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 physicality 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. Scene work 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 americans 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, Tinka 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 Fingue

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, Shangha Parker
Senior Lecturers: Mark Harrison, Mark Jenkins
Lecturers: Tom Burke, Judith Shah, Deborah Trout

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RETIRED, EMERITUS FACULTY AND FORMER PROGRAM HEADS

STAFF
Kris Bain, marketing and pr manager
Bob Boehler, stage manager
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 Halliday, advisor
Dorothy Kerst, graduate programs
Laurie L. Kurutz, costume

Hutchinson Hall
February 9-14, 1999

mypeople mypeople
harlem/paris 1927

A Workshop performance drawn from the writers of the era
my people my people
harlem/paris 1927

CONCEIVED AND DIRECTED BY SUSAN FINQUE
IN COLLABORATION WITH THE ENSEMBLE

KATHLEEN CLARKE
MARY ASHLEY
NEIL DAWSON
MATT ORDUNA
SAFFRON HENKE
MOLLY HALL
DAWN FRANCES ROBERSON
CHRIS HUTCHINSON
ROBYNE WALKER
KIMBERLY ATKINSON
BILL SMARTT

FEATURED GUESTS
Ron Gross & Christine Hansen

Suggested Reading:
Paris Was A Woman by Andrea Weiss.
The Harlem Renaissance by Steven Watson.

STAGE MANAGER
Sam Lai

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGERS
Tikka Sears & Angie Tyler

LIGHTING DESIGN
Stacey Roberts

SOUND ENGINEER
Matt Vanlaanen

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
Jude Domsik

PROP MASTER
Alex Danelishk

LIGHT BOARD Op
Connor Duffy

SOUND BOARD Op
Miranda Fairbrook

RUNNING CREW
Molly Boettcher, Kelly Connery, Elizabeth Grant, Becky Huddleston, Rachel Kerwin, Julie Frederickson, Anna Martin, Haley Ostrander, Craig Wetzelbacher

PRODUCTION OFFICE
James Aitken, Jude Domsik

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 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