

DIRECTORS NOTES

MY PEOPLE MY PEOPLE is the kind of project for which I need a year. I would love to work closely with a team of scenic designers, a musical director and choreographer, and a couple of script writers who would attend many of the collaborative workshops held with the performers. We would all travel together first to Harlem, and then to Paris; to walk the streets, to visit the neighborhoods, to experience firsthand where these historical figures lived and worked. Wouldn't that be fabulous? Don't get me wrong, the marvelous experience I am having here at the University with this group of gifted graduate students has been the best kind of theatrework there is...it's just that for a project this exciting, I would love to create the most optimal kind of environment to enable our imaginations to be completely served creatively. I want the world for MY PEOPLE MY PEOPLE. Here at least we are able to share with you the earliest fruit of our labour.

I cast the ensemble first, choosing the historical characters we would focus on after I began to understand the strengths, interests, and physicalities of the actors. We worked together to study the worlds and minds of Duke Ellington, Djuna Barnes and Bessie Smith and the others; delving into the writing and the politics of the time. Scenework began to emerge as we imagined alliances between the people, both conceivable and unlikely, and as we allowed the language of the stories and poetry we were unearthing to be contextualized. We needed to focus on the separate worlds of Paris and Harlem; culturally so distinct. But equally as vital was to discover the connective tissues between the worlds---ideas about sexuality, the economics of living as an artist and renegade, revolutionary notions about form and aesthetics, challenging cultural norms about race---these "common grounds" make me passionate about the era and convince me that something was happening cosmically throughout the planet during the late 1920's that changed ideas about art for the rest of the 20th century. This is why I want to make theatre about those times and those people. I guess I feel that they are my people.

Now that we are on the threshold of the new millennium, I can understand more fully the enormous contribution that the artists and writers of the 1920's have made. I mourn the lives and careers that were cut short by racism, sexism, poverty, or neglect. I grieve for Alice B. Toklas, cruelly mistreated by the Stein family after Gertrude's early death from cancer. I rage against black and white america for closing their eyes to the genius of Zora Neale Hurston, Nella Larsen, and others allowing their writing to lie fallow until ghosts demanded just rewards. But I glory in the legacy left behind, and am grateful that I am part of a generation of artists who are rediscovering their brilliant work.

Enormous kudos and thanks are due to the cast of actors/collaborators; I salute their artistry and investment, and hope that they can feel ownership over what we have created. The excellent assistance of Jude Domski made much of my work possible, and greatly enhanced the development of the script. The stage management team of Sam, Tikka and Angie was tireless and patient with the changing needs of both the project and the demanding director. Thanks to all of you. Thanks to Sarah and Steve for bringing me onboard to let me experiment with this kind of approach to making new work for the theatre. I hope we are all proud of the work you see tonight, even in its infancy of development. I hope there will be many projects of this nature to follow here at the U.W.

For tonight, enjoy.

— Susan Finque

SCHOOL OF DRAMA

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Sarah Nash Gates

FACULTY

Professors: Robert Dahlstrom, Steve Pearson, Barry Witham

Associate Professors: Robyn Hunt, William Forrester

Assistant Professors: Sarah Bryant-Bertail, Valerie Curtis-Newton,

Mary Louise Geiger, Odai Johnson, Shanga Parker

Senior Lecturers: Mark Harrison, Mark Jenkins

Lecturers: Tom Burke, Judith Shahn, Deborah Trout

PART-TIME FACULTY

Geoff Alm, Scott Hafso, Catherine Madden,

Karen Omahen, Stephanie Skura, Scott Weldin

RETIRED, EMERITUS FACULTY AND FORMER PROGRAM HEADS

John Ashby Conway*, Jack Clay, Betty Comtois, James Crider, Alanson

B. Davis, Gregory Falls*, Vanick Galstaun, Robert Gray, Agnes Haaga,

Donal (Dan) Harrington*, Robert Hobbs,

Paul Hostetler, Glenn Hughes*, Robert Loper, Warren Lounsbury*,

Michael Quinn*, Duncan Ross*, Geraldine Siks, Jack Sydow,

Aurora Valentinetti, Jack Wolcott

STAFF

Kris Bain, *marketing and pr manager*

Bob Boehler, *stage technician*

Nacho Bravo, *master electrician*

Malcolm Brown, *stage technician*

Sue Bruns, *office assistant*

Alex Danilchik, *stage technician*

Josie Gardner, *costume shop manager*

Arlene Hamilton, *administrator*

Kathy Holliday, *advisor*

Dorothy Kerst, *graduate programs*

Laurie L. Kurutz, *costumer*

Cecile Kummerer, *computer technician*

Scott Perkins, *fiscal technician*

Anne Stewart, *general manager*

Joanne Tall, *secretary*

Rebecca Traber, *office assistant*

Alan Weldin, *scene shop manager*

Nanci Vaeth, *costumer*

* Deceased

my people my people harlem/paris 1927

A Workshop performance drawn from the writers of the era



Hutchinson Hall
February 9-14, 1999

Scenes

1927
Ensemble

Biographies
Ensemble

Left Bank
Ensemble

Chez Natalie
Djuna & Janet

Patronage
Zora

Harlem Explosion
Ensemble

Music Is My Mistress
Bessie & Duke

Zora's Travels
Zora

Harlem Intellectuals
Ensemble

Paris & Food
Ensemble

27 rue de Fleurus
Alice & Carl

Duke & James Joyce Jam
Duke & James

~ A ten minute intermission ~

Legends
James

Shakespeare & Company
Sylvia, Alice & James

For A Poet
Countee

NH
Countee, Zora & Carl

Madness
Zelda & Djuna

Nobody Knows You
Bessie

Eulogies

Epilogue

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CONCIEVED AND DIRECTED BY SUSAN FINQUE

IN COLLABORATION WITH THE ENSEMBLE

KATHLEEN CLARKE *Djuna Barnes*

MARY ASHLEY *Sylvia Beach*

NEIL DAWSON *Countee Cullen*

MATT ORDUNA *Duke Ellington*

SAFFRON HENKE *Zelda Fitzgerald*

MOLLY HALL *Janet Flanner*

DAWN FRANCES ROBERSON *Zora Neale Hurston*

CHRIS HUTCHINSON *James Joyce*

ROBYNE WALKER *Bessie Smith*

KIMBERLY ATKINSON *Alice B. Toklas*

BILL SMARTT *Carl Van Vechten*

FEATURED GUESTS *Ron Gross & Christine Hansen*

Suggested Reading:

Paris Was A Woman by Andrea Weiss.

The Harlem Renaissance by Steven Watson.

PRODUCTION CREDITS

STAGE MANAGER *Sam Lai*

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGERS *Tikka Sears & Angie Tyler*

LIGHTING DESIGN *Stacey Roberts*

SOUND ENGINEER *Matt Taufsaasu*

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR *Jude Domski*

PROP MASTER *Alex Danilchik*

LIGHT BOARD OP *Connor Duffy*

SOUND BOARD OP *Miranda Fairbrook*

RUNNING CREW
*Molly Boettcher, Kelly Conway,
Elizabeth Grant, Becky Huddleson,
Rachel Kerwin, Julie Frederickson,
Anna Martin, Haley Ostrander,
Craig Welzbacher*

PRODUCTION OFFICE *James Aitken, Jude Domski*

HOUSE MANAGEMENT *Michael Thompson*

TICKETS *Production Office*

"Sometimes then each one is a whole one to me. Sometimes then each one has a whole history of each one for me. Everything they do then in living is clear then to me, their living, loving, eating, pleasing, smoking, scolding, drinking, dancing, thinking, working, walking, talking, laughing, sleeping, suffering, joking, everything in them. They are then each one a whole one inside me. Repeating of the whole of them always coming out of each one of them makes history always each one of them to me."

— Gertrude Stein