

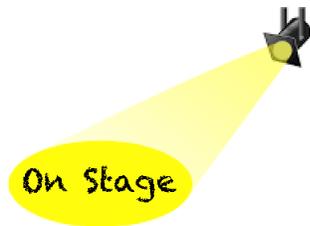
On Stage: Creating a Community Dialogue Around Live Theater

An Octoroon

Mixed Blood Theatre, October 16 – November 15, 2015

Created by: Lucas Erickson

Fiscal Sponsor: Project SUCCESS



On Stage: Creating a Community Dialogue Around Live Theater

Mission: To make local theater relevant to younger and non-traditional audiences and to lay the groundwork for building future theater audiences

“On Stage” raises awareness of the theater offerings in the Twin Cities to academic classes and groups. It brings local actors to Twin Cities college classrooms and community settings to read scenes from a play in current local production. Participants then engage in a lively discussion of the play’s themes, tying in current events, personal values and narratives to stimulate critical thinking. Subsequently attending the full play is encouraged.

ON STAGE: An Octoroon – Discussion Schedule

1. St Thomas University- SOCI 251- Race and Ethnicity; Buffy Smith; 18 Students.

Monday, October 26th, 12:15-1:15PM

- Race and ethnicity as significant components of U.S. social structure; the cognitive and normative aspects of culture which maintain and effect varying manifestations of social distance, tension, prejudice and discrimination between majority and minorities at both micro and macro levels, nationally and internationally. We will talk about identity issues and about how race is a social construct. We will discuss the debate about American Indian Mascots.

2. St Catherine University- The Reflective Woman; Jane Carroll; 80 Students.

Monday, November 2nd, 1:35-2:35PM

- The Reflective Woman (TRW) sets the tone for a St. Kate's liberal arts education. Taken by all new students in the College for Women, this discussion-based and writing intensive course develops academic skills using various frameworks from liberal arts traditions and emphasizes critical thinking, effective communication and cultural analysis. This common experience facilitates the building of community among varied social, cultural, linguistic and economic situations. The class will have already read the novel *Jubilee* by Margaret Walker and will have compared its account of slavery and southern society with the account portrayed in the film "Gone With the Wind." Also, we will be discussing issues of gender, race and identity in society today as part of the course, so "Octoroon" fits well with the major themes of the course.

3. U of M- SOC 3211- American Race Relations; Enid Logan; 51 Students.

Wednesday, November 4th, 1:15-2:15PM

- This course is designed to provide students with an understanding of the contours of race in the post-civil rights era United States. This course will focus on race relations in today's society with a historical overview of the experiences of various racial and ethnic groups in order to help explain their present-day social status. The class will also class consider the future of race relations in the U.S. and evaluate remedies to racial inequality. Topics include: "Multiracial in America," "Coming Out As Biracial," "He's Black, Get Over It," (on Barack Obama) "Half Asian"? 'Half White'? No - 'Hapa,'" "Discovering Racial Borders," "Selling Mixedness: Marketing with Multiracial Identities."

4. East Side Freedom Library- St Paul; Peter Rachleff; 15 Community Audience Members.

Wednesday, November 4th, 7:00-8:00PM

NOTE: This is the only one that is not in a college. I wanted to experiment with a community audience.

- The ESFL's mission is to preserve and promote knowledge about the East Side – its history, residents and institutions – through educational collections and programs. The library will house non-circulating research collections that appeal to interested general learners as well as scholars, with innovative databases and finding aids that make using the collections fun and vital. Story is a major theme of the ESFL, and the telling and gathering of stories, through formal interviews, workshops, and small-scale public performances, will allow local residents and interested publics to learn more about the work and residential histories of the East Side. It is a center for resources and programs engaging labor, immigration, and African American history.

5. U of M- AFRO 3866- The Civil Rights and Black Power Movement; Peter Rachleff; 32 Students.

Thursday, November 5th, 6:00-7:00PM

- Modern black civil rights struggle in the U.S., i.e., the second reconstruction. Failure of reconstruction, abdication of black civil rights in 19th century. Assault on white supremacy via courts, state, and grass roots southern movement in 1950s and 1960s. Black struggle in north and west. New emphasis on Black Power, by new organizations. Ascendancy of Ronald Reagan, conservative assault on the movement.

ON STAGE: *An Octoroon* – Total Tickets Purchased

Total Participants: 196

St Catherine University- 50 tickets

University of Minnesota- 18 tickets

University of Minnesota Group- 17 tickets

University of Minnesota Group- 12 tickets

University of Minnesota Group- 18 tickets

Total Tickets Purchased: 115

Note: The total tickets purchased was confirmed by the Mixed Blood Theatre Box Office.

ON STAGE: *An Octoroon* – Discussion Agenda

We start the discussions with BJJ monologue (read by **JuCoby**), starting from “I believe a good part of being a good artist,” and ending at “And by break, I mean a production.”

Then **Lucas** will step in and welcome everyone, thank the teacher/sponsor, say why we are there, ask who has seen play/been to mixed blood, and pass it off to the actors to introduce themselves based on 3 questions: name, why you are here, and something most people don't know about you.

Thomasina can then talk briefly about the play (then maybe popcorn for people to yell out a word they felt when they saw the play- this will only work for the people that saw the play), **JuCoby** will talk briefly about Brandon Jacobs-Jenkins, and **Stuart** will talk briefly about Dion Boucicault, the context for the BJJ scene that was just read, and segway into the next scene.

The scene with George (read by **JuCoby**) and Zoe (read by **Thomasina**) (*traditional language/style*), starting from “Poor child! She must be so sad now, thinking she'll have nowhere to go,” and ending at “Ah, George, my race has at least one virtue- it knows how to suffer...”

Discussion follows. What did you notice about the style of the language in this scene versus the BJJ scene? What social codes are at play? Do we have social codes now? For example, who can you bring home to dinner? Why? What does it mean to see a black actor play a white man who is rejected by a woman who says she's too black? What's being 'sent up' here?

Segway into next scene (**Stuart**). (30/35 minutes into class)

The final scene is between Dido (read by **Austene**) and Minnie (read by **Thomasina**) (*modern language/style*) starting at “Girl, who was that?” and ending at... “I know. I just don't know what I'm supposed to do with that.”

Discussion follows. Why did I laugh at that? How does BJJ use humor to reveal truth? What stereotypes were at play in the George/Zoe scene? Are Minnie and Dido stereotypes/caricatures? Which ones are more relatable/human to you? What are their lives like? How do they see the world vs how do the white characters see the world? ... What is BJJ trying to accomplish with this play? ... What does progress look like?

Final questions?

End.

ON STAGE: An Octoroon – Feedback

Dear Lucas,

Thank you so much for making your program available to participants at my community-based project in Saint Paul, the East Side Freedom Library, and to my University of Minnesota students ("The Civil Rights and Black Power Movement"). I feel very fortunate to have popped up in your contact list, and I hope to be able to take advantage of Project SUCCESS programs in the future.

In both settings, the presentation worked beautifully. The actors not only read parts of the script as if they were the people who would be on stage, but they contextualized the play very effectively. And, more, they responded to questions and engaged both audiences in conversations which stimulated imaginations.

At the Freedom Library, adult participants were clearly intrigued by the very premise of the play, and they were drawn in by the commitment the actors made to the text. While some of the people present were meeting each other, and the actors, for the first time, they were put at ease and encouraged to speak their minds. The actors set a wonderful tone for the evening's discussion, a difficult yet honest discussion. I know that several of the people present, myself included, have plans to see the Mixed Blood production.

In my University of Minnesota class, the script and the actors provoked me and the students to build on the work we have already done together, but to go deeper, to consider new dimensions of the inner workings of racism and the complexities of challenging it. When you all left, I put aside my lecture notes for the evening, and we spent an hour and a half building on the foundation you had built. That is, we asked what the play said to us about "the politics of representation" and we explored the ways that the civil rights and black power movement had put forward a "politics of representation" (or multiple politics) which generated individual and social change. Or not. It was a great discussion.

I know that a number of the University students will be attending the Mixed Blood production. I require them to attend one cultural event off campus in each half of the semester, and to write analytical papers about their experiences, papers which tie the cultural event to the themes and issues of the course. This was such a good fit that I expect to be reading many papers about "An Octoroon." Not such a bad thing, at all.

I feel so fortunate that we connected. All three actors were clearly committed to the project, and they interacted effectively with my audiences. Thank you so much.

What's next?

Love and Solidarity,

Peter Rachleff

Executive Director, East Side Freedom Library

Visiting Professor, African and African American Studies, U of M

ON STAGE: An Octoroon – Feedback (continued)

Dear Lucas,

The students connected to the play because we talked about it again today. Our lesson this week is understanding the social, political, and economic factors that contributed to the enslavement of Africans. Several students made reference to the play when we talked about the limited status of free Blacks.

My only suggestion for the future is to maybe get the students involved with the discussion first by calling on them one at a time. Otherwise, I think the discussion and reading were wonderful.

*Buffy Smith, Ph.D.
University of St. Thomas*

Hi Lucas;

I thought the visit went very well, and the actors had very interesting things to say about the play and their characters. Many of the students, especially those unfamiliar with theater and acting, found what the actors had to say very illuminating. The visit also got the students excited about going to see the full performance of the play. These were first year college students and many of them have had little experience with the theater, so it was a good introduction to thinking about how to critically analyze a play and performance.

I would definitely invite you back again to visit my own history classes in the future when plays connect to the course materials.

*Jane Carroll, Ph.D.
St. Catherine University*

Lucas,

It was an honor and a pleasure being a part of this process. Lucas did a great job coordinating meetings and talks in the colleges we attended. He made sure the team was equipped with information about the demographics, body and subjects of the classes we would be reading for and talking with. He handled the team, students and subject matter with respect, professionalism and care.

*Austene Van
On Stage Teaching Artist*

ON STAGE: *An Octoroon* – Sample Contract

PROJECT CONTRACT *On Stage: Creating a Community Dialogue Around Live Theater*

This Agreement is made effective as of 10/23/2015 by and between **On Stage**, and the following individual (“Actor”)

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE NUMBER: _____

EMAIL: _____

- DESCRIPTION OF SERVICES AND PAYMENT.** Actor will receive compensation for providing the following services/expenses including but not limited to: *5 discussions (\$500), 3 planning meetings (\$150), facilitator prep time (\$150), and parking expenses (\$20).*
- TOTAL PAYMENT.** On Stage will pay total compensation for services in the amount of **\$820**. Payment will be sent directly to the Actor from Project SUCCESS (On Stage’s Fiscal Sponsor) at the address listed above at a date postmarked on or before 11/19/2015.
- SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER.** A valid SSN is required for all payments. - -
- TERM/TERMINATION.** This Agreement shall terminate automatically on **11/19/2015**.
- RELATIONSHIP OF PARTIES.** It is understood by the parties that the Actor is an independent contractor with respect to On Stage, and not an employee or contractor of Project SUCCESS.
- WORK PRODUCT OWNERSHIP.** Any copyrightable works, ideas, discoveries, inventions, patents, products, or other information (collectively, the “Work Product”) developed in whole or in part in connection with the Services Rendered shall be the exclusive property of On Stage.
- NAME AND LIKENESS.** Actor agrees to allow On Stage and Project SUCCESS full use of their name, likeness, voice, testimonial, and/or portrayal in whole or in part, severally or in conjunction with other material, for any documentation and marketing purposes.
- ENTIRE AGREEMENT.** This Agreement contains the entire agreement of the parties, and there are no other promises or conditions in any other agreement whether oral or written.
- SEVERABILITY.** If any provision of this Agreement shall be held to be invalid or unenforceable for any reason, the remaining provisions shall continue to be valid and enforceable. If a court finds that any provision of this Agreement is invalid or unenforceable, but that by limiting such provision it would become valid and enforceable, then such provision shall be deemed to be written, construed, and enforced as so limited.
- APPLICABLE LAW.** This Agreement shall be governed by the laws of the State of Minnesota.

This Project Contract is executed and agreed to by:

ACTOR

(Printed Name) _____

(Date Signed) _____

(Signature) _____

ON STAGE

(Printed Name) _____

(Date Signed) _____

(Signature) _____

ON STAGE: *An Octoroon* – Marketing



The East Side Freedom Library Welcomes:

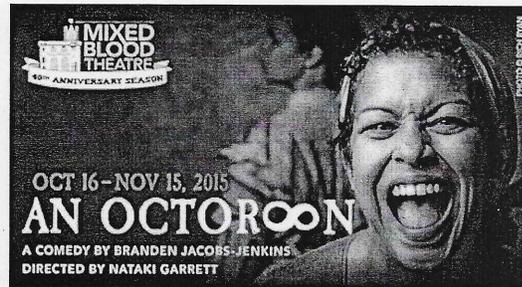
Mixed Blood Theater in Minneapolis is producing "An Octoroon".

Wednesday Evening, November 4th @ 7PM

1105 Greenbrier Street St. Paul, MN

info@eastsidefreedomlibrary.org and 651-774-8687

Free and open to all!



Join us Wednesday, November 4, at 7:00 PM for a special dialogue based around themes and issues in *An Octoroon*, a new play at Mixed Blood Theater in Minneapolis. The playwright takes as his source material the infamous 19th century melodrama *The Octoroon* about an illicit interracial love affair between a slave and her master. This new play turns the story into a hilarious, disturbing whirlwind which places the antebellum South in a conversation with our present day American selves.

This program is presented by Project SUCCESS, a nonprofit organization that uses theater to look at real-life issues. Reading and discussing the play's text will be two prominent actors, Thomasina Petrus and Austene Van, and Guthrie Theater/ U of M Theater BFA JuCoby Johnson.

ON STAGE: *An Octoroon* – Photos



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ON STAGE: *An Octoroon* – Photos



The Need For A Younger Theater Audience

NEA 2012 Survey: The Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (SPPA) is the largest and most comprehensive survey of U.S. arts participation, with a total sample size exceeding 37,000 adults, ages 18 and over.

- Adults who attended performing arts or visited museums as children were three to four times as likely to see shows or visit museums as adults. Exposure to the arts in childhood turns out to be a stronger predictor of adult arts participation than education, gender, age, or income.
- Technology is a great enabler of arts creation and participation. In 2012, nearly three-quarters of American adults—about 167 million people—used electronic media to view or listen to art.
- 12.3 percent of adults in 2002 said they had attended a non-musical play in the past year; only 8.3 percent of adults in 2012 could say the same.
- The average age of those attending classical music performances, the ballet, jazz concerts and plays is increasing. This is not just because the median age of the general population is creeping up as well; it is the result of one generation of audience members not being adequately replaced by the next.
- The average age of the theatergoer for touring Broadway is 52 (according to The Broadway League).

June 17, 2012, Boston Globe:

“The Boston area is home to an estimated 250,000 college students from September to June. In other words, there is a huge population of 18-to-22-year-olds at more than 65 colleges and universities, quite a few of whom are eager, even desperate, for something to do off-campus on the weekends. Many who go to college here settle down in the area after graduation; they are the logical foundation of Boston theater’s future. So, theoretically, Boston should be the perfect laboratory for experiments in how to attract young adults to the theater, right? ... Intellectual curiosity and a spirit of cultural adventure are, or should be, cornerstones of higher education” (Don Aucoin).