deaf, but that does not mean I cannot live a full, varied and interesting life," Aranha said, "even though most people depend so much on audio clues."

When we started talking about the kind of shows he gravitates toward, Aranha said that he enjoys musicals much more than plays. The combination of choreography and the visually interesting set pieces that come with seeing a Broadway-style musical make for an incredibly joyful experience. His favorite musical is *Les Misérables*. "I come

“I especially want to see more works by Deaf directors. They will certainly bring different perspectives and resources, reframing each play in a different light.”

—Patty Liang

from a musically inclined family,” Aranha said. “I usually know the lyrics and storyline of a musical already. Or I’ll learn it beforehand.”

Looking back on this last year, Aranha’s experience of seeing *Hamilton* at The Paramount Theatre is a particular favorite. “I love how Lin-Manuel Miranda combined history, music and modern storytelling, all into one,” Aranha said. “It was all braided together so wonderfully.”

Before seeing *Hamilton*, Aranha read the script and did some research on YouTube. “But when I went to see it live, with captioning provided, it was even so much better than I expected,” Aranha said.

In the middle of his story about seeing this performance, Aranha stopped to acknowledge the theatre that made this all happen. “The Paramount [via programming by STG and Broadway at The Paramount] has been incredible in providing access to shows for Deaf and hard of hearing people,” Aranha said. “Shout out to them!”

As a hearing audience member, I shared with Aranha that my only experience with captioning was at the opera, where all

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performances are captioned and interpreted for the entire audience. “That segues into my argument that all shows should have captions,” Aranha said. “People go to the opera and need captions. But the argument theatres make is that hearing people complain about captions, so they’ll never turn them on for all shows.”

And it can be frustrating when the dates and times for captioned and ASL-interpreted shows are so few and far between. “Have you noticed that the ASL performance is always on Saturday at 2 p.m.?” Aranha asked. “It’s like we’re sheep. Go see the afternoon show and then go home. I want to have dinner and drinks before and then take in a show.”

Aranha echoed what so many of the Deaf actors and audience members I spoke with did. There is always room to do more to welcome Deaf audiences in. Provide more captioned performances, more ASL-interpreted performances and more opportunities to grow and learn from Seattle’s vibrant Deaf community.

“I hope your article makes waves,” Aranha said.

I hope it does too. ■

More information about captioned and ASL-interpreted performances at Seattle Repertory Theatre, Sound Theatre, The Paramount Theatre, ACT Theatre and The 5th Avenue Theatre, as well as other accessibility services they provide, can be found on each theatre’s website.

Submissions for Deaf Spotlight’s 2020 Seattle Deaf Film Festival are now open. Visit [www.deafspotlight.org](http://www.deafspotlight.org) for more information.

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*Danielle Mohlman is a Seattle-based playwright and arts journalist. She’s a frequent contributor to Encore, where she’s written about everything from the intersection of sports and theatre to the landscape of sensory-friendly performances. Danielle’s work can also be found in American Theatre, The Dramatist and on the Quirk Books blog. [www.daniellemohlman.com](http://www.daniellemohlman.com)*



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# Necessary Sacrifices

by Richard Helleesen

## CAST

*(In Order of Appearance)*

**Frederick Douglass** *Lamar Legend\**  
**Abraham Lincoln** *Ted Rooney\**  
**George Stearns** *Andrew Litzky*

## PRODUCTION

**Director** *Karen Lund\*\**  
**Scenic & Sound Design** *Mark Lund*  
**Costume Design** *Pete Rush*  
**Lighting Design** *Brian Engel*  
**Stage Manager** *Laura Karavitis\**  
**Dramaturg** *Mario Gomez*

---

## TIME

*1861 to 1865 – but centrally, August 1863 and August 1864*

---

*Necessary Sacrifices* is approximately 2 hours and 15 minutes including one 15-minute intermission.

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*Necessary Sacrifices* is presented by arrangement with Graham Agency, New York.

\*\*  The Director is a member of the STAGE DIRECTORS AND CHOREOGRAPHERS SOCIETY, a national theatrical labor union.

\*  Member of the Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.

# From the Director



***“Fellow citizens, we cannot escape history. We, of this Congress and this administration, will be remembered in spite of ourselves ... The fiery trial through which we pass will light us down in honor or dishonor, to the latest generation.” - Abraham Lincoln***

As a parent and as an administrator, I've experienced the anxiety that comes when making decisions that will affect other people well into the future. But even with those relatively small encounters with significant power, it's impossible for me to fathom the weight of responsibility carried by both Lincoln and Douglass as they met twice in 1863 and 1864 to discuss the present and future of our warring country.

In *Necessary Sacrifices*, playwright Richard Hellesten uses historical documents, letters and newspaper reports from the time to craft what might have been said between these two giants of history, but of course we will never know the details. History has shaped our perspective of both these men and the events surrounding them, but theatre provides us the lens of empathy through which to experience understanding.

As you listen in on this performance, try and put yourself in the place of either one of these great men. Try and reason alongside them. Remember: The union **MUST** be preserved - at all costs! Slavery **MUST** be abolished - at all costs! Where, when, how do you compromise to achieve these ends? (Do you compromise?) What sacrifices can you make? Or ask other people to make?

My hope is that our production will engage, excite and challenge your understanding of this difficult period in our past and give you deeper insight into our present-day struggles.

Enjoy,

*Karen*

Karen Lund  
Associate Artistic Director



# From the Dramaturgy

## FINDING THE WAY

By Mario Gomez

In this country, we have a tendency to mythologize historical figures. This is particularly evident in the character of Abraham Lincoln, who is usually remembered as the great liberator and savior of the Union. His actions and policies led to Emancipation and the 13th Amendment, which abolished slavery. But, Lincoln was a man of his own time and held deeply problematic and racist views through his lifetime:

- **Lincoln did not think Black people were equal to whites.** While he believed everyone should have the same natural rights (life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness), he opposed granting Black people equal rights.
- **For Lincoln, Abolition and Emancipation were mostly a means to an end.** In his own words: *"My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that. What I do about slavery, and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union."*
- **Lincoln also could not envision a society where white and Black people could live in harmony.** He even pursued a policy where emancipated Black people would move to Panama, Haiti or somewhere in Africa to establish their own country.

Yes, Lincoln was very deeply flawed. And yet, he was prepared to listen and learn. This is the Lincoln we meet in *Necessary Sacrifices*, a man willing to change his mind when proven wrong. Throughout his presidency, Lincoln started to evolve on many of these issues by talking with leaders like Frederick Douglass. It was not enough, but he was moving in the right direction by the time of his assassination.

Most of us share the same shortcomings: we fail to be mindful of our own privilege and how we promote systemic racism, by our actions or inactions. We do not consider the real impact of our "good intentions." We center our own feelings. We take up space that is not our own. We don't listen. We only take superficial steps and use buzzwords and yet dare call ourselves allies and accomplices. Just as we see these dynamics in the play, we should recognize them in our own lives.

And like Lincoln, we can learn, we can work to better ourselves so we can truly fight for equal rights and opportunities for all, and not just pay lip service to it. We must admit when we are wrong and realize how we benefit from our privilege and the racism that pervades our society. We must work, so that one day, this country can finally live up to its promise that all people are created, treated and respected equally.



# Necessary Sacrifices Company



**LAMAR LEGEND** (*Frederick Douglass*) is originally from New York City. Recent credits include: Darren in *Take Me Out*, Everybody in *Everybody* (Strawberry Theatre Workshop); Hastings in *She Stoops to Conquer* (Seattle Shakespeare Company); Eddie in *And in This Corner: Cassius Clay*, The Aviator in *The Little*

*Prince* (Seattle Children's Theatre), BJJ in *An Octoroon* (ArtsWest); Calcifer in *Howl's Moving Castle*, Bailey Sr. in *I Know Why The Caged Bird Sings* (Book-It Repertory Theatre); James T. in *Barbecue* (Intiman Theatre), Franco Wicks in *Superior Donuts* (Valley Center Stage), Horatio and Ophelia in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (The Plimoth Players, MA); Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Chicago Shakespeare Theater); and Legba in *The Brother/Sister Plays* (Steppenwolf Theatre, Chicago). He has been honored with The Gregory Award and The Rising Star Award by The League of American Theaters & Producers.



**TED ROONEY** (*Abraham Lincoln*) is thrilled to work at Taproot Theatre once again! 33 years ago, he toured with their Road Company. Ted was seen last year in *Quietly* and *Last Four Things* at Corrib Theatre in Portland (Drammy nomination), and recently finished a run of *Everybody* at ART (PDX) where

he appeared two years earlier in *A Civil War Christmas*. Before that was *Orlando* at Profile Theatre (PDX, Drammy Winner for Best Production) and productions at the Ahmanson Theatre, Williamstown, The McCarter, The Wilma, The Arden, Portland Stage, Idaho Shakespeare, 10 off-off Broadway credits and 10 plays with The Actors Co-op in LA. He has over 45 TV guest-star credits, over 20 principal film roles and oodles of commercial credits. Ted just finished filming *The Waterman* with director David Oyelowo and, yes, he was the wrestling Abe Lincoln in that Mountain Dew commercial. He received his BA in Theatre from Lewis and Clark and his MFA from Temple. He currently coaches and teaches on camera acting classes out of Rooney/Totman Studio in Portland and at Portland State – and he loves every minute of it.



**ANDREW LITZKY** (*George Stearns*) (he/him) happily returns to Taproot (*Around the World in 80 Days*, *The Explorers Club*). He is a disabled person, living with the degenerative neurological syndrome Charcot-Marie-Tooth, CMT, similar to Muscular Dystrophy (talk to him about it...he's happy to tell you more). As

Co-Founder of *theater simple*, Andrew has appeared in 30+ productions and tours internationally. Regional credits with Berkeley Repertory and the Spoleto Festival;

internationally in Canada, Australia and Singapore; locally with Sound Theatre, Seattle Shakespeare, Strawberry Theatre, Book-It, Seattle Public, Seattle University and the Bathhouse. He is grateful and ever-so in awe of his co-conspirator in life and art, Llysa.

**BRIAN ENGEL** (*Lighting Design*) Some of his recent designs for Taproot Theatre Company include *Baskerville*, *Relativity*, *Evidence of Things Unseen*, *Joyful Noise* and *Dracula*. Brian received his MFA in Lighting Design from the University of Maryland. He currently works as the Lighting Supervisor for Meany Center for the Performing Arts at the University of Washington. He would like to thank his wife, Julia for all her support.

**MARIO GOMEZ** (*Dramaturg*) is a Seattle based dramaturg, designer and director. He has worked on over 240 productions in Seattle and internationally. Past dramaturgical credits include *Oslo* with ACT Theatre, *Kim's Convenience* with Taproot, the ACTONE Festival organized by ACT Theatre and OCC featuring Pulitzer Prize winner Martyna Majok. More about Mario at [www.onlinedramaturg.com](http://www.onlinedramaturg.com) and [marioagomez.com](http://marioagomez.com).

**LAURA KARAVITIS** (*Stage Manager*) is originally from the Spokane area and has stage managed for regional theatres across the nation, with local Seattle credits at Book-It Repertory and Balagan Theatre. Most recently she spent several years as the production stage manager of Forward Theater Company in Madison, WI before moving back "home" to Seattle where she currently works as Production Coordinator at Seattle Children's Theatre. She shares her home with her favorite spaniels Ruby & Yoshi, and her favorite person, Tony. She is a proud member of Actors' Equity Association but an even prouder alumna of Washington State University.

**KAREN LUND** (*Director*) serves as Taproot's Associate Artistic Director. Her most recent work includes, *Bright Star*, *Always... Patsy Cline*, the world premiere musical *Persuasion*, *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley*, *Sweet Land*, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *A Civil War Christmas*, *Room Service*, *Silent Sky*, *Godspell* and *The Explorers Club*. She is the past president of the board of directors for Theatre Puget Sound, a member of the Stage Directors & Choreographers Union (SDC), a professional voice over artist and the recipient of numerous theatre and film directing awards including three Tellys. Karen thanks her amazing family Mark, Jake and Hannah.

**MARK LUND** (*Scenic & Sound Design*) has designed over 100 shows at Taproot. Recent favorites include *Kim's Convenience*, *Sweet Land* and *Persuasion*. Other design work includes Seattle Shakes, Book-It, SFF, and award-winning short films, including sound for *Dancer By The Sea*, which premiered at SIFF and was an award-winner

at LA Shorts Film Fest. Mark is also a voice over actor including many years as Falco Lombardi in *Star Fox* for Nintendo. Love to Karen, Hannah & Jake.

**SCOTT NOLTE** (*Producing Artistic Director*) is a co-founder and the Producing Artistic Director of TTC. Over the course of 43 years, he's directed plays ranging from *The Odyssey* to *Smoke on the Mountain* and more recently *Kim's Convenience* (with David Hsieh), *We Will Not Be Silent*, *Baskerville*, *Camping with Henry and Tom*, *Relativity* and *The Trial of Ebenezer Scrooge* for TTC. He has participated in several new-play development projects, is past president of Theatre Puget Sound and is a member of the Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers. One year ago Scott hiked the Camino de Santiago in Spain: Buen Camino!

**PETE RUSH** (*Costume Design*) designs scenery and costumes for the theatre. He recently designed *Kim's Convenience* and *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley* for Taproot. Seattle designs include: ACT Theatre, 5th Avenue Theatre, Seattle Shakespeare Company, Book-It Repertory, New Century Theater Company, ArtsWest, Washington Ensemble Theatre and Seattle Public Theater. Regional: Hangar Theatre, George Street Playhouse, Berkshire Theatre Festival and Bloomsburg Theatre Ensemble.

## Necessary Sacrifices Crew

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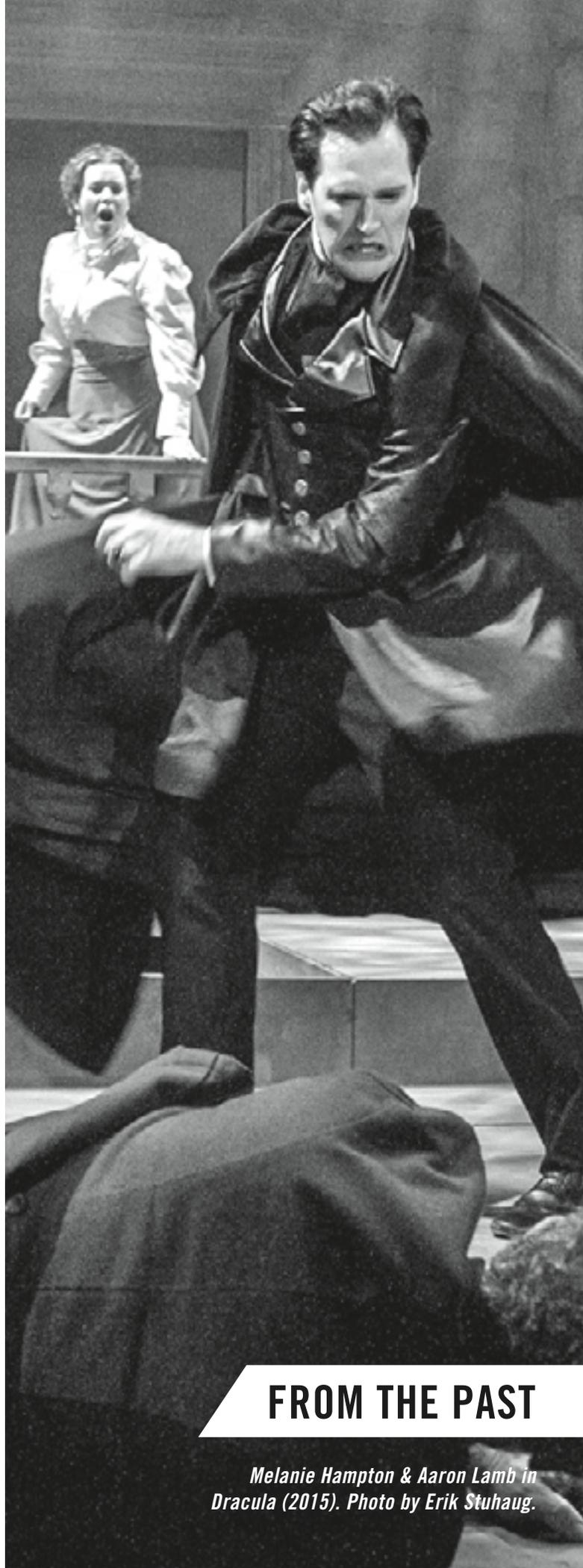
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Jacob Viramontes, Eric Wu – *Electrics Crew*



**FROM THE PAST**

*Melanie Hampton & Aaron Lamb in  
Dracula (2015). Photo by Erik Stuhaug.*

# Frederick Douglass

**BORN:** around 1818 in Talbot County, Maryland  
(Douglass himself wasn't sure of his exact birthday)

**DIED:** February 20, 1895 of heart failure at age 77

**AGE IN THE PLAY:** 45-46

## POLITICAL ACHIEVEMENTS:

Became the first black man to hold high office when he was appointed ambassador to the Dominican Republic.

Was the first African American to be nominated for vice president in 1872, though he was nominated without his knowledge or consent.

He advocated for women's rights and worked with Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony.

After the Civil War, he advocated for African Americans who fought for the Union to get the right to vote.

## WRITINGS:

*Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845)

*The North Star*, Douglass' own abolitionist newspaper (1847)

*My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855)

*The Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (1881 and revised in 1892)

"The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro" was a speech delivered in 1852 and later distributed as a pamphlet.

## FAMOUS QUOTE:

"If there is no struggle, there is no progress."

## INTERESTING FACT:

Late in life, Douglass wrote and thought in a one-room cabin he called his "growlery." The name likely references *Bleak House* by Charles Dickens; in the book, John Jarndyce uses the small library next to his bedroom as a place of refuge.

Lamar Legend as Frederick Douglass  
and Ted Rooney as Abraham Lincoln

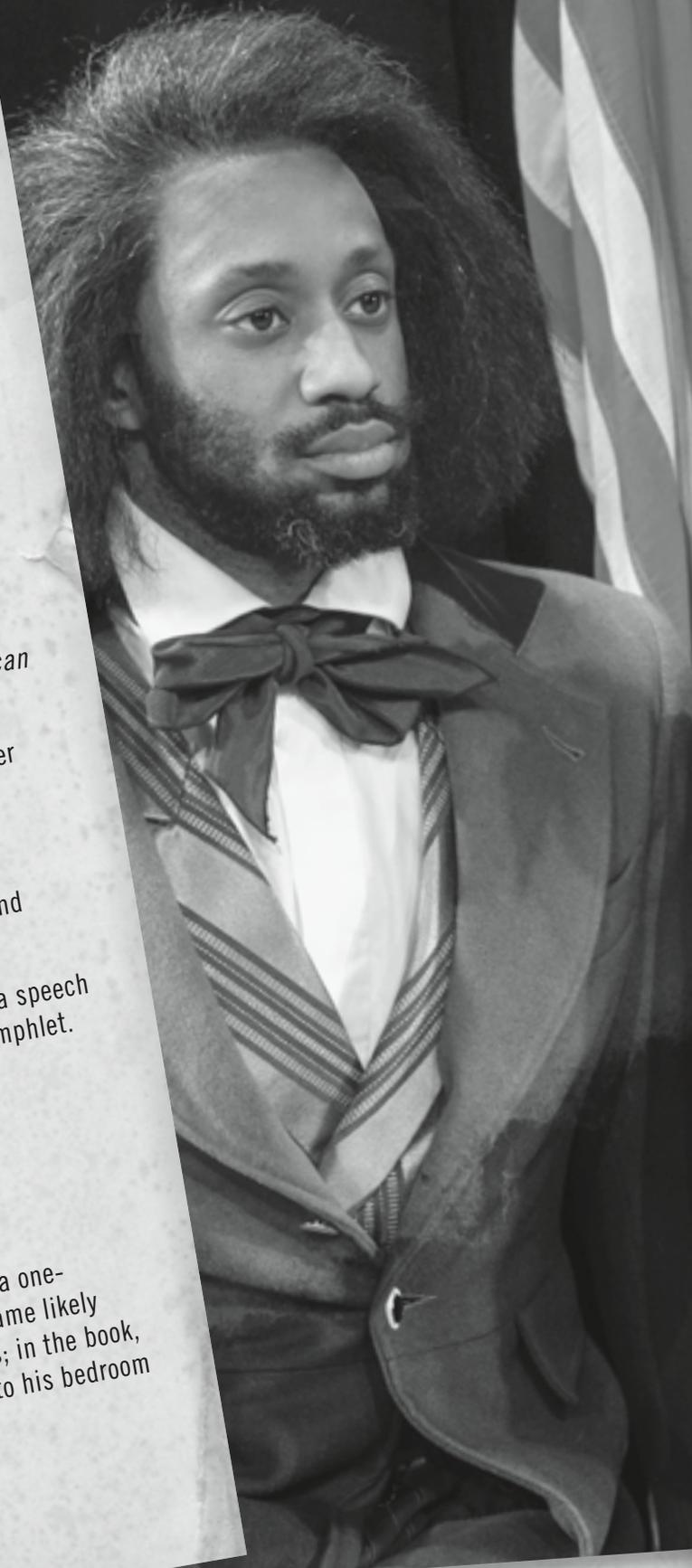




Photo by Robert Wade.

# Abraham Lincoln

**BORN:** February 12, 1809 in Hodgenville, Kentucky

**DIED:** April 15, 1865 from a gunshot to the head at age 56

**AGE IN THE PLAY:** 54-55

## **POLITICAL ACHIEVEMENTS:**

Led the U.S. to defeat the Confederacy during the Civil War.

Issued the Emancipation Proclamation, which eventually led to abolishing slavery in the U.S.

Established the United States Department of Agriculture.

Signed the National Currency Act, which became the National Bank Act after substantial amendments.

Issued the Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction which was a plan for the reunification of the U.S.

## **WRITINGS:**

“House Divided Speech” (1858)

“Farewell Address” (1861)

“The Gettysburg Address” (1863)

“Second Inaugural Address” (1865)

## **FAMOUS QUOTE:**

“You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today.”

## **INTERESTING FACT:**

He’s the only president to have a patent! Lincoln invented a device to free steamboats that had run aground.

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*In the Isaac Studio Theatre*



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Taproot Theatre Company is a professional, non-profit theatre with a multifaceted production program. Founded in 1976, TTC serves the Pacific Northwest with touring productions, Jewell Mainstage and Isaac Studio Theatre productions and the Acting Studio. Taproot is a member of Theatre Communications Group (TCG), Theatre Puget Sound (TPS) and the Phinney Neighborhood Association.

*Taproot Theatre Company creates theatre experiences to brighten the spirit, engage the mind and deepen the understanding of the world around us while inspiring imagination, conversation and hope.*

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**Josh Krupke** - Marketing & Development Associate

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## DRAMATURG DISPLAY

Visit the Jewell Mainstage upper lobby to view a display with additional information relating to the current production on the Jewell Mainstage.

## ASSISTED LISTENING DEVICES

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If you have lost an item, check with the Box Office in person or by phone at 206.781.9707. If you find a lost item, please give it to the House Manager or Box Office staff. Unclaimed lost & found items may be donated to a thrift store at the discretion of management.

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The touring cast of Broadway's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* with adults playing all characters except Collin Jefferey (Charlie).

# Why Aren't Young Characters Always Played by Young Actors?

by HANNAH SCHOETTNER

When we go to see a play or musical, we expect to enter a world of suspended reality. For this reason, watching adults perform the roles of children may not register as strange in the moment. But after the show we may ask ourselves, for what purpose are adults cast in much younger roles?

The infamous teen flick/cult classic *Mean Girls* follows Cady Heron, a high school student who has recently moved from Africa to an American public high school. There she meets “the Plastics,” a group of mean girls who rule the school. Hijinks ensue. The key concepts here are not the hijinks, but the high school setting. The ringleader of the malicious Plastics, Regina George, was played by a then 25-year-old Rachel McAdams.

In the movie, the character is 16—that’s a nine-year age difference. In the warp speed of puberty, that’s a “totally bogus” gap.

Huge age gaps between actors and the characters they play isn’t an isolated trend—think of almost any smash hit starring teens and the actors will be in their twenties, occasionally even pushing 30. These casting age gaps are in no way exclusive to TV and movies. Kids and teens are everywhere

in the media, be it on the silver screen or live on stage. And across genres, the casting age gap is startlingly prevalent. There are some obvious reasons for this—teenagers are often gangly and awkward, and by casting people in their mid- or late twenties, the acne and braces can be edited out without any post-production or makeup department headaches.

But there are also some troubling implications—for one, age dissonance in casting can set a standard of beauty that is nigh impossible for many teens to achieve, which can contribute to long-term issues with body image and/or self esteem for the kids in the audience. Also, there’s the chance that the age gap can impact the ability of an actor to capture the youth experience



The cast of the original Broadway production of *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, which was also a full cast of adults playing the grade school characters.

accurately—if older bodies are playing younger people, the chance for an actor to play a role in telling their own story is lost.

A lot of a character's impact, however, depends on the actor. Brynn Williams, a Broadway actress who starred as Sandy in *Spongebob Squarepants: The Musical*, is currently touring the country with Broadway's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. She plays Violet Beauregarde, a bratty twelve-year-old with a penchant for blowing bubblegum and spitting snark. Williams said that in taking on her role as Violet, she not only alters her speech patterns and energy, but even the small details—like the way she's standing—in order to accurately capture the essence of a kid. "The Golden Ticket winners have qualities that transcend age . . . who are very prideful or very greedy," she stated. "What we [actors] do is we take that energy and put it in a kid form."

In this role, Williams felt that having a child played by an adult actor is beneficial. "People are more forgiving of kids," she said. "If a kid is being nasty, there's a little more tolerance that goes along with it. If [the Golden Ticket winners] are played by adults, it really zeros in on how this isn't okay behavior."

Arika Matoba, who will play Marcy Park in Village Theatre's upcoming production of *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, had similar feelings. In *Spelling*

*Bee*, Marcy is a grade schooler. "Anyone, at any age, can play those child-like characteristics," Matoba said. "A lot of us feel like kids sometimes . . . if you can tap into that, then it doesn't really matter what age you are." While she acknowledged that the casting of older people as younger characters can impact audience perception, she felt that "everyone knows that you're not a kid, but they're there with you for that hour and a half of the show."

In theatre, one must check a certain amount of realism and disbelief at the door to engage with the medium, so adults taking on bite-sized roles can be considered along as part of that. However, it does raise the question—why are adults cast in these roles in the first place?

Brandon Ivie, the director of the upcoming *Spelling Bee*, felt that he needed people who could "play child-like characters...but still keep it grounded in some kind of reality." He said that he treats casting the child roles just like any other, and that to cast somebody who couldn't take the role of a kid seriously would damage the production's credibility as a whole. When asked what he was looking for in casting the show, Ivie said, "adults that have a youthful energy to them, a joy, an optimism, without being caricaturish or juvenile or . . . treating the material and characters as 'lesser than.'"

Ivie also pointed out an unfortunate stigma in theatre, especially musical theatre, against productions that feature predominantly young actors. It's different than in TV or film, where there are a variety of critically acclaimed shows featuring young actors—think *Stranger Things*. But on stage, it's different. For one thing, "as soon as you see a kid on stage, you think about *Annie*," Ivie said. As well as other associations to "cheesy, corny musical theatre." These stigmas color the casting decisions made in shows, as productions that feature kids are categorized as "family shows" or pieces of fluff, rather than being treated as valid, respectable productions.

But every production is different. In *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, for example, the role of Charlie is played by age-appropriate actors—three of them, in fact, all of whom play the role on different nights. Williams said the age dissonance between the casting of Charlie and the other kids in the play helps to emphasize the good qualities possessed by Charlie, which are often associated with kids in general—innocence, goodness and a sense of wonder. The casting also serves to contrast those good things with the negative quirks and traits of the other kids, who are all, in their own unique and terrible way, bratty, spoiled and generally rotten. Also, Williams said the age gap among the actors helps to amp

up and emphasize Charlie's cuteness factor. So in this case, there are young actors involved in a production largely populated by young characters, but the kids are cast deliberately, with awareness of the impact that the age gap in casting can have on the audience.

Given that theatre is a medium inherently reliant on a suspension of disbelief, the casting of adults in these young roles, when done with thought and care, can actually have a positive impact on the production. It's important to acknowledge that there can be harmful impacts to age dissonance in casting—it all depends on the needs of an individual show and role. So next time you see a kiddo or a teen played by somebody clearly pushing 30, think carefully before you chuckle—is this casting beneficial to the production? Is there a reason a kid isn't up there? The casting dissonance is probably an intentional decision, so ask yourself—does the casting work for the show? If it does, maybe the whole thing isn't "totally bogus" after all. ■

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**Hannah Schoettmer** is a senior at Interlochen Arts Academy. She is the founder and editor-in-chief of Butcher Papers, a youth-focused literary magazine, which can be found online at [butcherpapers.org](http://butcherpapers.org). She is also an active writer and participates in several other arts-centered activities around the city of Seattle.

This article was written on special assignment for Encore Stages through the TeenTix Press Corps, a program that promotes critical thinking, communication and information literacy through criticism and journalism practice for teens. TeenTix is a youth empowerment and arts access non-profit.

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# Intermission Brain Transmission

Why stare at your phone for the hundredth time today when you could treat your brain to this scintillating trivia quiz. Better yet, send us your answer to the bonus question for a chance to win tickets to an upcoming performance.



**1** Running September 6–29 at ACT Theatre will be *People of the Book* by Seattle's own Yussef El Guindi. El Guindi has worked with ACT before, and one of his plays was awarded a prize by the American Theatre Critics Association in 2012. For which play did the ATCA reward him?

- A *Threesome*
- B *Hotter Than Egypt*
- C *The Talented Ones*
- D *Pilgrims Musa and Sheri in the New World*

**2** A stage adaptation of Jonathan Safran Foer's novel *Everything is Illuminated* will be performed by Book-It Rep September 11–October 6. Safran Foer's novel of family history was made into a film in 2005 and starred Elijah Wood and Eugene Hütz. Of which "gypsy punk" band is Hütz the front man?

- A Firewater
- B Gogol Bordello
- C Kultur Shock
- D DeVotchKa

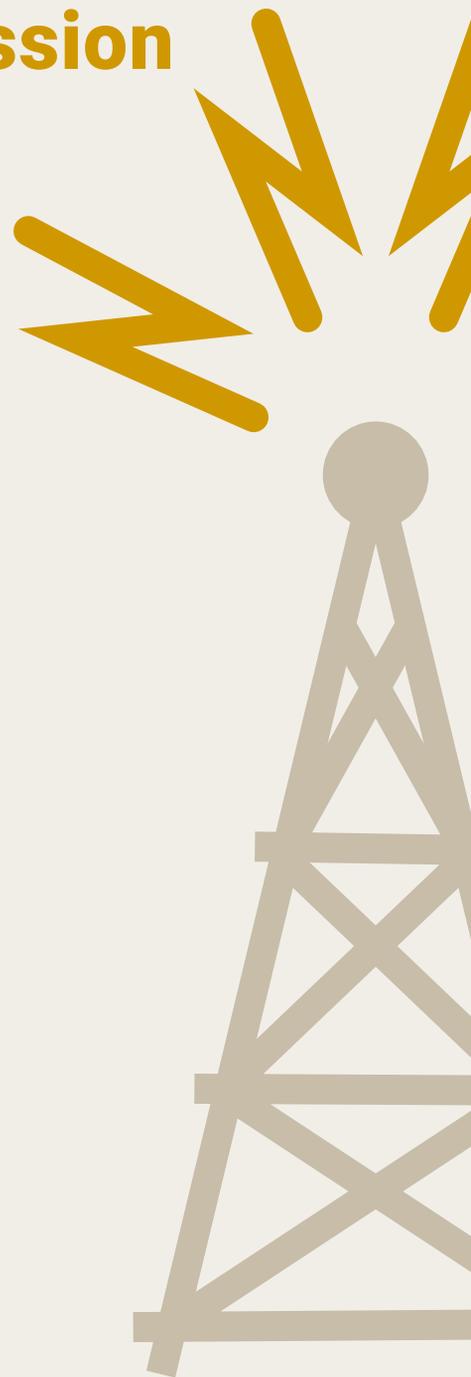
**3** *Necessary Sacrifices* will play at Taproot Theatre Company September 18 through October 26. This play depicts abolitionist, author and orator Frederick Douglass and President Abraham Lincoln as they discuss policy and strategies to win the Civil War. Lincoln was born in Kentucky. In which state was Douglass born?

- A Virginia
- B Massachusetts
- C Maryland
- D Indiana

## BONUS

**What was the last arts performance you attended that you liked best and why?**

Email your answer with "Trivia Quiz" in the subject line to [production@encoremediagroup.com](mailto:production@encoremediagroup.com) or post your answer to social media and tag @encorespotlight.



1) d—*Pilgrims Musa and Sheri in the New World*. This play about immigration and assimilation won the Harold and Mimi Steinberg/ATCA New Play Award in 2012. 2) b—Gogol Bordello. The Hütz-led band's contribution to the score, "Start Wearing Purple," became well-known. 3) c—Maryland. Born Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey in Cordova, Maryland in 1818, Douglass changed his name to escaping slavery.



# Seattle Rep Teams Up with the Community to Put on a Show

by ROSEMARY JONES

We talk to Public Works Director Angie Kamel about how Seattle Rep's Public Works program centers on the joy of theatre, and how it lives up to their motto: "theatre of, by, and for the people."

Seattle Rep's Public Works program is an ambitious attempt to create theatre relevant to communities and those within them. After successfully launching with a citywide production of *The Odyssey* in 2017, the program has provided workshops, classes and conversations about theatre. This summer, they're back to rehearsal as more than 100 community members prepare for a musical version of Shakespeare's *As You Like It* at the Bagley Wright Theater in early September.

## How did the idea for a series of community classes, dialogues and grand performance come about?

Public Works began as a program at New York's Public Theater for community-based theatre. It's certainly a lovely way for a regional

company to be involved in community. Our Artistic Director Braden Abraham was interested in this type of work for some time. He was so excited about [what New York had done] and wanted to make it happen. He and Marya Sea Kaminski kept talking about the future of Seattle Rep here. Marya was interested in a similar type of work and [began the program at the Rep]. In 2016, we held our first classes

## How does the program work for Seattle Rep and its partners?

We are looking for deep, long-term relationships with members of our community and building relationships with existing organizations. We host classes and special events throughout the year to create an appreciation of theatre-making



Angie Kamel

in general. Our partners vary. We have seven partners at the moment and some have been with us since 2016. Some of our participants, like Path with Art, create arts access for folks who are low or no income. For the acting classes at Seattle Central College, we are embedded in classes. We work with Ballard NW Senior Center, Byrd Barr Place, Jubilee Women's Center, the Boys & Girls Clubs of King County and, most recently, Compass Housing down in Redmond. At Compass we have a multigenerational group with the youngest participant being six and our oldest in her 70s.

## What are some of the ways that you spark conversation around theatre and the community?

We host a meal around every main-stage show, two potlucks a year, and find other ways to support leadership of different organizations. [One] of our goals is to build enough relationships so that we can get together in our upcoming



Rehearsal of Seattle Rep's Public Works' *The Odyssey*.

season to create cross-cultural communications and intergenerational connection—to have young people from Boys & Girls Club building relationships with Ballard NW Senior Center, for example. We want to emphasize human commonality and build ties across experiences.

**How does the performance of *As You Like It* build those relationships?**

It's deeply rooted in the values and goals of the program. Musical theatre is a great opportunity for joyful expression. This is theatre for anyone who wants to participate and creates a big, dynamic, exciting opportunity for people on the stage and in the audience. They get to exercise various aspects of their creativity. It's not only members from our workshops and partnerships. Beyond that we've opened auditions to the general public in our region who are interested in the values of the work that we are doing. There are five Equity actors in the show, a number of actors who participate in the fringe scene and a number who feel a real connection with spirit.

**There's also a bunch of community groups who will be on stage.**

A big part of what we are doing is redefining the participation of professional musicians. Regular musicians who work in musical theatre as well as a number of cameo groups or feature artists [are in the show]. We're working with a number of incredible groups like the Seattle Hand Drummers, Lucha Libre Volcánica and LQ Lion Dance. Local puppeteer Sarah Lovett is loaning one of her rainbow serpents.

**So this is a big show and a lot of work.**

It's fully costumed and with 100+ people needing costumes, our costume shop was moving full speed ahead this summer. We want everyone in the show to get the same level of respect as any artist who walks through door.

**What do the theatre professionals get out of this work?**

There are ways that we produce theatre that aren't particularly

friendly or welcoming or comforting. The pros have learned so much during the process of *The Odyssey*. A lot of folks did not necessarily know what it was going to be [until] once it happened and saw that this is how we can do things differently to support the actors, the director and crew in a really beautiful way. That's so incredibly good and valuable. Our director for *As You Like It*, Timothy McCuen Piggee, brings joy. His spirit is perfect for this work. He talks about a big part of what makes this show interesting is the bonds between family, chosen and otherwise. How it's about reconciliation, love and understanding. ■

Seattle Rep's Public Works' *As You Like It* will play at the Bagley Wright Theater September 6–8.

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*Rosemary Jones* has written about arts and culture in the Pacific Northwest for the *Cornish Magazine*, *Capitol Hill Times*, *Encore*, *Examiner.com* and others. Additional work can be seen at [rosemaryjones.com](http://rosemaryjones.com).

Cellist Daniel Müller Schott performing at Seattle Symphony September 26–29.

## Upcoming Events

Explore a full-season performing arts calendar at [encorespotlight.com](http://encorespotlight.com).

### People of the Book

**SEPTEMBER 6–29**  
ACT Theatre

### As You Like It

**SEPTEMBER 6–8**  
Seattle Rep

### Everything is Illuminated

**SEPTEMBER 11–OCTOBER 6**  
Book-It Repertory Theatre

### The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee

**SEPTEMBER 12–NOVEMBER 17**  
Village Theatre

### Opening Night Concert & Gala

**SEPTEMBER 14**  
Seattle Symphony

### Necessary Sacrifices

**SEPTEMBER 18–OCTOBER 26**  
Taproot Theatre Company

### Indecent

**SEPTEMBER 20–OCTOBER 26**  
Seattle Rep

### Rent

**SEPTEMBER 24–25**  
Tacoma Arts Live

### Mussorgsky Pictures at an Exhibition

**SEPTEMBER 26–29**  
Seattle Symphony

### Black Beauty

**SEPTEMBER 26–OCTOBER 27**  
Seattle Children's Theatre

### Carmina Burana & Agon

**SEPTEMBER 27–OCTOBER 6**  
Pacific Northwest Ballet

### Garrick Ohlsson

**OCTOBER 1**  
Meany Center for the Performing Arts

### Bryce Dessner's Triptych

**OCTOBER 9**  
Seattle Theatre Group

### The Tempest

**OCTOBER 15–NOVEMBER 10**  
Seattle Shakespeare Company



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