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## Initiating Change, Connection, and Community

Janine Papin  
*University of Central Florida*

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INITIATING CHANGE, CONNECTION, AND COMMUNITY

by

JANINE PAPIN  
BA Ramapo College of New Jersey, 1982

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts (Musical Theatre)  
in the Department of Theatre  
in the College of Arts and Humanities  
at the University of Central Florida  
Orlando, Florida

Spring Term  
2020

Major Professor: Earl Weaver

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## ABSTRACT

Augusto Boal said *“Theatre is a form of knowledge; it should and can also be a means of transforming society. Theatre can help us build our future, rather than just waiting for it.”*

I have been a teacher in a private school setting for 27 years. In my work with students, it becomes increasingly important to me that the projects in which I engage become transformative, not only for me and my students, but for my audiences as well. Finding ways that promote awareness of social justice, both locally and globally, has become paramount. My ongoing goal is to inspire dialogue and understanding while dealing with relevant social issues. Can theater designed as a “means of transforming society” be made relevant to students I work with? Over the course of this past year, I documented some of my efforts. Through the thoughtful and careful selection of theatrical material which allowed me to explore various topics, I opened up conversations that started at the beginning of the rehearsal process and continued through, and even after, the performances. I networked with organizations connected with the chosen social issues so they could provide first-hand information to me and my students. I was able to share that information with my audience members who attended our productions. I explored different types of immersive techniques and added a pre-show experience that underlined the theme for two of my shows. My research focused on plays and musicals that dealt with pressing contemporary social issues related to each production. I explored how the shows could be staged in inventive ways to target the chosen issues. I collaborated with local organizations that were able to benefit from our efforts through

charitable donations. I was also able to tie in my professional work on the stage with this project.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## INTRODUCTION

“Brazilian artist and activist, Augusto Boal, [saw] theater as a dialogue and an opportunity to act out social change. Drawing on Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Boal developed Theater of the Oppressed out of his experimental work at the Arena Theater in Sao Paulo during the 1950s and 1960s. Boal took the theater to factories and farms throughout Brazil and developed plays around the experiences of people silenced by poverty and oppression.” (Gonzalez) This paper explores the production of five different theater pieces - four which were produced and one which was denied for production at the school where I teach. My experiences with these shows can be viewed through the lens provided by Paulo Freire, the Brazilian educator who inspired Augusto Boal’s development of the Theatre of the Oppressed:

Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) is a form of popular community-based education that uses theater as a tool for transformation. Originally developed out of Boal’s work with peasant and worker populations, it is now used all over the world for social and political activism, conflict resolution, community building, therapy, and government legislation. Inspired by the vision of Paulo Freire and his landmark treatise on education, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, T.O. invites critical thinking. It is about analyzing rather than accepting, questioning rather than giving answers. It is also about “acting” rather than just talking. In T.O., the audience is not made of spectators but “spect-actors”. Through the evocative language of theatre, everyone is invited to share their opinion on the issues at hand.” (Theatre of the Oppressed)

Paulo Freire's concept of conscientization is central to the Theatre of the Oppressed. The Freire Institute describes conscientization as "the process of developing a critical awareness of one's social reality through reflection and action." Reflection and action are equally important:

"It is not enough for people to come together in dialogue in order to gain knowledge of their social reality. They must act together upon their environment in order critically to reflect upon their reality and so transform it through further action and critical reflection"

(Concepts used by Paulo Freire)

In his book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968), Paulo Freire contrasts dialogic education with the banking form of education, where "knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing." (Concepts used by Paulo Freire) In contrast to the banking form of education, "dialogic education argues that knowledge isn't transmitted from teacher to student; instead, knowledge is co-constructed between learners through engaging in dialogues with peers, teachers, subject material and relevant situations. Knowledge is powerful, meaningful and memorable when made relevant to students' lives, and when they have the opportunity to act on it." (Dialogic Education)

The *Theatre of the Oppressed* is based on this same concept - critical thinking and exploration leads to new understanding and action. My thesis project examines my attempts to provide a transformative interpersonal experience in the process of producing plays with students in my theatre classes and students I work with extracurricularly. Prompting insights and personal reflection not only on performative processes but fostering increased social awareness and sensitivity towards relevant social issues is a key element I worked to achieve in this study.

Teaching in a predominantly wealthy suburban private school provided opportunities and constraints for me as my aim was to incorporate social awareness into our theater productions. Students' socio-economic backgrounds gave them insights into some social situations and challenges, and simultaneously limited their first-hand experiences of other socioeconomic circumstances people may face. Students frequently came to auditions with limited first-hand insights into some of the social issues portrayed in the plays. Issues of homelessness, surviving and thriving in a country devastated by hurricanes and a severe lack of education, and other socio-political factors were not topics to which many students could initially relate to.

Choosing theatrical pieces to produce that administrators, board members, parents, and students all find "acceptable" can be a challenge. It becomes even more difficult when the purpose of the production is to raise awareness and initiate social action. Working to make a "positive difference" by provoking discussion, observing relevant issues, and prompting cognitive dissonance in the course of the musicals and plays performed, allowed the shows we produced to become a medium of raising awareness of current issues of injustice and inspiring restorative actions in the audience members.

As part of my coursework for my master's degree at U.C.F., I enrolled in a class entitled "Theater for Social Change." It sparked my imagination and challenged the work that I do. My thesis work attempts to document and track some of the theatre work I engaged in over the course of a year. I chose shows that either dealt with a social or global issue or one that could be connected to an organization that provided services for those in need. I attempted to shed some light on the problem, inspire conversation and find ways that my students could help with solutions.

I wanted my work with my students to provide the following:

- Personal growth for the individual student(s)
- Development of an ensemble and a feeling of collaboration for all involved
- Awareness, discussions, and understanding of relevant social issues
- An opportunity to use Paulo Freire's idea of praxis (action/reflection): “It is not enough for people to come together in dialogue in order to gain knowledge of their social reality. They must act together upon their environment in order critically to reflect upon their reality and so transform it through further action and critical reflection” (Concepts used by Paulo Freire)
- Partnerships with local organizations

With the politically charged atmosphere we live in now, I am keenly aware that most people are quick to argue and disagree with each other. As a teacher in a private sixth through twelfth grade school, we are told to stay away from political conversations. But, in my position as a theater teacher, that is difficult to do. Augusto Boal, the Brazilian theater practitioner, political activist, and founder of *Theatre of the Oppressed*, maintains that theater is always political. I believe that statement is most often, if not always, true. It can be challenging to find performance material that not only is relevant but is doable within the school setting. Some of the issues I am most concerned about are among the top hot topics that truly are dividing this country today. Gun violence is something at the top of my list, but, to my dismay, having lived through the reactions to the Pulse\* and then the Marjory Stoneman Douglass shootings,\*\* I know that is not a subject I can engage in. I am told I must respect those who do not believe in

common sense gun laws. If I raise my voice to advocate or take a visible stand, I risk offending some of our students and parents whose beliefs differ from my own. So, any actual “protest” I participate in is without my "teacher hat" on. I know theater provides a way "in" to important socially relevant discussions, so I must tread delicately trying to affect change when possible while avoiding calls that summon me to an administrator's office.

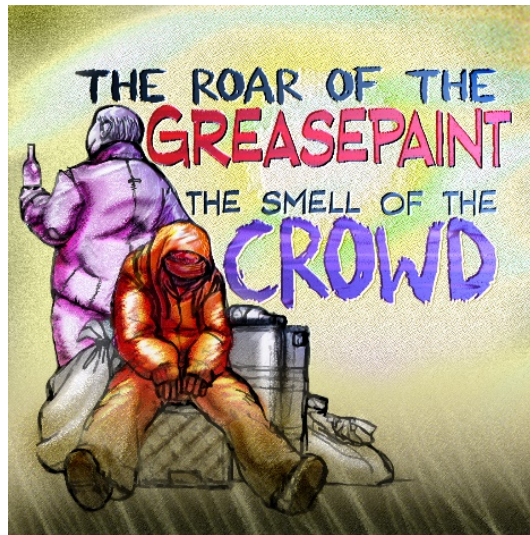
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\*Mar 30, 2018 - In one of the deadliest mass shootings in American history, Omar Mateen killed 49 people at a gay nightclub in Orlando. (New York Times)

\*\*\*“On February 14, 2018, a gunman opened fire with a semi-automatic rifle at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, killing 17 people and injuring 17 others. Witnesses identified Nikolas Cruz, a 19-year-old former student at the school, as the assailant.” (Wikipedia)

## CHAPTER ONE: THE ROAR OF THE GREASEPAINT, THE SMELL OF THE CROWD AND HOMELESSNESS

Overview of the Play: “Synopsis: The scrappy but poor Cocky routinely survives the abuse of the well-born and powerful Sir as they play the Game of Life, in Leslie Bricusse and Anthony Newley's allegorical musical.” (Playbill)



*Figure 1 Original Poster Image by Joe Rinaldi, with permission from artist*



*Figure 2 Sir and Cocky on Garbage hill, with permission by photographer, Kathleen Lightsey*



*Figure 3 The Stranger "We are all immigrants" moment, with permission by photographer, Kathleen Lightsey*



*Figure 4: Sir with props in shopping cart, with permission by photographer, Kathleen Lightsey*

### Concept

To address the following relevant social topics by reimagining *The Roar of the Greasepaint, The Smell of the Crowd*. Update where the story takes place, how the show is staged, and change a few lines to make the issues more resonant with today's society.

- Poverty
- Homelessness
- Abusive Relationships
- Stereotypes of “outsiders”

### Putting my concept into action

I staged the production in our black box theater to make it intimate and to include the audience in the location. The set was a back alley with a garbage dump that the “game” was played on. The rules of “the game” were similar to “king of the hill” with the winner reaching the “prize” at the top of the heap. Other than the garbage pile, the only other things on the set were a few boxes and some garbage cans. The garbage cans and boxes contained “garbage” props that we needed. The only other props came from the shopping cart that “Cocky” pushed “Sir” in on. Some of the songs, which are upbeat and positive, seemed incongruent with the placement of the “game.” So, I changed the context in which they are sung. The opening number “Beautiful Land” became about the books the urchins found in the garbage. I wanted to suggest that for some a “beautiful land where all your dreams come true” (“Beautiful Land” from *The Roar of the Greasepaint...*) is found not in reality but perhaps in something that can carry you

away from reality, like a book. The colors the urchins sang about were the colors of the jackets they pulled out of a Goodwill donation box.

In order to make the show experience more immersive, I created a pre-show as the audience was arriving. I based the idea on the Coalition for the Homeless “Cardboard Stories”<sup>\*</sup> that was created to break preconceived notions about the cause of homelessness. The eleven ensemble members (the “urchins”) were outside the theater building in different locations, sitting on the curb and against the building, holding signs and a donation cup as the audience members arrived. My students were the embodiment of the homeless in Central Florida. Within the show, there are two main characters, Cocky and Sir. They play a game in which Sir always has the upper hand assuring that he always will be the winner and Cocky, the loser. For my production, the game was played on a garbage heap. Within the show, Cocky often takes one step forward to be told to take two steps back as he tries to make it to his desired goal at the top of the heap. I attempted to make a visible connection for the audience between Cocky’s difficult path with the difficult path of homeless families. The journey of many homeless families is literally a one step forward and two steps back progression.

- The Central Florida Coalition for the Homeless’s campaign “Cardboard Stories” involved two team members going out on the street with handheld video cameras, a stack of spare cardboard pieces, and a set of markers. They offered homeless people a piece of cardboard and a marker, giving them a platform to tell part of their story to the community at large. The videotaped results went viral, garnering almost 5 million YouTube views and bringing Central Florida Coalition for the Homeless objectives to an even wider audience. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=THxtcWNw3QA>

I had reached out and had several conversations with professionals who work with homeless youth and families in the Central Florida Tri-county area. Pathways to Home helps families with children who are experiencing, or at imminent risk of, homelessness, to obtain stable housing. “Every child needs a safe home” is their motto. In 2018, Pathways to Home helped 337 children (128 families); and, since the program’s inception in 2009, a total of 1,122 children (426 families) have received comprehensive support. Their services include Rapid Re-housing as well as Permanent Supportive Housing. The Program Director for Pathways to Home and Director of Youth Services for CBC (Community Based Care of Central Florida) talked with me about their work and families they assist. They were able to provide two staff members to moderate talkbacks after each performance. Flyers with information about Pathways to Home were handed out by the cast members during the end of the show while the company sang the song “Sweet Beginning.” After the audience was in and seated in the theater, the “homeless” student actors came into the theater and stood quietly on our set. One by one they spoke the words that were on their signs. After each person spoke individually, they started a “round” and the intensity grew. This “round” was repeated two times. After each actor finished their second delivery of the “round,” they spoke the words “I am you” until each of the eleven were saying that line together. One by one they stopped speaking and exited the theater, leaving one person behind. When the last “I am you” was spoken, the student exited quietly, and the show began.

Pre-show script:

Lines one through 11 were spoken solo by the person holding the sign with the following words:

1. I lost it all
2. I am trying to start over
3. I got sick
4. I do have a job
5. I live in the woods
6. I go to school and no one knows I'm homeless
7. I speak 4 languages
8. I was abused
9. I was abandoned
10. I am educated
11. I live in a car

Lines 12 to 20 were spoken in a "round"

12. I am your neighbor
13. I am your classmate
14. I am your friend
15. I am your student
16. I am your teacher

17. I am your son

18. I am your daughter

19. I am your brother

20. I am you



*Figure 5 Homeless student 1, photo by author*



*Figure 6 Homeless Student 2, photo by author*



*Figure 7 Homeless Student 3, photo by author*



*Figure 8 Homeless Student Group 1, photo by author*



*Figure 9 Homeless Student Group two, photo by author*

The total that the “urchins” collected came close to \$1,000, and all proceeds went to the organization. During the talkbacks, the representatives spoke about homelessness in Central Florida. They pointed out misconceptions about homelessness and told our audience members

how they could help. Additionally, since this show was in the beginning of December, we had an angel tree. On the tree were 48 paper angels hanging from the branches. Each had a name of a homeless child and gift ideas for them for Christmas. The ages of the children ranged from newborn to teenager so the gift ideas included a wide range of things: diapers and baby toys, children's clothing, art supplies, and video games. Audience members were encouraged to take an angel and bring back presents for the children the next week. All the children represented on the tree received presents.



*Figure 10 Donated presents and “Angel Tree” for Central Florida homeless children, photo by author*

Here are the problems and issues I encountered. Not everyone was onboard with this project. I assumed that my audition notice made it clear my “take” on this show, which included information about the original production and how we would be presenting it. On the flyer it said, “Our production will bring a very different look to this older piece of musical theater. The story now takes place in a garbage dump. Relevant issues of today like homelessness and mental

health will be explored in this updated version of the story. A talk back with the audience will follow each performance.” (Complete audition announcement is included in appendix A) In my re-envisioning the script, the part of “The Negro” was changed to “The Stranger.” Other theater companies had made this change prior to me, so when I asked the licensing company, Tams-Witmark, if I could make the change, they gave me the go ahead. I removed the lines that identified the character as being Negro and substituted a few lines pulled directly from our current news. I used a few verbatim quotes made by the president of the United States, and with those added lines “The Stranger” was now a Mexican immigrant. I included a line mentioning “the wall” to keep “them out” and used these Trump words: “They’re bringing drugs. They’re bringing crime. They’re rapists.” (Donald Trump June 16, 2015) They are not our friend, believe me.” (Donald Trump Jun 16, 2017) I substituted the word “they” to “you” and Sir now had strong words to use against the stranger.

The character of the stranger comes in, and, in spite of the fact that he is an outsider, demonstrates that obstacles can be overcome, and anyone is capable of “winning.” His actions are responsible for “Cocky’s” growth and enlightenment.

Shortly after our first read through, I got wind of some students who were feeling uncomfortable with the political nature of the show, and a few were saying it was racist. I thought it was strange the focus was solely being placed on the one scene “The Stranger” was in. Some of the students engaged in conversation were not even in my cast but in another production that was also in rehearsal. I wanted to shut down the negativity, so I called a meeting for everyone in our theater department. We circled up, and I talked through my vision of the show and asked that anyone with any concerns to please speak up so I could address them. I

pointed out that theater can bring to light bad behavior but typically does not condone it. The negativity shown to “The Stranger” should be seen as objectionable, and it was clear the disdain and distrust shown to him within the scene WAS the point! It is wrong to make generalizations about anyone. I also told them that if anyone was uncomfortable with being a part of a show that had a social and political statement to please let me know and they could excuse themselves from the cast with no negative repercussions. I had double cast all the roles, and if some were to step away, it would not be a problem. A discussion followed, and I thought I had successfully dealt with everyone’s concerns. But, a few days later, I was summoned to the principal’s office. I found myself in a meeting with not one but three administrators. I was told in no uncertain terms that I could not quote President Trump. And I could not make “The Stranger” a Mexican immigrant. I told them I wanted to engage in conversation about social issues that mattered. My judgement was questioned, and I was told I needed to pick “appropriate material” for our students. They implied I could replace the show with another one, and I told them that was not at all possible at this point in time. They were also concerned about what I might say during the talkbacks which I had said would follow each show. Not understanding what a “talkback” was, they assumed that it would be a time for me to push my political agenda. I assured them that was not the case, and that a talkback was a time for the audience to ask questions of the cast or the production crew. I was hurt, angry, and became very defensive. I did learn from that experience that I must temper my reactions when questioned about my production choices.

After that meeting, I learned that one of the students who had gone to administration to complain about the show was the stage manager. I approached her a day later and asked her why she did not come to me to express her concerns. After all, I had asked all the students to express

themselves. She replied with, “We are just teenagers, we don’t want to make statements; we just want to do a fun show.” I told her I was not interested in doing shows just for fun; they had to have a purpose. I also told her it would be best for her not to be my stage manager, because she was working against me, not with me. Sadly, she declined to step away from the project, and the rest of the rehearsal process was painful. I ended up suggesting to two other students that they not be a part of the show and neither student heeded my request. I believe the students stayed, not because of a change of heart, but because of a need to be with their friends and part of a show that they knew was going to be adjudicated. Ego can play a big part of why students want to be on stage. For them, it is more about meeting their needs and less about the collective whole. Sadly, when too many students feel this way, the reasons for the project take a back seat to the self-serving needs of “hanging out with their friends” or wanting to be seen by an audience. This rehearsal process proved to be tedious and painful for me. The students that had stayed with the project, in spite of me giving them an invitation to leave, did not grow. In fact, they barely mastered their dialogue. Connections were never made on stage because they struggled with lines. A director knows that “the book” (the script) must be out of an actor’s hands to begin the work of developing a character. An actor must be present and aware of what is being given them to be able to react honestly on the stage. Even at the final dress rehearsal, the action came to a screeching halt when one of my leads could not get back on track without calling for a line.

My relationship with my stage manager student, who stayed to be around her friends, was difficult. A director relies so much on the ability of a stage manager to be their partner and to run a rehearsal with efficiency. A good stage manager makes a director’s job easier. My

relationship with this stage manager remained strained and tense. Stage managers are best when they can handle issues with a calm demeanor. Sadly, I have found that it is difficult to find students who want to take on the job of stage manager, in part because a stage manager is very easily resented by other students because of the authority they hold. Being told to “stop talking and be quiet in the wings” is enough for some students to perceive the stage manager as “the bad guy.” If at that time I had had another student willing to jump in to stage manage, that might have provided me with a solution, but I did not. This student, a senior, who also served as my Thespian president, wanted the title and the authority, and, self-admittedly, wanted to stay with her friends in the show. The fact that this particular student struggles with anxiety issues did not predispose her to handling the job of a stage manager. But being sensitive to her issues, I did not want to engage with more negativity and resentment. It would have created additional problems for me. In a private school setting, where parents are paying for their students to have opportunities, I have learned from past experience that prohibiting students from participation invites the displeasure of parents. Students complain to their parents, parents complain to administration, and I wind up in a meeting trying to justify why a student cannot do what they want to do. I had already been through meetings with administrators and did not want to create the possibility for any more.

### Results and Reflections

This was a painful process, but I did learn several lessons through the unpleasantness. My first lesson was an understanding that when doing theater that addresses a political or social issue, it is easier if the people involved in the production fully understand the concept from the start. That way you have people involved who are on the same page as you. That can be a

difficult thing to gauge, because I have students who do not always listen or comprehend even when I think I am being clear. Secondly, when defending your work, it is best if you can avoid becoming emotional. Lastly, one must find a way around the stumbling blocks in your path to create something new. Bottom line is you must remain focused and committed to your work. The stumbling blocks I ran into from my administration allowed me to think about other ways to make the statement I wanted to. I think I was successful in working around the limits that had been set about the character of the “The Stranger.” Since I was told he could not be Mexican, I made him the “everyman” or the “any man.” I gave the character a jacket that had on it every conceivable flag possible. I sewed all different countries flags as well as the pride flag onto the jacket. He now was any and every person who had ever been marginalized. Following the song “Feeling Good” that the “The Stranger” sings when he “wins the game,” the actor unzipped his jacket revealing a t-shirt with the words “We are all Immigrants” on it. My point was made without any added dialogue. I found that not every person who saw the show or was part of the show understood my concept. The more intellectual students, parents, and audience members did. What I find to be curious in working with students is that the ability to see truths and connection in the human experience is not related to age. It has to do more with the personality of the student; some young people are more aware of the “big picture” than others. When they possess the qualities to see beyond themselves, it makes them more open, more insightful, empathetic, and much more vulnerable. The student who had more to say during our talk backs was not a high school student but a young man in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. Every once in a while, I meet a student who has more awareness of the connectivity between humans than some adults. This young man is a deep thinker. An audience member asked about the significance of a game

of tug of war between Sir and Cocky during the song “My Way.” During that song Cocky starts to argue against Sir (the establishment). As he pulls on the rope, he begins to “win” the urchins over to his side. He wants the rules to change so Sir can no longer control his and the urchins’ existence. Cocky says that Sir’s “game is a sly game that could lead to wars.”

Cocky:

“Now, let me have my say:

From now on we're gonna see some changes;

Changes - that's what we need!

I'm gonna play what I wanna play when I say -

Not when you say - but when I say.

And I say that your game is a sly game.

Your game could lead to wars...”

(“My Way” lyrics from *The Roar of the Greasepaint...*)

The young man answered that the tug of war symbolizes the struggle between the underdog in any society that is deprived of their rights and those that hold them down. The more other people have awareness of the problem, the more likely they are to join together to stand up for what is right. This young man understood all the metaphors and symbolism within the production. The following semester I cast him in the part of the Prince in *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry and, once again, he managed to understand all the metaphors in that story as well. As I write this paper, he is now in 8<sup>th</sup> grade and continues to be a voice of

understanding and compassion for others. I have a lot of hope for the changes that he will bring about through his continued work in the theater and society. He “gets it.”

The adjudicators representing the Applause Awards from the Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts definitely understood what I was attempting to do as well. They not only understood but were very complimentary. And the icing on the cake was that the school was recognized and given an award for our community engagement at their ceremony in June of 2019.

Below are some of the adjudicator’s comments regarding the concept of the show.

- “Opening with the ensemble holding signs indicating their status as homeless, abused, without a job, and having each actor speak their status aloud, and then transitioning into the individual statements of “I am you,” until all their voices are joined in that message was a powerful way to begin this show.”
- “This production speaks so well about why good directors make selections for their educational theatre. This play not only has a message but strong teaching moments to share with the cast and crew. Director Janine Papin maximized the message from the script by bringing in a local organization, Pathways to Home. What a great experience for the students to use their talents to give back to the homeless in their own community. The experience leads to an understanding of why a playwright writes and how to use that purpose to make a difference through art. I applaud every element of this theatrical event.”
- “The director developed a strong and unique concept for this older musical to make the show socially relevant to today’s students and audiences. All the characters in her

production were homeless, living and playing in a city alley. As part of a pre-show, as the audience walked toward the theater, they encountered individual Urchins holding signs and begging for a donation. It had a strong effect, seeing these young people looking so hopeless and hungry, obviously needing help.”

- “I was intrigued by the idea of this concept as I read about it in the program and wondered if the material would support the concept. It absolutely did, and the plot felt modern in many ways and not at all dated. The play succeeded in making us think and allowed us to see things in a new way. Both of these are among the most important attributes of live theater. The show was very well cast, the concept well realized and obviously communicated to the performers, who demonstrated a clear understanding of it. The tempo and pacing were excellent; the show moved well; transitions were clear.”
- “In my mind, this was a risk that paid off, and the director, Janine Papin, is to be congratulated.”
- “First of all, kudos to Director Janine Papin for choosing such a challenging piece of work for her students. In addition, reaching out to Pathways to Home in order to connect the students’ theatrical experience to an immediate, local, real-world issue had to enrich them immeasurably.”
- “Wearing the hats of director, choreographer, and set designer allowed you to fashion a cohesive vision for the production and execute that vision with clarity and focus.”
- “The choices made in presenting *The Stranger* were very successful in bringing a script from the 1960’s into the present moment. From the costume covered in flags of other nations to the reveal of “We are all immigrants” on his shirt at the end of “Feeling

Good,” the actor’s powerful vocal performance made a potent statement on an issue of ongoing national concern.”

- “Students today have ample opportunities to shine in bubbly, perky pieces of musical fluff. It is a valuable gift you have given your actors in this opportunity to explore theatre that asks them – and their audience – to think as well as to feel.”

While the comments of the adjudicators for the Applause Awards from the Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts speak to their awareness that theater can promote critical thinking for both the actors and the audience, my difficulties with the stage manager point to different set of issues. In their 2017 article, “Two secondary teachers’ understanding and classroom practice of dialogic teaching: a case study “Dialogic Teaching (DT) is effective in fostering student learning; yet, it is hard to implement.” (Pol, Janneke Van De, et al) The principles of DT make a distinction between conversation and dialogue. There are five cornerstones of dialogic teaching: the talking that occurs between all participants must be collective, supportive, reciprocal, cumulative and purposeful. Dialogue then becomes a shared engagement and inquiry. The time restraints that came from trying to mount a production with a demanding schedule created a limited time for DT to occur. I have had much more success in a classroom setting where we are not concerned about quickly producing a product. Once the students have arrived at the place where they trust each other, the dialogue and subsequent learning is remarkable. This can only happen when there is a feeling of safety. To create that environment, everyone must learn to listen and respect others’ opinions. That is not always possible in a classroom setting due to a lack of maturity or a difficult personality. But when it does happen, it makes being a teacher incredibly rewarding. Since my experience with *The Roar of the Greasepaint...*, I have

witnessed incredible growth and learning occur in my acting classes. I attribute most of that progress to the dialogue that the entire class has entered into. Establishing that atmosphere in a rushed rehearsal process where you are not only learning a show but engaging in conversation about social issues would have meant that I needed much more time.

“To enter into dialogue presupposes equality amongst participants. Each must trust the others; there must be mutual respect and love (care and commitment). Each one must question what he or she knows and realize that through dialogue existing thoughts will change and new knowledge will be created.” Freire Institute, (Concepts used by Paulo Freire)

The student who wanted theater to “just be fun” was not interested in theater as a mode of transformation and learning. As her teacher, I could suggest that this play was not for her, but it was her choice to be able to continue to work with the production. The difficulties with the student paled in comparison with my conflict with the administration.

## CHAPTER TWO: SPRING AWAKENING AND THE ADMINISTRATIVE NO

### Background

I teach a musical theater class each spring, and I put on a full-length musical with the students who register for the class. There is a prerequisite of acting one class so the students have a basic understanding of acting and creating a character before they can enroll in the class. Most of my serious musical theater students take this class each year. After I see the list of students registered, I try to pick a piece of musical theater that is a good fit. For this particular class, I knew that *Spring Awakening* would work well. I am able to do shows within the class that would not fly as an extracurricular main stage show. I have tackled shows with risqué subject matter, such as the issues in the musical *Cabaret*, by providing an academic background for the production. I have found it easy to justify my choice by including a study of time, place, and history. *Spring Awakening*, with music by Duncan Sheik and book and lyrics by Steven Sater, is based on the 1891 Frank Wedekind play by the same name. Even though it is set in 19th-century Germany, it tells a story that is relevant today. The adults are not in tune with teenagers, afraid to engage in conversations about subjects that desperately need to be discussed. The show deals with teenage sexuality, pregnancy, abortion, and suicide...clearly, all hot topics. However, within the context of a class, I believed all the topics could all be handled in an appropriate way. So, I spoke to one of my administrators and told them I believed it would be a worthy project that could open doors for discussion and communication with the students. We would be able to study the original source and the time period that the play *Spring Awakening* came from. I would invite into the class mental health counselors to discuss signs of depression

that can lead to teenage suicide. I would play down the extreme sexual scenes with clever blocking. And the “Totally Fucked” song could be handled as was done on the Tony Awards when they did not say the “objectionable” word. I believed I had a very mature group of students in my musical theater class, and this real ensemble piece would be great for them to explore. Additionally, one of my upper classmen boys, who really wanted to do the show, asked to make an official proposal to administration about why we should do the show. The female administrator with whom I spoke agreed that this could happen, and a meeting was scheduled to hear the proposal from the student. Or so I thought. The meeting I was invited to had three administrators and me. No student. I reached out and explained that it was important for him to be invited. We are a school that values student leadership, and I had arranged the meeting so that he could be the presenter. The administrators said they needed to talk to me first. I refused to meet with them in advance because I knew that if they had already made up their minds, they would not want to even listen to the student. That is where I had a realization that theater and life were mirroring each other. Adults do not want to listen to their youth in the play *Spring Awakening*, and now adults did not want to listen to youth ABOUT *Spring Awakening*. I knew then the answer would be a “no” regardless of what the adults were told. But I insisted the meeting happen and that the adults TRULY LISTEN to what was being said to them. The student had written the following proposal and was going to read it to the three administrators. After sending it to me and to the administrator who I had originally approached about selecting this piece of theatre, during the meeting the student changed his mind. He decided not to read it but instead spoke directly to the administrators face-to-face and from his heart.

### Student Proposal

Hello. My name is \_\_\_\_\_, I am a junior, and I strongly believe that performing *Spring Awakening* would be a great opportunity for our Musical Theatre Class. *Spring Awakening* tells an important story that would benefit students educationally and mentally.

This is currently my third year here, and I have been in the musical theatre class shows in ninth and tenth grade. Each show the class presents is, in some way, an educational experience on not only the overall production of a musical, but also human outlook on life, identity, and the world. *Man of La Mancha* was a historical undertaking addressing mental illness as well as provided an optimistic message of persevering and never giving up on your dreams. *Now. Here. This.* was a true-to-life story covering the importance of friendship and overcoming personal struggles. *Spring Awakening* covers both these topics simultaneously in a historical context within late 19th century Germany, around the time the original play was written, as it tackles the struggles of adolescents and what happens when society tries to shape what children should and should not be exposed to. It presents the dangers of children being sheltered from what they will inevitably discover about life and the world, dealing with themes of the struggles of sexual identity in society, trauma from insecurity, personal confusion from a lack of knowledge, and classism. The issues this show brings forward, while they may be sensitive in nature, are better discussed in a moderated and structured setting rather than talking or gossiping in the halls. The issues this musical focuses on are things that adolescents deal with every day and performing this show would open up lines of communication within the families participating.

Sex/Sexual Situations: “It’s interesting because ... because the other stuff ... that stuff is all directorial. It’s not really in the script, per se. You could stage that however you want to stage it.”—Entertainment Weekly

Violence/Suicide: The cause of the use of gun violence and the discussion of suicide within the context of the show is because Moritz, the victim, is not guided or talked to about growing up and experiencing unfamiliar feelings. He is overwhelmed because he doesn’t ever have that discussion with anyone, and performing this show helps to prevent this from happening. The second to last song of the show, “Those You’ve Known”, shows Melchior about to make the same fatal decision Moritz did, but Melchior is convinced to keep living his life, sharing the stories of his fallen friends. If performing this show saves the single life of an audience member, I believe we should take it.

Language: In the case of “Totally Fucked,” Sheik says Slater has “given the tacit okay” to sing it as “Totally Effed” or choose to bleep out the word. “People are able to fairly broadly reinterpret those things if they feel they need to without changing the spirit of the play, as far as I know,” he says.—Entertainment Weekly

Abortion: Not only is the discussion of abortion important in the media, but the issue presented within the context of the show caters to both sides. In the show, Wendla gets pregnant, and her mother hires an underground abortionist to have the procedure done, and Wendla dies from a botched abortion.

Abortion. Pro-lifers who see the show can discuss with their children that this is the exact reason abortion should not be legal for fear of this happening to them and will encourage them to be

responsible when engaging in personal affairs. Pro-choicers can discuss with their children that this is the exact reason why abortion should be legal so doctors can be more careful with the operation. But both arguments teach children the importance of making responsible decisions and the inclusion of this element can start a discussion with children about safe-sex and the consequences that come from sex and/or abortion in general. We want every issue portrayed to be used in a non-explicit manner.”

### The Outcome

The answer, of course, was no. But, as you can see, my student was truly wise beyond his years. I was so proud of him as he spoke his mind. In the meeting, the administrators DID LISTEN! They asked questions and allowed him to say everything he wanted to. He left the meeting feeling heard even though they were never going to agree to let me produce this show.

While the administrators did listen, the power dynamics between administrators and teachers and administrators and students precluded any real dialogue - where each [person questions] what he or she knows and realize that through dialogue existing thoughts will change.” (Freire Institute, Concepts used by Paulo Freire)

The students were told that the proposal was denied and we needed to move forward and find another show. It took me a lot of time and effort, but I finally settled on a musical version of *Love's Labour's Lost*, based on the play by Shakespeare, book adapted by Alex Timbers and music by Michael Friedman. The class seemed to like the show, and I was able to cast it easily. The roles suited the students that I had enrolled in the musical theater class and the production provided opportunities for both ensemble work and moments to each person to shine. This show takes Shakespeare's original plot and much of his words and puts it in a contemporary setting.

The story focuses on the King of Navarre and his friends, Berowne, Longaville, and Dumaine. The musical sets the action on a college campus where the men have sworn off women for a period of three years so they can commit themselves to learning and study. Their plans are foiled when women from their past show up on the scene and they all end up falling in love. I assumed I had now chosen a show that no one could object to. Shakespeare, in spite of almost every controversial subject being present in his writings, can usually be produced without folks complaining. It is a fact that has always really amazed me! But, this time, it turned out that I was wrong. In spite of the fact that at the end of the show, when the men are told they must wait a year before the women will agree to marrying them, the production managed to upset a set of parents on a level I had never seen before. If there is any lesson or moral of the story of *Love's Labour's Lost*, it is that one should not rush into a relationship; that a person should take the time to examine if the feelings they are experiencing are strong enough to stand up over time. A pretty good message for teens who can have a tendency to be too impulsive.

The rehearsal period proved to be fun with almost all the students pulling together to create a true ensemble. Only one student did not share the enthusiasm for the work. At the last minute I ended up pulling in an understudy for her when it became evident that she really did not care. She put a damper on an otherwise positive and enthusiastic cast. They were enjoying the silliness of the piece and coming up with lots of comedic bits. The show opened, and the audience, comprised of parents, students, and administrators, found it to be funny and entertaining. Shakespeare's words sound quite different when accompanied by a live rock band. Comedy meets a need and the show provided that, offering laughter and diversion. The cast had bonded, the students had found their footing in their characters, and with the addition of the

replacement everyone offered each other support and encouragement. We opened on a Thursday to a full house. The second night my U.C.F. advisor, Earl Weaver, attended. Here is some of the feedback that I received from him:

- First and foremost, congratulations to you and your musical theatre class students for producing a delightful piece of musical theatre. It was clear from the beginning the students were the beneficiaries of your effective pedagogy and teaching methodology.
- Excellent use of all the students in the class. Fun piece for them to tackle.
- Nice cohesiveness in the overall design scheme for the production (sets, lights, costumes, sound, props)
- Really great handling of both contemporary and Shakespeare language and text in scenes and songs.
- Students had a clear understanding of the comedic style of the piece and stayed anchored in realism with their situations. Never did they cross over into caricature.
- Clearly-defined relationships and a good sense of action in the scenes.
- Really great sense of “ensemble” throughout the whole piece.
- Very clever staging and great use of the entire playing area of the stage.
- Fun choreography moments reminiscent of “*A Chorus Line*,” “*Spring Awakening*,” and Boy Bands.
- Great attention paid to prop details – loved that the love notes from the men matched the color of their shirts.
- Good use of the toy car, skates, and kick scooters.
- Fantastic energy and focus from the whole cast.

The next night's performance changed the light-hearted feeling that I had after two pleasant runs. One of the student's parents came into the black box theater and sat in the front row. I was right behind them in the second row. As the show went on, the father became more and more upset, sighing heavily, talking to his wife almost nonstop, wiping a huge amount of sweat from his face with his hands, and tensing his muscles. His wife literally was stroking his arm in an attempt to sooth him. It was evident he was angry, and I became afraid that he might stand up and pull his son off the stage at any moment. His talking became very distracting to all around him, and I wanted to lean forward and ask him to stop but could tell by his demeanor that he would not react well if I were to ask. Act one ended and he stormed out of the theater. I saw him speak to several parents and they confirmed that he was really upset by the show. As the audience was coming in for act two, he walked by me, firmly took me by the hand, and told me that we were going to have "a talk" after the show. I quickly arranged to have another adult stay with me after the performance as I knew I would need a witness. As it turned out, he left immediately after the show ended after telling another parent that he would be calling the head of school to make a formal complaint. He did just that and a meeting was called with both parents, the assistant head of school, and me. The parents walked in carrying a lot of papers. Among the papers were the script to the show, the school's handbook containing all our policies, as well as information on *Spring Awakening*.

During the meeting, the father unloaded a whole lot of anger, quoted the Bible constantly and attacked my character, my judgement, and my ability to mentor and lead children. The plot of the show had the men swearing off sex by signing a pledge. His son's character, Berowne, argues against signing the agreement with a humorous song. In the song he states what young

men are “supposed to do.” But after he sings the song, he concedes, and along with his friends, agrees to dedicate the next three years to study. This father believed that the words in the song that his son sang were all things that I was encouraging.

“Young men are supposed to have sex and get drunk and sleep in on Sunday morning till brunch. Young men aren't supposed to read philosophy between the ages of twenty-two and thirty. Young men are supposed to be callow and cavalier about things that later they will have to think are important...”

(Young Men, *Love's Labour's Lost* by Michael Friedman)

Another thing they took issue with surrounded a moment on stage when one of the other males in the show made a comedic choice to slap his son on the butt before exiting. That bit of business had gotten a laugh, so it stayed as a “bit” in the show. This father saw that as sexual assault. The father whipped out the school’s handbook which included our sexual assault policy and said that we had broken our own policy. The administrator quickly pointed out that action in no way was actually sexual assault. Both boys were playing up that moment as comedic bit and, in fact, his son played it up even more with a jump forward to get more of a laugh. After the administrator talked the parents down from wanting to press charges, he went on to defend me and my ability to teach children. When it was my turn to talk, I explained that theater was about storytelling and it was not real but pretend. Also, I pointed out that, within the world of a story, issues that get brought up don’t normally condone bad behavior. Instead they are demonstrated within the play so the audience can see right from wrong and form opinions about those issues. I assured both parents that I was not trying to promote pre-marital sex; in fact, the moral of the

story was to wait. The father went back to the objectionable words his son sang and stated he wanted his son to have “Christian” values and morals. I explained that an actor’s job was to speak and sing words with honesty so an audience believes them. Often time an actor will speak words they do not personally agree with but that it all was a part of telling a convincing story. I reassured them both that even when playing a villain, it did not mean that you were one in “real life.” This father, who acknowledged that his (step) son was talented and has “allowed him” be in theatrical productions in the past, seems to not have been able to grasp basic concepts about acting. I then said that as a professional actor, it was my job to make sure the audience believed all the words coming from my mouth were real. He then informed me that “another word for me was a hypocrite.” Speaking false words. That struck me as absolute craziness.

Next, the parents brought up the fact that they had heard I wanted to mount a production of *Spring Awakening* and that it contained filth. I shut down a further conversation about that by telling them that was not on the table. I didn’t mention that it once had been. The meeting continued with a lot of proselytizing by the father and the administrator responding by defending my character. The administrator firmly stood by me and attempted to reassure them of my abilities as a teacher and a director. I stressed the fact that I do care about my students and their growth as human beings and my intent at all times was to be a good educator. The meeting ended with the parents saying that their son would not be allowed to work with me in the future without a written permission slip from them and that they must read and approve any material I would be presenting in the future. The administrator told them that even though they certainly had the right to say what was appropriate for their son, they might not always agree with the material chosen in the future. But he reassured them that the material chosen always had good

educational reasoning behind it, both in the selection of plays and of books read in our literature classes (another area of disagreement and controversy for some). Even though I was thoroughly attacked during this lengthy meeting, I came out of it pretty unscathed. The support that was given to me during that meeting by the administrator validated me as a teacher and as a person. He made it perfectly clear that he has respect for the work I do and has personally witnessed the benefits I have provided the students who are under my guidance.

Even what I deemed to be a piece of theater with no social agenda had become a huge argument over morals, censorship, and right-wing Christian beliefs. Circling back to Boal, “Theatre is always political!” Yes, indeed.

## CHAPTER THREE: ONCE ON THIS ISLAND AND HAITI

Synopsis: Ti Moune is a fearless peasant girl who falls in love with a wealthy boy from the other side of the island. When their divided cultures keep them apart, Ti Moune is guided by the powerful island gods, Erzulie, Asaka, Papa Ge, and Agwe, on a remarkable quest to reunite with the man who has captured her heart. (Playbill)



*Figure 11 Once on this Island banner Original Design by Joe Rinaldi, permission to use from artist*

### Background

Our summer theater program is an incredibly rewarding experience for everyone involved. In part, it is because of the intense nature of rehearsing a show in a brief amount of time. Everyone must be focused and dedicated to the project. Moreover, students only have to think about theater and not the fifty million other things that occupy their minds and time during the school year. Over the course of two weeks, while rehearsing eight hours a day, they bond in a way that rarely happens in an after-school production. And since this experience is open to the community, it is a joy to watch friendships form between students who had never met before. Bridges are built and connections made. Plus, it is the one time I really get to collaborate with a full production team. It certainly is more enjoyable for me to work with creative partnerships. During the school year, I do much of the production work by myself. As for my aim to create

community, this summer theatre opportunity never fails to do just that. My plan was to network with a friend of mine who, along with his sister, had established a school in Haiti a few years ago. Their foundation, Lumiere D'Education Foundation, Inc.'s mission is "to provide free education to Haitian children who are eager to learn and gain the skills required to lead healthy, productive lives. Our organization shines a light on the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere and empowers disadvantaged children to break the cycle of poverty."

([https://www.facebook.com/pg/lumierededucationfoundation/about/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/pg/lumierededucationfoundation/about/?ref=page_internal))

### Concept

Because I was hoping to help the school in rural La Plaine, Haiti that serves 165 poor children by providing them with free education, the community we were building would be more of a global one. I wrote a press release (see appendix) and reached out to our local newspaper and asked the theater critic to do a story on the show to increase audience size, and he kindly agreed (see article in appendix). I would create an interactive experience with the audience as they arrived as if they had just arrived by cruise ship to our island. All the proceeds from the merchandise the students sold would go to the school in La Plaine. In addition to selling whatever merchandise we could, the students from the Haitian school made woven beaded bracelets to sell with words like "hope" and "love" on them. They shipped them to us for the students to sell. If we were to be successful in raising money for them, I knew I needed to promote the production. Getting an audience for a school show is always a problem. I typically am the only one to market any of our productions. The article that appeared in the paper proved to be helpful, we had a full house for all shows. I mounted the production in our black box

theater in order to make it an intimate experience for all. I surrounded the stage with seating for the audience on three sides. With palm branches attached to all the rails of the seating areas and large beach umbrellas on the lighting boom stands in each corner, and a painted “sand” floor, the black box theater transformed into an island.

The pre-show experience started with the blast of a horn of a cruise ship, signaling the arrival of the “tourists” to our island. The doors of the theater opened, and the tourists were greeted by many vendors all selling their goods. For anyone who has taken a cruise and gotten off on a Caribbean Island, this experience should ring true. The students were wonderful! They all stayed in character and tried their best to outsell each other! The interaction of actor and audience was part of a wonderful immersive experience. Boal’s concept of the audience ceasing to be just observers but instead becoming “spect-actors” was achieved. With the sound effect of a storm approaching, the Islanders (some of my student actors) told the visitors (our audience) to take shelter. To pass the time while waiting out the storm, the island guide (one actor) suggested that a story be told. She invited other Islanders (more student actors) to play the different roles in the story by handing them a prop or a small costume piece. When the person received the prop or costume piece, they transformed into that character and entered the storytelling.



*Figure 12 Haitian student making jewelry with permission for use by Lumiere D'Education Foundation*



*Figure 13 Cast of Once on this Island, photo by author*



*Figure 14 Cast of Once on this Island photo by author*

### Outcome and Responses

With this production, conscientization did happen - reflection and action - what Freire calls praxis - the joining of action and reflection: "It is not enough for people to come together in dialogue in order to gain knowledge of their social reality. They must act together upon their environment in order critically to reflect upon their reality and so transform it through further action and critical reflection." (Freire Institute-Concepts used by Paulo Freire) With this particular project, the coming together of all the participants created a transformative experience. Everyone involved: the students in the production, the students in Haiti who made the bracelets to sell, the foundation that supports the Haitian school, the person who wrote the newspaper article, the show production staff, and the audience together had reflected upon an issue and taken action. The subsequent results were varied and as unique as each individual. For some, they were made aware of an issue, and because of that, they were led to provide some financial assistance to ease the problem. Others gained empathy and an appreciation for the education they sometimes take for granted. All grew as human beings.

The diversity of the participants in this summer program made for a unique and extremely meaningful experience. One of the community students asked me if she could be the one to sell the bracelets made by the students in Haiti. She told me she was originally from Haiti and it meant so much to her to be able to help with a problem that the children there have to deal with. Education is not something the Haitian government provides, and many families simply can't afford it. A sense of community formed between all the participants. The students from my school made sure the non-school students felt at home and comfortable. Most of the roles were double cast, and students went from being a lead role to a member of the ensemble with ease

and grace. None of the ego that sometimes poisons a production was present. With a two-week period and eight-hour days, I also made time to build connections and a feeling of ensemble. I had the students circle up and gave everyone the opportunity to share how they were feeling. It always amazes me how experiences like this one can empower its participants. Every person walked away from the summer theater intensive feeling like they had accomplished something substantial. Additionally, we were able to provide a donation of \$1,700 to the school in Haiti. That gave the students the feeling that their work had made a difference to others; they had provided assistance to students who live very different lives than they do.

After the program was over, I reached out to students and parents and asked if anyone would be willing to share their reflections about the experience. Their letters are below. The first is a letter from the founder of the Lumiere D'education in Haiti:

- “This summer, the school conducted a summer intensive drama program which included the production, *Once on this Island*. This program greatly benefited Lumiere D'education Foundation Inc, a non-profit organization based on providing necessary and quality education to underprivileged children in La Plaine, Haiti. During the performances, the cast and crew sold bracelets, T-shirts, paintings and other items to raise funds to support the students in Haiti. These funds will be used to pay for teacher salaries, school supplies and other educational expenses within the school. Students at the school also receive a free lunch, a free uniform and free curriculum books which all are paid for by donations. The production of *Once on this Island* brought more awareness to the organization and why it is needed. The cast, crew, their families and friends learned more about the need in Haiti for free, quality education to those who

cannot afford it. Unlike the United States, public education for free does not exist.

Parents in Haiti only have access to send their children to school if they have the finances to do so. Lumiere D'education exists to provide a high-quality education to these children in order to give them a chance for a successful future.” Caberbe Joseph

Responses from participating students and parents:

- Thank you for organizing the charitable association for the play! The article in the *Orlando Sentinel* was great. As an FYI, and if you could forward to your friend, my father whose father remarried a Haitian woman, sent me the following: Thanks for sending this article. I looked at the Lumiere D'Education website, and it sounds just wonderful! I feel that their connection -- through "CJ" Joseph's friendship with Janine, who you know well there at Trinity Prep -- has provided me with a welcome opportunity. I'd been looking for a deserving "local" (in Haiti) charitable opportunity to replace the one I had been supporting for the past several years in memory of my Haitian stepmother and her now-deceased daughter. I recently stopped supporting that charitable faith-based village-improvement charity -- which set up a central well with human/animal-powered pump, plus a solar oven with village kitchen-- when its US sponsor retired, and so was no longer personally involved in the charity. So, what I did, just this morning, was to set up -- via a dedicated auto-debit monthly charitable donation -- the full-time sponsorship of 4 students at the L'ecole Dinaus Mixed school in La Plaine, Haiti, in gratitude for my own good fortune. (a letter from grandparent)
- Being new to the school and not knowing many people, I was unsure what they would think of me and how my talent level would fit in. Also, I was not sure of your teaching

style and your expectations and direction. My experience was amazing. I thought everyone made me feel welcome. So excited to continue to grow with you. (a new student to the school)

- Since my son was new to your program, I was unsure what it would look like. He is usually able to adapt to new experiences easily but sometimes he loses his confidence in his ability. I was glad to see him put himself out there and try to get to know multiple kids instead of just sticking with the two he already knew. We both thought the program was awesome. We loved that you raised over \$1,700.00 for the school in Haiti. That to me was so terrific. I know my son could not wait to go to rehearsal every day. That makes me smile. (a parent)
- I'd never performed for a show with someone outside of our school. Getting to know and perform with students from other schools was really great. Learning the choreography and the music was difficult at first, but I always looked forward to rehearsals to spend time with my friends and to perform a great show! (a student)
- I guess my take on the experience for my daughter was that she had to overcome a lack of self-confidence. This was really her first big role. While I've seen her on stage many times before, I felt she often looked self-conscious. To me, this was a huge step forward for her in confidence. She had a presence on stage that I have never seen before. The role required a lot of confidence on stage – playing a goddess demands it! I was just amazed with her growth. I know you worked with her a lot, but I also hope that just the story and the message of breaking down barriers gave her some strength. I know the cast really bonded, which was nice to see. It was great to see the Trinity kids really bond

with the non-Trinity kids. I drove three other students – and I think they were surprised at how close they got to the entire cast. I definitely felt a sense of “team” with them. Again, thank you so much for what you did for my daughter and all the kids. It was really a special experience for us! (a parent)

- I personally feel like this show helped me break down a lot of personal barriers. Some of the main ones include my social shyness, lack of self-confidence, and more. Just the nature of the intensive, spending 9 hours a day with people, some of whom I didn’t know, was a bit daunting at first. However, spending so much time with people forces you to socialize with them, and that definitely helped me make new friends, something I’m not always the best at, as well as strengthening old relationships. I also feel like this show did wonders for my self-confidence. I have always had shyness and self-confidence issues, and having a role where I was forced to let those things go really helped me start to let go of them in real life. (a student)
- I am so happy to have performed in two summer productions. The intensive rehearsal process prompts us to put our best work forward in a very short amount of time. I have had to build my skills in time management, keeping focus, communicating effectively, and actively listening. This has helped me both become a better artist and develop a better work ethic. These summer productions are also just incredibly fun and a great way to meet new friends! My little sister performed in the summer show before she started 6th grade at the school two years ago, and by the first day of school she already had friends in every grade. The summer intensive is incredibly enriching mentally and socially. (a student)

- The Summer Theater intensive meant having a place with people who wanted to make me better, and who wanted to see me achieve my goals. It was a place to meet new people with similar goals who wanted to get better at what they do. It's was a safe place to laugh and cry and make memories while doing something you love. An opportunity to work on yourself and be whatever it is you want to be. It allowed me to build confidence and get out of my comfort zone and do things that I've never done before -like have a solo. (a community student)
- Helping kids in Haiti makes me feel like I have a purpose in helping kids that have been through hard times. I know how they feel because I was born there. I came to the U. S. as a foster child. I know that life in Haiti is hard because housing and food is scarce, and children don't have school to go to if they can't afford it. So, it means a lot to me to help them in any way I can. (a community student)
- I am always moved by the message in the shows you select and the personal touch that you give them to add further emotion. Regarding *Once on this Island*, I thought the rich/poor barriers were laid bare, and it is definitely an issue that translates to modern times. The moment in the show that constantly wounded me was the scene where Julian was pleading at the gate only to be slapped, and instead of retaliating, he just begged to help the Monsieur get his son back. The black/white barrier was (in your adaptation) much more subtle - only a couple of song lines that most people likely missed. However, I felt the lack of attention drawn to race in the black/white couple made the pairing seem so much more typical, and helped the audience "root" for them for the reason of love alone. (a parent)

- I think the show helped break down barriers because we were able to tell an important story by embodying another culture but doing it respectfully and as a way to help people in Haiti. The entire show is about breaking down the barriers that we as a society create, and that was really reflected well in the conveying of the show as well as the learning process in the intensive. It's really good we show that people can do what they love and find a way to make a difference when doing it and make a social impact and change. The experience helped break down some of my personal, emotional barriers because I was able to open myself up and make friends with some awesome people. I learned a lot about myself and the people around me. I also learned that acting and performing is something that brings me a lot of joy, and it's awesome to think how doing something we love was able to help people in need. (a student)
- The experience helped with my daughter's confidence and sense of pride in her performance. She can be anxious, especially about "the unknown." I think this showed itself to her detriment at her audition, especially in dance. Making it through the auditions, though, as difficult as they went for her, and coming out with a part that she really enjoyed, has helped her. I guess it's a barrier of self-doubt - I can't say that it's completely broken down, but this show certainly helped her to make it more manageable. The show and working with the Haitian charity helped her understand the challenges that kids in less fortunate circumstances face, for sure. Selling the bracelets that the kids personally made to help support paying for their education gave her a real perspective on the fact that circumstances around your birth - where and to whom you

are born - have an enormous and permanent impact on your future. Thank you for coordinating that piece of the show. (a parent)

- I've always loved theatre and performing in shows. When I joined *Once on this Island*, I figured it would be a great acting and vocal experience. I wasn't big on dance at the time and wanted to act and sing, nothing more. However, after a few days of rehearsal, I realized I loved the dance aspect in the show. I found myself wanting to learn more. Thanks to Ms. Papin and this wonderful show, I signed up for dance classes and found an amazing new hobby. This show broke down the barriers I had placed around myself and pushed me out of my comfort zone. Without *Once on this island*, I would have never discovered this love of dancing. Ms. Papin has worked her magic again! (a student)
- Anytime Ms. Papin is leading a production, we know that it's going to be amazing! That's why, despite the fact that I had already signed up my daughter for another camp that was at the same time as the Summer Intensive, I capitulated to my daughter's pleas. She had heard wonderful things about the Summer Intensive and she desperately wanted to be a part of it. After the first day she came home energized and thrilled since this experience was turning out to be everything she hoped and more. "Mom!" she cried. "I was selected to DANCE for Rain!" It was a silent victory for her - years ago, when she was 4 years old, she took dance class with a bunch of neighborhood friends. It was a sweet chapter where the moms got to connect while our daughters twirled about in tutus and enjoyed the innocence of childhood. When my daughter was 7 years old, we moved on to a hip hop class. It was there when she encountered her first "mean girl" who also happened to be the star of the class. This girl's natural rhythm earned her solos, front row

status in every number...and an ego. One dance class this girl casually told my daughter and a friend, "I see that you both are in the back row. That's where they put the bad dancers." My daughter came home in tears, and it was one of those tough parenting moments where you reassure your child that while they're perfect in your eyes and the most amazing gift you've ever been given, they can't always be the best at everything they attempt. "That kid was mean. You tell her that she hurt your feelings and that she doesn't have to tear people down to make her any better." I contemplated calling the girl's mother, but I also saw the merit in letting my daughter navigate this on her own and learn how to deal with those "challenging" personalities in life. She stood up for herself, the little girl made life tough for her for a bit, but they both moved on and ironically enough they are close friends today. While I didn't like the idea that another child shuttered an entire world of dance for my daughter, I respected her decision never to do dance again, and I watched her thrive in other areas with her dancer-like grace in cheerleading and swimming. That's why, when she was invited to dance, it was like unearthing a hidden gem that had been buried for some time. Like Ti Moune, my daughter found joy in the moment of dancing and was freed from outside opinions. I found myself delighted when I watched her dance with the other dancers and saw the natural smile on her face - Ms. Papin had reignited a passion within my daughter by tearing down a barrier that someone else had put up for her. For that, I will be forever grateful. (a parent)

## CHAPTER FOUR: RAGTIME, PANEL DISCUSSION AND AUDIENCE RESPONSE



*Figure 15 Ragtime Banner with permission of Garden Theater*



*Figure 16: Cast of Ragtime Steven Miller Photography. Courtesy of Garden Theatre*

I was cast as Emma Goldman in The Garden Theatre's production of *Ragtime*. The Garden Theatre is a Regional theater located in downtown Winter Garden, Florida. Based on E.L. Doctorow's novel, *Ragtime* is a musical with music and lyrics by Stephen Flaherty and Lynn Ahrens, and a book by Terrence McNally. This show provided me the opportunity to engage in a piece of theater that deals with many social issues. But this time, I could do it while

on the stage rather than through my typical role as director. For those unfamiliar with the story, here is the description from the licensing house, Music Theatre International:

*“At the dawn of a new century, everything is changing... and anything is possible. Set in the volatile melting pot of turn-of-the-century New York, three distinctly American tales are woven together – that of a stifled upper-class wife, a determined Jewish immigrant and a daring young Harlem musician – united by their courage, compassion and belief in the promise of the future. Together, they confront history's timeless contradictions of wealth and poverty, freedom and prejudice, hope and despair, and what it means to live in America.”* (MTI)

*Ragtime* was a remarkable and truly fulfilling experience. I have never been associated with a production that inspired so much discussion about the relevance of the material to society today. The entire experience was heightened by the new artistic director of the Garden Theatre, Joe Walsh. His views, which he often shared throughout the rehearsal process and performances, about the work that we do and the transformative nature of theatre served to inspire and challenge us. I also felt a huge connection to the role I got to portray, Emma Goldman. Emma addressed the audience as members of a rally held in Union Square. I got to speak these lines, “This is not the America he came here for, none of us did, none of us!” as well as “Let us at last make this the Land of Opportunity for all people.” Never have I connected so much with the words I spoke in a show. In *Orlando Sentinel*’s review, Matt Palm said, “Janine Papin grabs the attention as a fiery advocate for the underprivileged.” I found this role a true gift because it enabled me to speak words from my heart and soul.



*Figure 17: Me as Emma Goldman Steven Miller Photography. Courtesy of The Garden Theatre*

### Connection to the Classroom

Several of my students came to see the show. One sixth grade student talked about coming to see the show and was surprised that, when she opened the program, she saw my name. During class, I asked her to talk about her experience watching the show and what she thought. What followed was a surprising and in-depth discussion about how the issues in the play are still relevant. Profiling and violence against people of color was a major topic. The class is small, only 11 sixth graders, but four of them (all Latino) shared stories about family members who had experienced what we were discussing. A young lady's grandfather had been shot and killed. Another girl spoke of her experience when her family was coming back into the U.S. after visiting another country. She told us that her family has members that are lighter-skinned and some that are darker-skinned. The darker-skinned ones had been searched, questioned, and detained while the lighter-skinned ones were not. Still another student spoke of her parents moving from another country to this one for a safer place to be. The details were sketchy, but the

fact was clear: people of color have a lot more to contend with than their “whiter” counterparts. One of the other students said she was under the impression that Martin Luther King Jr. had changed all of that for people of color and now we were all equal. I pointed out that was not the case, and even though Civil Rights laws were passed, we have a long way to go for equality and fairness.

What was remarkable about this discussion is that this particular group of students is very rambunctious, and they have issues being quiet and respectful while others are talking. That was not the case with this heavy discussion. Everyone listened to each other, asked questions, and most importantly seemed to care about what their peers were saying. This conversation only happened because one student came to see *Ragtime*, a socially relevant show. I started the conversation by asking about her thoughts, but what came out of it was unplanned and spontaneous. I find it hopeful that discussions like this can be had with youth. Awareness is the first step of any change.

#### Panel Discussion on *Ragtime* and Community Connection

I was invited to be a part of a panel discussion following one of our Sunday performances of *Ragtime*.

The invitation:

“Join us next Sunday for a post-show panel discussion about the language of race! The panel will be led by Holocaust Center Staff, Project Grady-Rayam staff, and a member of our cast- Janine Papin, who is writing her master’s dissertation on theatre for social

change! Building Solidarity Between Differences: The Contemporary Relevance of "Ragtime: The Musical" September 8, 2019 | Following the 2:00 pm performance of "Ragtime" A partnership between Garden Theatre and the Holocaust Memorial Resource and Education Center of Florida. "Ragtime" is a musical to inspire social change—and it teaches us that change starts when we bridge racial divides. Come together after the play for a dialogue that delves into the relevance of "Ragtime" in our contemporary world. Debrief on the use of racist language in the musical and our society, and discuss what steps we can begin to counteract bigotry. All are welcome to attend the post-show panel discussion (which will begin at approximately 4:45 pm). However, only ticket-holders will be admitted into the theatre for the performance of "Ragtime" at 2:00 pm.

#### Panel Bios

Rudolf C. Cleare is Executive Vice-President to the nonprofit "NS" Scholarship Foundation, and Development Director of its Project GRADY-RAYAM programs He holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Saint Meinrad College and a Master of Divinity degree from Saint Meinrad Graduate School of Theology. Skilled as a public speaker, writer, and poet, Cleare shows great insight regarding how language works in human consciousness and his opinions regarding race and ethnicity in the social context are highly regarded.

He also has a passion for the sound of human voices and for singers, is an authority on America's Negro spiritual songs, and promotes the practical application of vocal arts education to curricula for youth development. In 1983, Cleare became the first person of African descent to be ordained as a priest by the Roman Catholic Church in the State of Florida. However, he no longer serves in public ministry in that capacity.

Janine Papin is the Fine Arts Department Chair, auditorium manager, theater teacher, director, choreographer, and sponsor of the school's thespian troupe at Trinity Prep School. Janine was one of two teachers named the "2018 Inspiring Teacher" by the Broadway League Foundation Jimmy Awards. In 2006, she was awarded The H. Benton Ellis Award for Excellence in Teaching. During the summer of 2015, she received a fellowship to study at Shakespeare's Globe Theater. She is currently finishing her M.A. in Musical Theatre at UCF.

Lisa Bachman, the Assistant Director with the Holocaust Center in Maitland, Florida introduced us, and Serena Ahmed, the program coordinator with the Holocaust Center facilitated the discussion. As I was given the questions in advance, I was able to research the topics on which I would speak.

### **Questions:**

1. *"I am sure one of the top thoughts on everyone's mind is the relevance of the racial and economic injustices present in the story of Ragtime with our experiences to today. I know this is a big question, but may you begin by grounding us in some of the similarities and differences between the musical's depiction of the turn of the 20th century with our present-day setting?"*

For my answer, I focused on three themes of the show:

- Immigration in the United States
- Violence against - and justice for - people of color
- Women's equality

## **Immigration:**

I looked up the statistics for immigration during the time the show takes place and compared them to the statistics of immigration of today. (LOC) There was a huge rise of immigration between 1900 and 1915; more than 15 million immigrants arrived. That was equal to the number of immigrants that had come into the United States during the previous 40 years combined. The immigrants were mainly from southern and eastern Europe, especially Italy, Poland, and Russia. They left their countries of origin seeking a better life, as America was viewed as the land of opportunity. The living conditions for the immigrants who came through Ellis Island into New York City were terrible. The tenements were overcrowded (at least 18 people in one tenement apartment), unsafe, and unsanitary. The lines I spoke as Emma Goldman, “The fetid tenements of the lower east side were worse than anything Tateh and his wife had suffered in Latvia,” were the truth of the times. Back then immigrants made up about 15 percent of the U.S. population. Today, it is about 14 percent of the population with immigrants mainly coming from Mexico and South and East Asia. The connection to the events of today with news of children being taken from their parents as they cross the U.S. border and the photos released of immigrants and their children in cages serve as a stark reminder that many who dream of a better life in America don’t get it. The sound effect during our show that happened when the immigrants were arriving was the sound of slamming gate. That sound gave me (and I assume most of the audience) a visceral response as it conjured up the feeling of a jail cell being slammed shut.

### **Violence against people of color and Justice:**

I found that 1 in 1,000 black men and boys can expect to die at the hands of police. That is 2.5 times more likely than white men and boys during an encounter with police. (Merrefield) The topic of justice for people of color is often in the news. Listening to NPR radio the morning of the panel discussion, I heard an interview with Allison Jean, the mother of Botham Jean, a man of color who was shot and killed in his own apartment by a police officer. As she pleaded for justice for her son's death, I saw a connection to the show. The character of Sarah, a woman of color, is mistakenly seen as a threat in the story of *Ragtime* and is killed by the police. That action sadly mirrors so many real-life incidents within the past decade.

### **Women's Equality:**

The changing dynamics between the white upper-class husband and wife illustrates the desire that women had to break free of traditional gender roles during this period of history. The character of "Mother" develops her independence and strength as she learns to speak her mind and do what she feels is right. I thought it relevant that even though times have changed radically, women are still by no means on equal footing in every area of society. Clearly, women have come a long way since the time depicted in the musical. The show takes place between 1902 and 1914, before women were given the right to vote. But there are so many more inequalities to tackle. Equal pay is one. Equal representation is another. The movement in the arts community of 50/50 by 2020 is a shared cause to bring equality to the arts.

- “The League of Professional Theatre Women (LTPW) and the Women’s Project and New Perspectives seek to bring parity to the theater world, while in Hollywood it is still a male dominated world. LTPW: Working proactively for parity for professional women theater artists, our objective is to achieve parity for professional women theater artists by 2020. Even today, women playwrights, directors, and designers receive fewer than 20% of the professional production opportunities nationwide.” (“50/50 In 2020.”)

5050 by 2020 is an intersectional initiative of the Time’s Up movement incubated at the Center for Cultural Power. We empower artists and storytellers to change the game in Hollywood and beyond. (*5050 By 2020*)

2. *“Let’s shift to the power of language. What was it like to rehearse this play for the first time? More specifically, how did you think and feel about having to engage with such vile, racist language?”*

Before I answered this question, I felt I needed to explain the reason why the language, as triggering as it is, was necessary within the story. Because I am an educator, I also wanted to tie in a bit of basic theater history to make my audience know what purpose the theater serves.

Drama has Greek roots: “Drama: is the action and a ‘theater’ is a place for observing.”. (Landy & Montgomery) Theater provides the following sequence: Action-Observation-Reflection-Re-action. Action of the actors, observation of the audience, reflection by both the actors and the audience which leads to a re-action. I quoted Augusto Boal about theater helping to transform society. If the action on the stage is meaningful, the audience who has observed it will reflect, and be inspired to re-act and respond. Ideally, it puts in motion more action. This happens for the

actors as well. The experience of viewing or participating in the action can ignite change. Addressing the racist language, I said the intent of the language within the show was to make the audience uncomfortable. I also felt the need to make it clear that, as a white woman, I am bothered by the use of the “N” word, but that since I am Caucasian, I will never know how it feels to hear that word as a person of color. Within the show, that word is uttered nine times; additionally, there are ethnic slurs against Jews, Irish, Polish, and Germans. The other panelist, Rudolph Cleare, pointed out that revisiting our troublesome past serves as a reminder of what we need to guard against. The language is tough to hear. The N-word is used by Willie Conklin (the character who is the instigator of the wrongdoings against the man of color named Coalhouse), several times by the father, and then Coalhouse himself utters that word. The song about baseball, designed to be a bit of comedic relief, contains numerous ethnic slurs. Those slurs are not noticed as much because of the humor in the number. Personally, my reaction is to cringe, but the specific language is in the show for a reason. The playwrights wanted audience members to see, and take note of, the prejudice and discrimination that was so commonplace in America at the turn of the century. It acts as a cautionary warning because racism still lives on in one way or another, and we need to face it straight on in order to put an end to it. I ended my response with a Bertolt Brecht quote “Change the world, she needs it.” (Pappademos) The world still needs that change.

3. *“The musical not only depicts racial and socio-economic injustice, but ways in which we counteract discrimination. What resistance and calls to action in Ragtime stood out to you?”*

Emma Goldman said, “someone has said it requires less mental effort to condemn than to think” and “The most violent element in society is ignorance.” The call to action lies in the lyrics of the musical:

*“Make them hear you; Your sword can be sermon or the power of the pen. Make them hear you; teach every child to raise his voice and then, my brothers then, will justice be demanded by ten million righteous men. Make them hear you.”*

We need to build a society “*where a man can live and a child can play*” without prejudice, bigotry, or fear. (Lyrics from the musical *Ragtime*)

### Responses

The Garden Theatre reaches out to their patrons to get feedback from their audience members. I asked the marketing department if they could share the responses from *Ragtime*. They were most accommodating. Believing the goal of good storytelling is to affect the audience in a way that makes them think and reflect on the story presented, I was eager to read their comments. My hope was to see if connections were made between the issues and themes brought up in the story to current societal problems. This was certainly the case with many of the responses. Most saw and appreciated the relevance to today. Here are some of the responses, all taken from different patrons.

- Your production of *Ragtime* may have been the BEST production of anything in our 16 years of living in Central Florida. The message of the show was classic and certainly relevant today.

- *Ragtime* was a fabulous production that included beautiful singing, timely themes and clearly spoken dialogue that mesmerized the hearts and minds of the audience.
- I think it is so important to produce shows like *Ragtime*. It is a great show ... and reminds us of current issues we unfortunately still face today.
- I was blown away by the talent in this production! ...I cannot praise this show enough. Bravo to the cast and crew on a spectacular performance of a story that every American should hear!
- The message of the play was very timely, e.g. immigrants, racial issues, class issues, etc. There was a lot of passion, and I found myself in tears on more than one occasion.
- A very emotional script and *Ragtime* is one that is relevant in 2019.
- The show had it all: A socially relevant storyline, outstanding performances, and excellent staging.
- This production deserved the plaudits it's been getting. Fine acting, staging and directing. This was a triumph. This is the kind of show that builds regular attendance.
- Extremely poignant and all too true and quite moving!
- The story was told with heart and emotion and sadly enough the issues touched in the play still apply in today's society.
- The production was excellent, and the subject matter is still incredibly relevant. My goodness when they sang "It Will Happen Again" at the end of Act 1, I was sobbing.
- Strong cast, wonderful voices, moving treatment of cultural and political issues.

- Garden Theatre also doesn't shy away from themes that may be considered too extreme or controversial when they address the real issues of the story's era. Even when the themes are relevant today.
- It is American history live with outstanding music!
- Storyline was potent and meaningful, especially in current times of intolerance.
- The issues, unfortunately, are relevant today.
- This production was very well executed and very moving. I was still wiping tears away as I walked down the street from the theater.
- The cast was believable, and the show's themes are timely.
- I became so involved in the production that by its conclusion, I was emotionally drained.
- *Ragtime* is a brilliant musical, and its message is especially relevant during these challenging times.
- A show that is moving and classic yet has important implications for our time.
- *Ragtime* was the BEST show I have ever seen at the Garden! A powerfully performed show that brought me to tears twice.
- The play was inspiring!
- *Ragtime* was emotional and had an extremely talented cast!
- Quality show with a message that resonates in today's world.
- The story, unfortunately, is still current. Great for opening our minds and hearts!
- The musical is set 115 years ago. The story is as current today as it was then.
- The timing of this musical in today's very prominent focus on immigration, immigrants and their potential successes is greatly appreciated.

- The message from this production could not be ignored; nor would one want to. I can't remember being present before when I was unable to take my eyes off the stage or the performers- the story was so riveting! I could put myself in the actors' parts; liking some and disliking others- not the actors but the characters. I wanted to be able to step into the story and help. I am so proud of everyone involved for being capable of such impressive work. It was beyond wonderful; it stirred by mind, my heart, my beliefs and those I wasn't previously sure of. It made me terribly disappointed as well as very joyful. Mostly, it made me very sorry when it was over.

On the other hand, there are always audience members who do not want to see, discuss, or make connections.

- The story content was too sad and dark. We get enough of that on the news. Give us something that makes us happy. I love musicals, but this musical was very negative, had racist language, and was not enjoyable.
- I didn't know that *Ragtime* had so many racial themes- the play was far more serious than I expected.

Here is an excerpt from a social media post:

- “Against the backdrop of our current times a show like *Ragtime* feels like it could be ripped from today's headlines: racial tensions, immigrants struggling to feed their children as they worry they will lose them, celebrity worship and ignorant acts of xenophobic hate. Is it 1906 or 2019? Kudos to Garden Theatre for selecting such a

relevant title. And even more kudos to them for trusting Mark Edward Smith with the piece's direction. The final image is so simple and powerful it brought tears to my eyes. Seeing a tiny beautiful black boy far down stage looking straight out at the audience as the diverse chorus sings "our son will rise on the wheels of a dream" put me squarely here in 2019 praying for the lives of young black boys all over this country. I couldn't help but feel hopeful that out of all the mess and tragedy of the last few decades we can all come together and lift up the lives of our black boys "on the wheels of (an American) dream." ...The sweet and adorable Michael Ursua as Tateh will melt your heart and Janine Papin's fury and passion as Emma Goldman is contagious.

And lastly from the artistic director of the Garden Theatre:

- "I am proud to have joined *The Garden Theatre* at a time when it made the brave decision to produce *Ragtime*. Having lived and worked in Boston, New York and London, I did not realize what a bold choice this was for our theatre until I began to engage in discussion with theatre staff and community members about this piece. This was one of only a handful of times the theatre has presented a work that could be seen as overtly political, and sadly its themes of racist, immigration, workers' rights, and empowering the female voice are even more important than they were when the play premiered on Broadway in 1998. Programming this piece offered the *Garden* an opportunity to engage with actors we had not worked with before and partner with a more diverse range of community groups. We were able to offer a platform for actors, artists and the community in general to discuss the place of art in society and ask our audience

to acknowledge a difficult and painful history. The play inspired an energy in our community and a platform *The Garden Theatre* had never had before. The positive reaction both critically and at the box office has allowed us to look at a far more diverse group of titles for upcoming seasons than we have before. *Ragtime* is a beautiful and important story to tell, but it is still a story created by Caucasian authors. One of the goals this production has given *The Garden Theatre* is to not only diversify the stories we tell on our stage, but also the voices that tell those stories. *Ragtime* has given us the confidence to diversify the voices we share and a long-term goal of giving a home and platform to the tried and tested, but also to telling stories that we hope will spark healthy discussion, personal growth and social change.” Joseph Walsh



Figure 18 End Moment in *Ragtime* Steven Miller Photography Courtesy of *The Garden Theatre*

## CHAPTER FIVE: THE ABSOLUTE BRIGHTNESS OF LEONARD PELKEY AND HATE CRIMES



Figure 19 Flyer for *The Absolute Brightness of Leonard Pelkey* by author

### Background

I direct a one-act play each year for the Thespian District Festival. Because I also direct another production after school, and am short on rehearsal time, I often use one of my acting classes to produce a play within class time. I had read *The Absolute Brightness of Leonard Pelkey* by James Lecesne over a year ago. The description from their website reads:

“One actor portrays every character in a small Jersey Shore town as he unravels the story of Leonard Pelkey, a tenaciously optimistic and flamboyant fourteen-year-old boy who goes missing. A luminous force of nature whose magic is only truly felt once he is gone, Leonard becomes an unexpected inspiration as the town’s citizens question how they live, who they love, and what they leave behind.” (Dramatists)

Even though it was written as a one-person play, there are actually nine characters. The website notes that it has flexible casting, so I divided the roles between the six actors I had available.

### Concept

The play deals with a hate crime against a gay boy named Leonard Pelkey. This story was reminiscent of the hate crime against Matthew Shepard, a gay young man, whose story was documented in the play *The Laramie Project*. Matthew was attacked, tied to a fence in a field outside of Laramie, Wyoming and later died of his injuries. October 11, 2019 was the 21st anniversary of his death. And October 28, 2019 marked the 10th anniversary of the signing of *the* Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act. “The legislation, fought for tirelessly by his parents and a sweeping coalition of civil rights advocates, finally brought LGBTQ+ Americans under the protection of federal hate crimes law. Matt’s and Mr. Byrd’s namesake statute also extended recognition to victims of bias crimes based on gender identity and disability and provided vital aid and training for law enforcement nationwide.” (Matthew Shepard Foundation)

This year is the 21st anniversary of his death, so it was fitting that I reached out to the Matthew Shepard Foundation. Their mission is “to erase hate by replacing it with understanding, compassion and acceptance. Through local, regional and national outreach, we empower individuals to find their voice to create change and challenge communities to identify and address hate that lives within their schools, neighborhoods and homes.” (Matthew Shepard Foundation) I reached out to the foundation and was given some recent statistics on hate crimes I included in my program.



*Figure 20 The Detective in The Absolute Brightness of Leonard Pelkey, with permission by photographer Kathleen Lightsey*

Because this particular play was being done for a thespian festival, and we have a limit of 40 minutes that includes set up and strike time, I needed the set and the tech to be as portable as possible. A desk, a chair, and some stools, and a few props sufficed. To add a bit of dramatic lighting, I used two LED hotboxes (small programmable stage lighting instruments) on the front of the stage. One light was placed in front of the detective's desk, and one in front of the stool where the person who was speaking to the detective sat. The "up lighting" created huge shadows behind the actors. This look was reminiscent of the style of "film noir," which was perfect for our detective story. (Film noir: a gangster thriller, made especially in the 1940s in Hollywood characterized by contrasting lighting and often somewhat impenetrable plots. Dictionary.com) I had the characters rotate around the desk in a circular motion, always bringing the person who was to speak to the stool on the right hand side of the detective. All dialogue was delivered straight out front, with the detective listening and responding as if he was looking directly at the person speaking. At the end of the play, the detective talks about the connection between all the

people in the community created by the young man in the story. As each name was said, the character stood and faced into the circle for the first time. A circle, with no beginning or no end, is a wonderful way to visually demonstrate that connection. The students performed the play twice at the school, where they received some generous donations from our audience members for the Matthew Shepard Project. They next performed it at the Thespian District 3 Festival. One-act plays are adjudicated by a panel of theater professionals, and awards are given out in both performance and technical areas. Individual awards are also given. The student who played the detective was awarded Best Actor in a one-act, one of the students who played two different roles received the Best Supporting Actor in a one-act, and one young lady received the honor of being an all-star cast member. Superior ratings were given for performance and tech. Thespian festival has a numeric way of judging that results in a ranking of superior, excellent, good, fair, or poor. I have submitted the play for the Orlando Fringe Festival which happens next May. If selected by lottery, we will have the opportunity to raise additional funds for the Matthew Shepard Foundation. The best feedback from one of the adjudicators was “Thank you for telling this story; it is so important.”

### Results

The message of the play - to respect, honor, and celebrate what makes someone “different”- comes across loud and clear. Throughout the play, the audience learns how Leonard Pelkey changed so many people's lives by living courageously and fearlessly. In the final words of the play, the detective quotes Shakespeare, “*This above all: to thine own self be true, And it must follow, as the night the day, Thou canst not then be false to any man.*” (Hamlet, Act 1,

Scene 3, Lines 78-82) That message, that each person should be true to themselves, is such an important one for students to hear. So many of my students think they are not good enough and their self-doubt becomes crippling. Granted, that tends to be an issue many teenagers grapple with. But that also is a reason why validation is important. For the young lady who was awarded “All-star cast member,” it gave her a boost that was so needed. She was noticed. Sometimes a simple recognition is all a student needs to know that they are seen. She is someone who had been struggling with self-doubt and that feeling she was “not good enough.” I am not a big believer in awards, but I am a believer in providing opportunities for students to develop and grow. This show served as a needed foundation for change for this student.

## CHAPTER SIX: REFLECTION AND CONCLUSION

At a time when I sometimes find it hard to listen to the news, the work I do serves as a reminder that it has become more and more important to build community and connection between people. At the very least, being part of a theater production provides a way for individuals to come together and work towards a common goal. It is common knowledge that people are more plugged into devices and are not having as many face-to-face discussions as they used to have. The work I do encourages students to listen and respond while on stage but, more importantly, it builds a community off the stage as well. Theater encourages people to engage in dialogue. The dialogue that came out of the 6th grade class that came about by the one student seeing *Ragtime* was an incredible experience. I must agree with Freire and his belief that “dialogue is the basis for critical and problem-posing pedagogy, as opposed to banking education, where there is no discussion and only the imposition of the teacher's ideas on the students.”(Fieser) The dialogue that occurred in the class that day created an environment of listening, respect, and equality for all participants. Although we were not able to solve the problems of racism, I can’t help but hope that it will be youths like them who will find solutions to some of the social issues I care most about. In one of Freire's last books, *Pedagogy of the Heart*, he wrote that “he believed that education was an act of love, and it thus required courage to be politically committed to work toward the empowerment of our students and belief in their potential.” (Freire)

This past year, I have been lucky enough to be cast in several shows. Acting was my first love, and when I have the privilege of being on the stage, I end up learning so much. While being

led by others, I find the inspiration that in turn fuels my work with my students. Listening to the artistic director of the Garden Theatre talk about building family, connecting with others, creating relationships and bonds, makes me realize the transformation I desire as the outcome of my work does not necessarily need to be transformation of the audience. It is also the transformation of the people doing the work. I would like to think the audience can be awakened by a moving piece of theatre, but that is a hard thing to track and quantify. What **can** be tracked is the transformation of the students I work with. I am reminded every once in a while that theatrical experiences can have a lasting impact on someone's life. Years after I convinced a young man to be in his one and only high school theater production he wrote me the following:

“If I were to look up the almighty and sovereign Papin in the dictionary, it would read super talented, the ability to see potential talent from a mile away, a leader! I am truly thankful for you! I remember my sneakiness to try to cut through the auditorium to get to band class and you saw past my scheme. I was reluctant to join the cast of *Ragtime* but you gave me an opportunity to be around the most down to earth, artistic, supportive, dedicated, geeky and nerdy guys and gals around, a chance to experience something to last a lifetime!! I made so many great memories! Thank you a million! I am glad to have been a newbie in the arts and to have been taught by such a wonderful teacher. So many countless kids are inspired by you and will be for years to come!! God Bless, and best wishes in many more achievements!” (a former student)

I have received notes from graduating seniors and students currently in college:

“When I joined the theater department, I did it for fun. I had no idea how it would change me, it’s been one of the best decisions I’ve made. It pushed me out of my comfort zone, and this made me grow as a person. I’ve learned so much about myself and others as well as about acting. Not to mention all the great memories and the friends I’ve made along the way. I’m grateful for this department and for all your dedication.” (a 12<sup>th</sup> grade student)

“From the first time I met you, I knew that I could be myself around you. You have provided me with so many enriching opportunities, allowing me to understand myself and be proud of who I am. It is under your direction and encouragement that I have broken down my walls and truly expressed myself. These past three years have freed me and I am so grateful to have you as a mentor.” (a 12<sup>th</sup> grade student)

“I just wanted to write you and let you know how much I appreciate your love and guidance while I was at Trinity. Very few teachers have the ability to make an impact on students like you do. Theatre was the highlight of my high school career and my home away from home. I look back on those days with nothing but fondness and appreciation. You mean so much to me and I wanted to thank you for everything. The standard of excellence and passion and work ethic that you demanded has been a huge help and I am so thankful to you for that.” (a college student studying theater)

Some of my students that have gone on to pursue theater professionally have gifted me with the knowledge that my belief in them, and the opportunities that the theatre provided them,

influenced their life direction. A former student whose path has included Broadway, movies, and television, recently thanked me “for planting the seeds of her dreams” and “helping her find her wings” to where she is now. The success that she has achieved gives her a platform where she can use her voice to address social and political issues. And she does. She is an advocate for equal and fair representation for women of color. As a performer, she has been a participant in breaking down casting stereotypes. I have no doubt that she will continue her social activism and push for needed changes.

In conclusion, quoting from the article *Understanding Paulo Freire*: “Freire....requires, an acceptance that nothing can truly ever be understood, that the process of enquiry is valid in itself, and that there are no immediate or exact answers to any particular situation or problem. Even the word ‘conclusion’ is anathema to Freire given that he saw human life as an ‘unfinished project’ that could never be ‘concluded’.” (Blackburn) So, perhaps I might not be able to articulate solid conclusions due to the fact that all my work with students lies within them. No one will know what they might do with that in the future. Their actions and reflections on the theater work in which they have engaged, and the social issues to which they have been exposed, might have an ongoing effect throughout their lives. I agree with Freire’s belief that people are always a work in progress. I see it in my own life as a teacher and an artist, my ongoing experiences and resulting reflections do lead me to more action.

Every theater teacher knows that when we expose students to the world of theater, we do change their lives. We teach them to see humanity and give them the ability to open up and take risks. We teach empathy and understanding, and, most importantly, the work builds connections

that are so needed. There is also a ripple effect. Theatre creates more open, vulnerable, and compassionate people, and that has to have an effect in the world. Circling back to something I mentioned in the beginning of this paper. Gun violence. Last year when the Stoneman Douglass shooting happened, it was the youth who came forward to create the “Never Again” and “March for Our Lives” movement. *American Theatre* published the article, “*Surprised That ‘Never Again’ Leaders Are Theatre Kids? I’m Not. Many of these Florida teen activists found their voice and their sense of community onstage*”

“Rehearsing a play teaches young people teamwork, collaboration, tolerance, the importance of listening to and following direction. They learn about problem-solving, discipline, goal-setting, and time management...The engine for all dramatic plays is conflict. Rehearsing a play thrusts students into roles attacking and defending both sides of an issue. Drama teaches that no matter how dire the circumstances may seem, it remains valuable to understand and overcome opposing points of view to reach a satisfying ending. They find human connection...Perhaps most important, kids learn that a group, working together, can deliver something meaningful and life-changing that is greater than themselves, for the benefit of the community.”(Sachs)

As far as working within a school system, I discovered the importance of being able to justify the reasons I have for wanting to produce a particular piece of theater. It is important to have administrative backing, because almost any piece of theater can offend someone. When being questioned (or attacked) by a parent, it helps if someone has “your back.” But, I truly believe that we cease to be effective teachers if we don’t challenge our students. I need to accept

the fact that I will encounter roadblocks along the way. Not everyone is going to agree with my vision. I must be ready to articulate my reasons for why I want to produce a piece of theater. And then I must stand strong and hold fast the goals I have to transform the lives I touch.

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## **APPENDIX A: ROAR OF THE GREASEPAINT ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Audition Notice for *The Roar of the Greasepaint, the Smell of the Crowd*



**AUDITIONS FOR  
THE ROAR OF THE GREASEPAINT  
THE SMELL OF THE CROWD**

**Book, music, and lyrics by Leslie Bricusse and Anthony Newley  
Directed by Janine Papin**

**Performances November 29, 30, December 1, 2.**

**AUDITIONS: AUGUST 20TH FROM 3:15 TO 5:30**

**PLEASE COME PREPARED WITH A 32 BAR CUT OF A SONG.**

**YOU MAY SING FROM THE SHOW.**

**CALL BACKS WILL BE HELD AUGUST 23rd: MUSIC AND SIDES  
WILL BE PROVIDED**



## THE ROAR OF THE GREASEPAINT – THE SMELL OF THE CROWD

The original production explored British class structure through the antics of two comic figures: Sir, who has everything, and Cocky, who has nothing. The two clowns fiercely compete in a “Game of Life,” in which Sir holds every advantage. Cocky struggles to overcome the obstacles Sir lays in his path, and soon grows as judgmental and bellicose as Sir himself. In time, Cocky and Sir reconcile and develop a mutual, if cautious, understanding.

**Our production will bring a very different look to this older piece of musical theater. The story now takes place in a garbage dump. Relevant issues of today like homelessness and mental health will be explored in this updated version of the story. A talk back with the audience will follow each performance.**

### **ROLES**

Sir  
Cocky  
The Kid  
The Girl  
The Stranger  
The Bully  
The Urchins

Director's Notes from *The Roar of the Greasepaint, the Smell of the Crowd* Program

This semester, as part of my coursework for my master's degree at U.C.F., I am enrolled in a class entitled "Theater for Social Change." It has sparked my imagination and challenged the work that I do. My thesis work will attempt to document and track the rehearsal process: the connections, conversations, and results that come from the projects I direct with a slant on social issues. By targeting a few local relevant issues, I hope not only to bring some light to the problem, but also to inspire conversation and find ways that the theater students can help. For this production, I have taken a fairly old piece of musical theater (1965) that was originally an allegory about the "haves" and the "have nots" in England. I have changed the setting to any alley in the U.S. where there is a large population of homeless folks. Perhaps it is our own Central Florida that we are looking at. All the characters you will see are homeless. The "game" that Sir plays with Cocky for things that we all need: food, a job, love, and more, become a metaphor for the games that we play in life. But these two characters are clearly in a dysfunctional relationship; perhaps there are some mental health issues that need to be addressed. Sir always seems to have the upper hand at Cocky's expense. That power makes the "urchins" look up to Sir since he clearly controls the rules of the "game," ensuring that he will always be the winner and Cocky, the loser. But then something happens that results in clarity and a realization that change is possible. Cocky sees that old patterns can be broken. Circumstances and people that keep us down can be overcome or removed from our lives. Sometimes we need a mental shift to succeed, and sometimes we need others to assist us. The community group that TPS has joined forces with is Pathways to Home, a collaboration of many groups that share a mission to eliminate child homelessness in Orange, Osceola, and Seminole Counties. All money

collected by the cast during the run will be donated to this group. With their help the folks they serve, just like the characters at the end of this show, will be helped to find a “Sweet Beginning.”

## **APPENDIX B: ONCE ON THIS ISLAND ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Press Release for *Once on this Island*

The Summer Theater Intensive, in partnership with Lumiere D'education Foundation, proudly presents the musical "Once on this Island." The summer intensive program started in 2003 and was designed to provide students an experience similar to that of a professional theater company, with only a two-week rehearsal process. The program is open to students from all schools and brings together a community of enthusiastic and passionate youth. "*Once on this Island*," under the direction of Janine Papin, with a book and lyrics by Lynn Ahrens and music by Stephen Flaherty, is based on the book "My Love My Love" by Rosa Guy. The recent revival of "Once on this Island" won the 2018 Tony Award for Best Musical Revival.

The story takes place on an island referred to only as the "Jewel of the Antilles." It is a mythical world, inhabited by both gods and humans, but the story resonates with the historical and political realities of Haiti, which was actually known as "Jewel of the Antilles" in the 1800s. The island has great beauty and wealth as well as devastating poverty.

It is with that current-day reality that the school brings awareness to a school in Haiti that needs much assistance. Lumiere D'education Foundation's mission is to provide free education to Haitian children who are eager to learn and gain the skills required to lead healthy, productive lives. The organization empowers disadvantaged children to break the cycle of poverty by providing them the education needed to achieve that. The Haitian government doesn't fund public education; families have to pay for their children to attend school. In rural areas like La Plaine, where this school is located, poverty rates are high, and it's even more unlikely children there will be able to afford schooling. Lumiere D'education provides this at no

cost to the families. The school is run by Caberbe Joseph and Gelina Mascoe. Caberbe Joseph, known as C.J. to all the kids he works with, is the area arts director for Boys and Girls clubs of Central Florida. He is originally from Haiti, and his goal was to open a school there once he finished college. In 2017, he and his sister took over the school opened by their father and have run it ever since.

At each production of the play, foundation t-shirts and jewelry made by students in Haiti, as well as other Haitian art, will be on sale, with the proceeds going to Lumiere D'education. Information about sponsoring a student will be available. A donation of only \$14 will provide one student with school uniforms, school supplies, and meals and will help cover the teachers' salaries for an entire month! Lumiere D'education Foundation, Inc. is a 501c3 non-profit organization. All donations are tax-deductible.

Please come and join us for one of our performances and be swept away by this beautiful tale of a young woman who “fights and endures the ultimate sacrifice to make the world a better and more inclusive place.” - Michael Arden, the original Broadway director of “*Once on this Island*.”

#### Director's Notes for *Once on this Island*

The Summer Theater Intensive, in partnership with Lumiere D'education Foundation, proudly presents the musical "*Once on this Island*." The summer intensive program started in 2003 and was designed to provide students an experience similar to that of a professional theater company, with only a two-week rehearsal process. The program is open to students from all schools and brings together a community of enthusiastic and passionate youth.

The story takes place on an island referred to only as the “Jewel of the Antilles.” It is a mythical world, inhabited by both gods and humans, but the story resonates with the historical and political realities of Haiti, which was actually known as “Jewel of the Antilles” in the 1800s. The island has great beauty and wealth as well as devastating poverty.

It is with that current-day reality that Trinity Prep school brings awareness to a school in Haiti that needs much assistance. Lumiere D'education Foundation's mission is to provide free education to Haitian children who are eager to learn and gain the skills required to lead healthy, productive lives. The organization empowers disadvantaged children to break the cycle of poverty by providing them the education needed to achieve that.

A donation of only \$14 will provide one student with school uniforms, school supplies, and meals and will help cover the teachers' salaries for an entire month! Lumiere D'education Foundation, Inc. is a 501c3 non-profit organization. All donations are tax-deductible. Thank you for considering any donation to this worthy organization. We thank you for being here.

Trinity Prep actors help Haiti students with *Once on This Island*  
by Matt Palm of the Orlando Sentinel

Trinity Preparatory School's summer production of “Once on This Island” has a purpose beyond entertainment: It's helping Haiti.

At a recent rehearsal, enthusiastic students danced to the tropical-sounding music of the Broadway hit in a theater at the Winter Park private school. Meanwhile, nearly 900 miles away on a Caribbean island, students were immersed in their final exams at a school that only recently obtained clean drinking water.

The production of “Once on This Island” — a story about love and compassion on an isle much like Haiti — is designed to raise awareness for the Lumiere D'Education Foundation and

bring in money for the foundation's Haitian school. It runs through Sunday, June 30. "It's a lot of work," said Janine Papin, who heads the Trinity Prep drama department, as her friend Caberbe Joseph gently finished her thought: "But it's worth it."

Papin has long known Joseph, known as CJ, an Orlando resident who runs the foundation school with his sister, Gelina Mascoe. Joseph, the area arts director for Boys and Girls Clubs of Central Florida, was born in Haiti — where there is no guarantee of free public education. "We saw the struggle," said Joseph, a graduate of the University of Central Florida. "As a young person, you sit next to someone at school for four or five days and then they are not there. You think 'Maybe they are sick,' but no, their parents can't afford to send them to school anymore."



*A Haitian student creates a bracelet in an after-school program in La Plaine, Haiti. The bracelets will be sold this week in Winter Park to raise money for the school. (Trinity Preparatory School / Courtesy photo)*

The nonprofit foundation's school, in rural La Plaine, serves up to 165 poor Haitian children with free education through sixth grade. Beyond paying for books and teachers, Lumiere d'Education — the "Light of Education" — tries to provide shoes, free lunch and other basic necessities to students, including the clean-water project.

“Our job is to shine a light where light had not shone before,” Joseph said. But the expenses add up. Joseph tries to come up with \$15,000 each year but “we haven’t hit that target ever,” he said.

“He’s always doing fundraisers,” said Papin — who thought her show, Trinity Prep’s “summer intensive” production, could help.

In the annual summer intensive, open to students across Central Florida, a show is put together with just two highly focused weeks of rehearsal. Participants say the experience goes beyond improving their artistic skills.

“The summer intensive is incredibly enriching mentally and socially,” said Olivia Miller, who just graduated from Trinity Prep. For performer Mariah Holt, a rising sophomore, the program provided “an opportunity to work on yourself and be whatever it is you want to be. It allowed me to build confidence and get out of my comfort zone.”

Papin hopes, beyond singing and dancing, the experience helps students develop empathy.



**SPONSOR A CHILD CHANGE A LIFE.**



**LUMIERE D' EDUCATION FOUNDATION, INC.**  
provides a future for children  
in Haiti by providing  
education one child at a time.

*The Lumiere D'Education Foundation raises money to educate poor Haitian children. (Trinity Preparatory School / Courtesy photo)*

“Helping kids in Haiti makes me feel like I have a purpose in helping kids that have been through hard times,” said Kisha Delgado, who just completed eighth grade at Indian Trails Middle School. “I know how they feel because I was born there.”

The Broadway version of “Once on This Island” deals with racial issues, but the academic adaptation performed at Trinity Prep is focused on how the divide between the very rich and the very poor hurts society.

Papin said the story line makes the show even more appropriate to use in a benefit for Haiti, an impoverished nation dealt devastating blows by a 2010 earthquake and 2016’s Hurricane Matthew.

“The end of the story is sad, but it leaves you with hope for the future,” Papin said. “It’s my hope that this next generation can turn everything around.”



*Haitian students made these colorful bracelets that will be sold this week at a production of the musical "Once on This Island" to raise money for their school. (Trinity Preparatory School / Courtesy photo)*

Papin has structured a pre-show in which the audience appears to be on a cruise ship headed to a Caribbean island. As they leave the ship (the lobby) for the island (the theater), they are met by vendors selling water, T-shirts and bracelets — a familiar sight to cruise-goers.

The proceeds will benefit the foundation, and there's a twist: The bracelets were made in an after-school art program by the Haitian students.

“It gives them a way to express themselves” — and in this case, help themselves — Joseph said.

Once the show recoups its expenses, all other ticket sales will also go to the foundation, and Papin hopes some theatergoers will be moved to sponsor a student.

“I know that life in Haiti is hard,” sad Delgado. “So it means a lot to me to help in any way I can.”

*mpalm@orlandosentinel.com*

## **APPENDIX C: PERMISSION TO USE ART AND PHOTOS**

## Garden Theatre



March 13, 2020

Janine Papin

Dear Janine,

Via this letter, we happily grant permission to use our photos of *Ragtime* in your thesis. Please indicate that they are provided "Courtesy of Garden Theatre."

Warmest Regards,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Janet M. Haddock".

Janet M. Haddock  
Manager of Design & Advertising  
Garden Theatre  
407-877-4736 ext. 210  
[janet@gardentheatre.org](mailto:janet@gardentheatre.org)

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160 W Plant St, Winter Garden, FL 34787

| 407.877.4736

| [gardentheatre.org](http://gardentheatre.org)

## Kathleen Lightsey

3/14/2020

Trinity Preparatory School Mail - Thesis photos



Janine Papin <papinj@trinityprep.org>

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### Thesis photos

2 messages

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**KATHLEEN LIGHTSEY** <kathleenlightsey@me.com>  
To: Janine Papin <papinj@trinityprep.org>

Sat, Mar 14, 2020 at 12:42 PM

Dear Janine,  
You have permission to use any photos that I have taken of any Trinity Preparatory School performances for any purpose, including use in your Master's thesis.

Sincerely,

Kathleen Lightsey

---

**Janine Papin** <papinj@trinityprep.org>  
To: KATHLEEN LIGHTSEY <kathleenlightsey@me.com>

Sat, Mar 14, 2020 at 12:49 PM

Thank you!

[Quoted text hidden]

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Janine Papin

Fine Arts Chair/ Auditorium Manager  
Trinity Preparatory School  
321-282-2508 [trinityprep.org](http://trinityprep.org)

*"Our mission is to develop individuals who will excel in college and in life, contribute to their communities, lead in a changing society, and grow spiritually."*



<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0?ik=3fa0e77428&view=pt&search=all&permthid=thread-f%3A1661158484366557790&siml=msg-f%3A1661158484366557790> 1/1

## Joe Rinaldi

3/14/2020

Trinity Preparatory School Mail - permission to use your artwork



Janine Papin <papinj@trinityprep.org>

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### permission to use your artwork

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Joe Rinaldi <jrinaldi@gmail.com>  
To: Janine Papin <papinj@trinityprep.org>

Sat, Mar 14, 2020 at 5:13 PM

I hereby authorize the use of my original artworks in any needed capacity.

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe Rinaldi". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Joe Rinaldi

[Quoted text hidden]

[Quoted text hidden]

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## Lumiere D'education Foundation

3/15/2020

Trinity Preparatory School Mail - image permission



Janine Papin <papinj@trinityprep.org>

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### image permission

1 message

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**Caberbe Joseph** <cjosephide@gmail.com>  
To: papinj@trinityprep.org

Sat, Mar 14, 2020 at 9:03 PM

To Whom This May Concern

I Caberbe Joseph, the Co-Founder of Lumiere D'education Foundation Inc, gave Janine Papin full permission to use the images of the handmade bracelets and the portrait of the youth on the Picture. These images were taken for the purpose of Janine Papin dissertation. If you would like to learn more about Lumiere D'education Foundation Inc, or If you would like to receive more proof, please contact me at (407) 538 – 7174.

### **Caberbe Joseph**

Co-Founder of Lumiere de Education Foundation, Inc.  
Florida Office  
[www.lumiereeducation.org](http://www.lumiereeducation.org)  
407.538.7174



<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0?ik=3fa0e77428&view=pt&search=all&permthid=thread-f%3A1661189975582729217&simpl=msg-f%3A166118997558...> 1/1

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