A LOOK AT THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN AMERICA AND HERE AT HOME

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ABOUT DRIVING MISS DAISY

Driving Miss Daisy tells the story of a friendship between Daisy Werthan, an elderly southern Jewish woman, and Hoke Colburn, her African-American chauffer. Set in Atlanta, Georgia between 1948 and 1973, Driving Miss Daisy was the first in a trilogy of plays, known as the Atlanta Trilogy, written by Alfred Uhry. The play is “inspired by the relationship of Uhry’s grandmother Lena Fox and her chauffeur, Will Coleman” as they try to navigate their individual roles and relationships in society before, during, and post the Civil Rights Movement (Terry). Starring Dana Ivey and Morgan Freeman, the play originally opened Off-Broadway in 1987 at Playwrights Horizons before later moving to the John Houseman Theatre. It won a Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1988. In 1989 the play was adapted to film and went on to win four Academy Awards (Wikipedia).

ALFRED UHRY (Playwright)

Alfred Fox Uhry was born in Atlanta on December 3, 1936, to a prosperous family of German-Jewish descent. He attended Druid Hills High School, and after graduation he attended Brown University in Rhode Island, where he received a degree in English and drama in 1958. Uhry then relocated to New York City, where he taught English at the Calhoun School. In 1975, after several failed attempts at writing a successful play, he collaborated with Robert Waldman to adapt Eudora Welty's short novel The Robber Bridegroom into a musical. The production received a Tony Award nomination for Best Book of a Musical, and it marked Uhry's first success as a playwright (Terry).
CHARACTERS

**Daisy Werthan** Daisy is a 72-year-old widow and former school teacher when the play begins in 1948 and 97-years-old when the play ends. After getting into a car accident while backing out of her garage, Daisy’s son Boolie decides she is too old to drive. He insists on hiring a driver for his independent, stubborn, and, at times, bossy but mother. She feels that a driver in her day-to-day life will cramp her style no longer allowing her to have full control of all her actions. She will lose her independence. The new driver, Hoke Coleburn, upholds a consistently mild, encouraging, and respectful manner with Miss Daisy, which eventually persuades her to allow him to drive her to the local grocery store. For the next 25 years, Hoke faithfully serves as Daisy’s chauffeur. As her friendship with Hoke grows, she reshapes some of her imbedded prejudices against African Americans and later becomes a supporter of civil rights. As the play ends, physically weak and unable to care for herself, Daisy is placed in a nursing home. Despite her old age, however, she maintains her sense of self, which is characterized by her humor and determined will – but at 97, she is softer and more vulnerable (Christensen 3).

**Hoke Colburn** Hoke, who is 60 years old at the beginning of the play and 85 years old at the end, is an uneducated, unemployed, African American Christian man and a member of the working class who is hired by Boolie Werthan, Daisy’s son, to work as his mother’s driver after she has her car accident. Hoke has previously worked as a driver and milk deliveryman. He is grateful for the job and remains respectful, patient, and tolerant of Daisy’s impertinence and prejudices. At different times throughout the play, Hoke speaks his
mind, maintains his dignity and is a self-advocate of his rights. The financial stability gained by being employed by Boolie over the 25-year period allows Hoke to gain greater self-confidence and self-respect (Christensen 4).

**Boolie Werthan**  Boolie is Daisy’s son. He is 40-years-old when the play begins in 1948 and 65-years-old at the end of the play (1973). He has inherited his father’s printing company and as years progress it makes him one of the best established, leading businessmen of his community. Boolie becomes increasing aware of how he might be perceived by others in his community, and, as a result, becomes very careful not to be viewed in ways that might have a negative effect on his public image. For example, while being Jewish himself, he tells his mother that he does not want to attend the United Jewish Appeal banquet for Martin Luther King, Jr. for fear that his attendance might not be good for his business. Boolie is diligent in making sure Daisy is taken care of financially and physically but, at times, is insensitive to her feelings. Like his mother, he exercises the same determination and will, which causes him to sometimes neglect Daisy’s true desires; he falls short of fully understanding her actions. Most times, he humors his mother’s stubborn ways rather than taking the time to understand them (Christensen 5).

**NORTH CAROLINA THEATRE AND THE CITY OF RALEIGH MUSEUM PARTNERSHIP**

NC Theatre is excited to announce its partnership with the City of Raleigh Museum during its run of *Driving Miss Daisy*. The story not only gives an historical look at race relations during and post Jim Crow\(^1\) south, but also

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\(^1\) The Jim Crow laws were racial segregation laws enacted between 1876 and 1965 in the United States at the state and local level. They mandated racial segregation in all public places, such as restaurants, schools, and public transportation and prohibited interracial marriages in many states across the country – not just the American south. The name Jim Crow comes from a popular minstrel show created and performed by a white entertainer by the name of Thomas Dartmouth Rice (1806-1860). Rice would dress in black face and play “Jim Crow,” a slave, acting out in song and dance an exaggerated portrayal of “lazy” African American slaves (Jim Crow Museum).
encourages reflection of and dialogue about race in today’s society. Raleigh is a city with its own unique history when it comes to race and civil rights, and NC Theatre is excited for the opportunity to open up a dialogue about how Jim Crow laws impacted the local community. As part of the partnership, the City of Raleigh Museum will display artifacts in the lobby of AJ Fletcher Opera Theater from its newest exhibit: *Let Us March On: Raleigh’s Journey Toward Civil Rights!* It explores our city’s struggle against racial inequality from 1930-1970, focusing on how local individuals made a difference—fighting to desegregate public schools, participating in sit-ins and protest marches, or joining their neighbors against racism.

NC Theatre has a longstanding history of partnering with other community organizations in an effort to make live theatre accessible to everyone in the community. It provides complimentary tickets to youth and families in underserved communities through the *Share the Stars* program and provides many services to persons with disabilities to ensure they are able to enjoy the full theatre experience. It is NC Theatre’s hope that pointed and strategic approaches to reaching out to various ethnic communities in an effort to diversify the racial and ethnic composition of its audiences will not only break down practical and perceptual barriers to participating in the arts, but better position NC Theatre to fulfill its vision of “providing broad access to the arts and to entertain and engage diverse audiences.”

**THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT: NATIONALLY AND LOCALLY**

2014 marks the 50th anniversary of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. As our country commemorates an important piece of legislation that prohibited discrimination based on race, color, religion, or national origin and provided federal control over desegregation, NC Theatre is excited to be
producing a work that boldly examines how the intellectual thought of post-Reconstruction Era America was one of “separate but equal.” African Americans and white Americans could not be educated in the same classrooms, drink from the same water fountains, or enter most business establishments through the same entrance, and African Americans were subjected to a multitude of other injustices in this country. With the ruling in the case of Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, “in 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down the “separate but equal” doctrine that formed the basis for state-sanctioned discrimination, drawing national and international attention to African Americans’ plight. In the turbulent decade and a half that followed, civil rights activists used nonviolent protest and civil disobedience to bring about change, and the federal government made legislative headway with initiatives such as the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the Civil Rights Act of 1968” (History.com). Well known civil rights activists such as Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, Rosa Parks, and Medgar Evers became the faces and names behind the fight for racial equality in the United States. As you will learn in Driving Miss Daisy, the Jewish community played an important role in the support for equality.

Many Jewish people from the Northeastern Corridor were very active and vocal during the Civil Rights Movement. James Peck, whose family converted from Judaism to Episcopalian, was a native New Yorker who was active in the fight for social equality in the years that preceded what became known as the Civil Rights Movement. He spoke against segregation and joined the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) in 1946, where he worked as the publicity officer. “He became increasingly consumed by the race issue especially after discovering and joining CORE. He was arrested in Durham, North Carolina, during the Journey of Reconciliation in 1947 which was an interstate integrated bus journey through the South, which was also Peck's first undertaking with CORE and
a precursor to the later Freedom Rides of the 1960s” (Wikipedia). Another notable activist during that time was Rabbi Joachim Prinz. Prinz, who escaped from Nazi Germany, later settled in New Jersey and was President of the American Jewish Congress from 1958-66, was one of the leaders of the 1963 March on Washington. “His speech, alerting Americans to the disgrace of silence in the face of injustice, preceded that of his friend Martin Luther King, Jr. (Joachim Prinz Biography). However, because the social tensions weren’t as high in the north as they were the south, some people felt that Jews in the north were safer expressing their opposition to segregation than Jews who lived in the south. While there were many southern Jews who did support social justice, they feared backlash from the white, non-Jewish communities. Their Jewish faith and heritage was not well received by many southern, white Christians, and they feared doing anything to draw attention that could potentially put their businesses and/or families in harm’s way (Berger). As we know, the Civil Rights Movement, was not just about the racial tension between black and white America, but also about working towards creating a society where everyone was treated equally, regardless of race, color, creed, or gender.

SEGREGATION IN RALEIGH: JOE HOLT’S STORY

While the nation was fighting its war against inequality during the civil rights era, many states, cities and towns were doing the same. North Carolina is known for the “Greensboro Four” – the four NC A&T State University students who sat a Woolworth’s “whites-only” lunch counter and demanded service in 1960. Shaw University and St. Augustine University students followed suit and had several sit-ins of their own at various local businesses in Raleigh. But there is one Raleigh native who, along with his family, challenged the status quo in an effort to have access to a better public school education – Joseph H. Holt, Jr.
Two years after the U.S. Supreme Court handed down its Brown vs. Board ruling declaring segregation unconstitutional in the nation’s public schools, and one month after the NC General Assembly enacted legislation (the Pearsall Plan) designed to thwart public school integration, the Joseph H. Holt, Sr. family (father and husband – Joseph H. Holt, Sr.; mother and wife – Elwyn H. Holt; son – Joseph H. Holt, Jr.), in August 1956, initiated the effort to integrate the Raleigh City Schools by applying for Joseph, Jr., then thirteen years old, to attend Josephus Daniels Jr.-Sr. High School. Daniels was located about ten (10) blocks from the Holt home on Oberlin Road. The Superintendent of the Raleigh City Schools, Jesse O. Sanderson, requested a conference. Mrs. Holt, a teacher with the Wake County Schools, represented her family at the conference. Sanderson attempted to persuade her to withdraw the application she had submitted for her son to attend Daniels Jr. High in exchange for the Raleigh City School Board providing free bus transportation for the African American students of the West Raleigh Oberlin Community from their neighborhood to the segregated J.W. Ligon High Jr.-Sr. High School located several miles across town in East Raleigh. Mrs. Holt informed the superintendent that she would not withdraw her son’s application, but would accept the free transportation. However, Joseph, Jr. was not permitted to enroll at Daniels, the superintendent using the excuse that the application was submitted too late, even though there was no established deadline. Thus began a long, arduous, stressful, and frustrating struggle by the Holts to integrate the Raleigh City Schools, punctuated by an application submitted to the all-white Needham
Broughton (Senior) High School in June 1957, and a suit filed against the Raleigh City School Board in August of the same year. The Holt struggle was a solitary one – they fought the battle alone, and became socially isolated, as many former friends, fearing white reprisals, began to distance themselves from the family. Over the next several years the family endured constant duress, experiencing incessant intimidation and harassment from angry whites, receiving hate mail and threats on their lives from white supremacist hate groups, enduring unreasonable demands from creditors, and suffering numerous economic reprisals and setbacks. (Joseph H. Holt, Sr. was fired from his job, and at least one of Mrs. Holt’s paychecks was garnisheed for almost its total amount). Additionally, the parents received word that there was a plot to abduct their son. The legal battle the Holts waged in federal court in the form of a suit against the Raleigh City School Board exhausted the family emotionally, physically, and in a number of other ways.

Two pieces of North Carolina legislation, the North Carolina Pupil Assignment Act, and the Pearsall Plan, deliberately designed to prevent school integration, frustrated the Holts in their effort to achieve a favorable court ruling.

The Holt fight ended in October 1959. At that time Joseph H. Holt, Jr. was in his senior year at J.W. Ligon Jr.-Sr. High School.

In April 1966 the Pearsall Plan was outlawed when a “three-judge federal court panel” determined it to be composed of “racially unconstitutional laws.” (Durham Morning Herald, April 5, 1966). However, it continued to remain a factor in North Carolina’s school desegregation saga until 1969 when, in the case of Godwin v. Johnston County Board of Education, its death knell was sounded
with finality in a ruling that adjudged it as unconstitutional a second time. (Courtesy of Joseph H. Holt)

BIOS

SANDY DUNCAN* (Daisy Werthan) has many Broadway, regional theater, film, television and commercial credits to her name. (Wheat Thins anyone?) Her stage career began at age 12 with her debut performance in The Dallas Summer Musicals production of The King and I. Since that time she has enjoyed a variety of performance opportunities for which she has earned Tony nominations (Peter Pan, Canterbury Tales, The Boy Friend), Emmy nominations (Funny Face, Roots) and Golden Globe Award nominations (Star Spangled Girl, The Million Dollar Duck). She is happy to take this opportunity to dispel the urban myth she has a glass eye. Much love to Donald, her husband of 35 years, and their two sons Jeffrey and Michael.

KEVYN MORROW* (Hoke Colburn) Broadway credits include the original casts of The Scarlet Pimpernel, Dream, Smokey Joe’s Café, Leader of the Pack as well as Dreamgirls (1987 revival) and A Chorus Line (1990 closing company). His London West End credits include the world premiere of 125th Street (Georgie Blues), and Ragtime (Coalhouse Walker Jr.) -2004 Olivier Award Nominee for Best Actor in a Musical. Off-Broadway he appeared in the 40th Anniversary Production of The Boys in the Band (Bernard) and Blue (Blue Williams). Regional credits include The Whipping Man (Simon), It’s A Wonderful Life -live radio play (Clarence the Angel), Gem of the Ocean (Solly Two Kings), Stormy Weather (Billy Strayhorn), The First Wives Club (1st Husband Bill)- NAACP Best Actor Nom., David Mamet’s Race (Henry), Radio Golf (Harmond Wilks), Les Misérables (Javert), The
Little Mermaid (King Triton), Xanadu (Danny/Zeus), The Pajama Game (Sid), The Three Musketeers (Aramis), Five Guys Named Moe (Nomax/Four-Eyed), Thunder Knockin’ On The Door (Jaguar), Our Town (Dr. Gibbs), Stone My Heart (Othello) and Tambourines to Glory (Buddy Lomax) - 2005 Helen Hayes Award Nominee for Best Actor. Film credits include Dark Light, The Trade and Stayin’ Alive. Television credits include, most recently, “Hostages”(guest), “Person of Interest” (recurring), “The Good Wife” (guest), “Elementary” (guest), Kennedy Center Honors (featured), and “Half-Share”- pilot (series regular), as well as “Hope and Faith” (recurring), “Ed” (recurring), “Law and Order” (guest), “Coach” (guest), “Murphy Brown” (guest), “L.A. Law” (guest), “One Life To Live” (recurring), as well as Host of “Kidsworld.”

BOB HESS* (Boolie Werthan) is delighted to be making his first appearance at North Carolina Theatre fresh off a successful, critically-acclaimed run of the Southwest premier of Christopher Durang’s Tony Award-winning Vanya and Sonia and Masha and Spike (Vanya) at Uptown Players in Dallas. Last fall, he had the pleasure of working with both Driving Miss Daisy director Eric Woodall and NCT Artistic Director Casey Hushion in productions of Big River and Oswald: The Actual Interrogation, respectively, at Fort Worth’s Casa Manana Theatre; Bob could not be happier to be working with both of them again! A proud member of Actors’ Equity for nearly 30 years, Bob’s favorite roles have included Lawrence in Dirty Rotten Scoundrels, Walter in Chess (directed by Rob Marshall), Martin in The Goat, or Who Is Sylvia?, Serge in Art, Man #1 in Putting It Together, Bob Cratchit in A Christmas Carol, Ben Weeks in The Normal Heart, Felix Unger in The Odd Couple, Mr. Nightingale in Vieux Carré, Paravicini in The Mousetrap, Father in Ragtime, Frog in A Year with Frog and Today, and Buddy in Follies. A recipient of numerous Dallas
Critics’ Forum Awards and the Greer Garson Theatre Arts Award, Bob is proud to originally hail from Louisville, Kentucky.

**ERIC WOODALL** (Director) is the Resident Director of *Mamma Mia!* (Broadway, Tour, Las Vegas and Cruise companies). Eric’s other directing credits include *Steel Magnolias* (North Carolina Theatre); *Big River* (Casa Manana); *August Osage County* and *Violet* (Theatre Raleigh), *Amadeus* (Memphis' Playhouse on the Square), and *Hay Fever* (Playmakers Repertory). Eric also works as a Casting Director at Tara Rubin Casting in New York. Broadway casting credits include: *Aladdin, Bullets Over Broadway, Les Miserables, A Little Night Music, Billy Elliot, Little Mermaid, Mary Poppins, Mamma Mia!* and *Phantom of the Opera*. Eric is a drama graduate of Carnegie Mellon-University. For my parents, Bill and Noela.

**JOSEPH H. HOLT, JR.**, (Civil Rights Activist) is a native of Raleigh, NC. During his youth he attended both the Wake County Public Schools and the Raleigh City Public Schools, graduating in June 1960 from J.W. Ligon Jr.-Sr. High School. Continuing his education, he matriculated at Saint Augustine’s College in Raleigh, graduating in 1964 with a B.S. in Biology. Upon graduation he was awarded a scholarship by the Southern Education Foundation for summer study in Zoology at the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill. He entered the United States Air Force in November 1964. While on active duty he earned a M.S. degree in Personnel Management from Troy State University in Montgomery, and he is an in-residence graduate of the Air War College, the Air Force’s senior level of professional military education and executive development. Holt retired as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1990.
After retiring from the Air Force, Mr. (Lt Col) Holt taught management and organizational behavior courses for two years at Fayetteville State University as a full-time lecturer, followed by two years as a part-time instructor at Saint Augustine’s College teaching math fundamentals and algebra to Army ROTC cadets. He also taught the Pre-College Course in the Wake County Public School System for two years under the auspices of the Math and Science Education Network initiative.

Mr. Holt is also an active community volunteer. His activities have been carried out primarily through his engagement with and support of veteran’s organizations. As a member of Charles T. Norwood American Legion Post 157, he has been instrumental in organizing Memorial Day, Veterans Day, and other patriotic events. One of his most important contributions was the regeneration of Post 157’s participation in, and the raising of the community’s consciousness about, the American Legion Boys’ State Program, one of the most widely acclaimed youth leadership development activities in the nation.

ERNEST DOLLAR (Executive Director, City of Raleigh Museum) began working in historic sites in 1993 after completing his B.A. in History and B.F.A. in Design from U.N.C. Greensboro. Ernest has worked in several historic parks in both North and South Carolina. In 2006, he completed his M.A. in Public History from N.C. State and currently services as the Executive Director of the City of Raleigh Museum and president of the Historic Stagville Foundation.

LISA GRELE BARRIE (President & CEO, North Carolina Theatre) joined North Carolina Theatre in 2003 and has championed a dynamic and successful philanthropic culture within the company in partnership with board and staff. Lisa serves on the board of the Capital City Club, on the marketing committee of the Cultural Presenter’s Forum, and was the 2012 recipient of the "Pinnacle Award for Community Leadership" from
the Greater Raleigh Chamber of Commerce. She is highly engaged as a community collaborator and plays an important role in NC Theatre’s fundraising efforts. Lisa graduated from Bucknell University and her marketing/communications/development experience includes advertising agencies in Boston, sales for The New Yorker Magazine, marketing at Talbots, heading up her own marketing communications consulting firm and development/communications for Gilda’s Club Metro Detroit. She was promoted to Managing Director in 2008 and hired as President & CEO in 2009 after a nationwide search. Lisa takes great pride in engaging the board, staff and the greater Raleigh community in activities that advance the Theatre’s mission and vision. She is a passionate STEAM advocate and has a deep belief in the role of the performing arts to build community, harness creativity, and reaffirm the power of our collective human spirit.

*Appearing Courtesy of Actors’ Equity Association

*Photo Courtesy of Casa Manana Theatre*
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Daisy and Hoke had an unlikely friendship. Can you think of a time in your life where you created a bond with someone you never thought you would because they were “different” from you?

2. Some people feel that because Barack Obama is President of the United States that we live in a post-racial America. What are your thoughts?

3. Were there any parallels that you noticed in the storyline of the play that still exist in today’s America?

4. This past year, the film industry has produced historical films like The Butler and 12 Years A Slave. Why do you think, if at all, that stories such as these and Driving Miss Daisy are important to continue to tell?

5. How would you characterize race relations nationally and locally, today?

WORKS CITED


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PNC pulls back the curtain of the 2013-14 NC Theatre season to share a series of behind the scenes experiences with audience members of all ages.

The PNC Director’s Chair is a window into the creative process, helping to broaden the way audiences engage with musicals and their regional theatre company, NC Theatre, giving patrons a deeper appreciation for the art form beyond simply their own experience in the moment, and ultimately enhancing their theatre-going experience.

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