

# UPSTAGE

A PUBLICATION OF THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT AT **ROUNDAABOUT HEALTH COMPANY** UP SPRING 2007



# 110

## IN THE SHADE

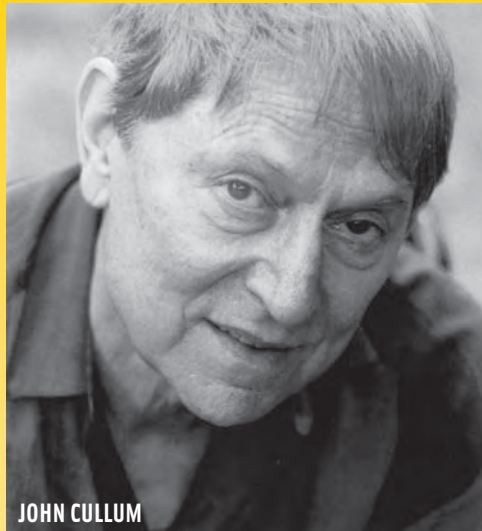
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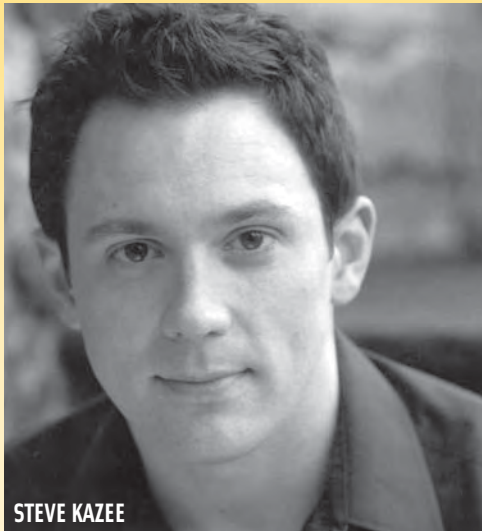
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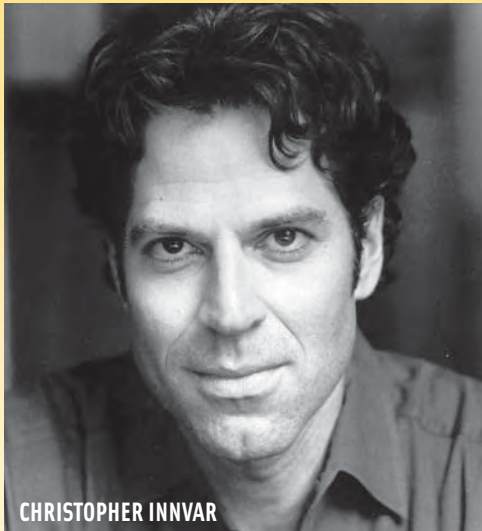
AUDRA MCDONALD



JOHN CULLUM



STEVE KAZEE



CHRISTOPHER INNVAR

**AUDRA MCDONALD** (Lizzie) past theatrical performances include *A Raisin in the Sun*, *Henry IV*, *Marie Christine*, *Ragtime*, and *Carousel*. Television and film credits include *A Raisin in the Sun*, *The Bedford Diaries*, *Risky Business*, *Love and the Tenth Planet*, *Wit*, *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*, *Contact*, *Annie*, *Cradle Will Rock* and *The Object of My Affection*.

**JOHN CULLUM** (H.C.) past theatrical performances include *Camelot*, *Hamlet*, *On a Clear Day You Can See Forever*, *Man of La Mancha*, *1776*, *Shenandoah*, *On the Twentieth Century*, *Deathtrap*, *Aspects of Love*, *Show Boat* and *Urinetown, the Musical*. Television and film

credits include *Northern Exposure*, *E.R.*, *One Life to Live*, *All the Way Home*, *Hawaii*, *The Day After*, *The Prodigal*, *Inherit the Wind* and *Held Up*.

**STEVE KAZEE** (Starbuck) past performances include *Spamalot*, *As You Like It*, *Grease* and *Damn Yankees*.

**CHRISTOPHER INNVAR** (File) past theatrical performances include *The Threepenny Opera*, *Victor/Victoria* and *Les Misérables*. Television and film credits include *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*, *Infected*, *Prime* and *Rock the Paint*.

# education

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# 110 IN THE SHADE

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# Shades

## of the Director

### **Why did you want to direct this play?**

The more I work on musicals, the more I think they work best when they're about romance, when they're about love. And as much as I grew up with all the Sondheim shows that are about so many other things, and after working on all kinds of shows that shy away from love, I wanted to do one that centered on it. And I've always really admired the score. When I started working with Audra, it seemed like a natural fit for her and I adore working with her. So it was a combination of both those things. Also, I think that this show is better than people realize and that it deserves another hearing. Knowing that I had Audra and that it would get such a wonderful representation was exciting to me.

### **Talk a little about how you have approached directing this show.**

I always think that the most important elements of a show are the performers and the material. To me, putting them front and center is always the most important thing. [Set designer] Santo Loquasto designed an abstract world within which a very realistic story is played out. Other productions I've seen [of this show] were very large—not overblown, just large—that was the idea. But my thought is that this is a family drama, so I wanted to scale it back so that you really could see this family was dealing with a problem with a very real time crunch. The brothers are trying to make sure the sister they love finds some love in her life before she's declared a spinster...and the clock is running! They want her to find some masculine, romantic—you know, that kind of love. And I'm very moved by that story. I'm moved by the father, who takes a risk by letting her be with someone that might be dangerous because he wants her to have (it's that beautiful speech he says to Noah) "even one moment with a man talking quiet, his hand touching her face." He wants her to experience life in all of its facets and that includes romantic, sexual life. He's willing to risk her being with someone who may be unsavory so that she doesn't go through her life without having experienced that. Hopefully, our scaled-down production will help us to connect with the characters on a much more personal level, in part because we will be so close to them.

### **How will you approach the challenge of Audra playing a character that is referenced as plain and unattractive?**

We've tried to shy away from the notion that she's not getting a man because she's ugly. Instead, she's not get-

ting a man because she speaks her mind. That's really the thrust of this Lizzie. And that's the problem. It's her intelligence, her wit, her forthrightness that in this period was not attractive to men. It didn't fit the stereotype of what a woman was. So basically it's a story about someone coming to terms with who she is, and appreciating it. We are downplaying the beauty question because I think we are taking beautiful to mean accepting of yourself, and that is what is lacking in her: the acceptance of the beauty that she is.

### **Did it cross your mind that it was unusual to cast the family multi-culturally, or were your choices based upon getting the best actors possible?**

No, it never crossed my mind. And it never crosses my mind. Making it an all-black cast seems offensive to me in some ways. I honestly think Audra transcends all worlds because she's just such a fabulous actress and for me, that's all that's important. I try to get the best actors for the roles no matter what their backgrounds, but I do try to be careful that the representation of races and religions does not advance a stereotype. But having said that, I'm sorry we don't have an Asian person in the cast. I would have loved that. And an Indian...

### **What is this show about for you?**

I think the show is about transformation. I think all the characters have an issue that they're dealing with, and not dealing with it very well. By the end of the play, everyone has moved forward. In some ways, it's about giving up. Characters come on stage saying, This is who I am, and this is what I believe. Then after this one day in which the show takes place, they're all able to be more flexible in their points of view and can shift towards a better way of living. Their rigidity is a block that keeps them from fully realizing themselves as human beings. For some reason, the confluence of all these things that happen in this day helps almost every character to grow—to grow in their humanity and in their self-actualization. To me, that's what the play is about—kind of getting out of your own way, getting out of preconceived ideas of who you are and what's right and what's wrong. It's about being alive and becoming human. Becoming free.

### **So when Lizzie chooses File over Starbuck, it's because she understands. She sings, "Simple Things."**

The show to some degree is about the argument, Should one live in one's dreams or be a realist? Fantasizers and realists. Starbuck, he's a complete "fantasizer." File is a complete realist. And Lizzie is somebody who I think of


## DURING REHEARSALS, UPSTAGE CAUGHT UP WITH *110 IN THE SHADE* DIRECTOR LONNY PRICE.

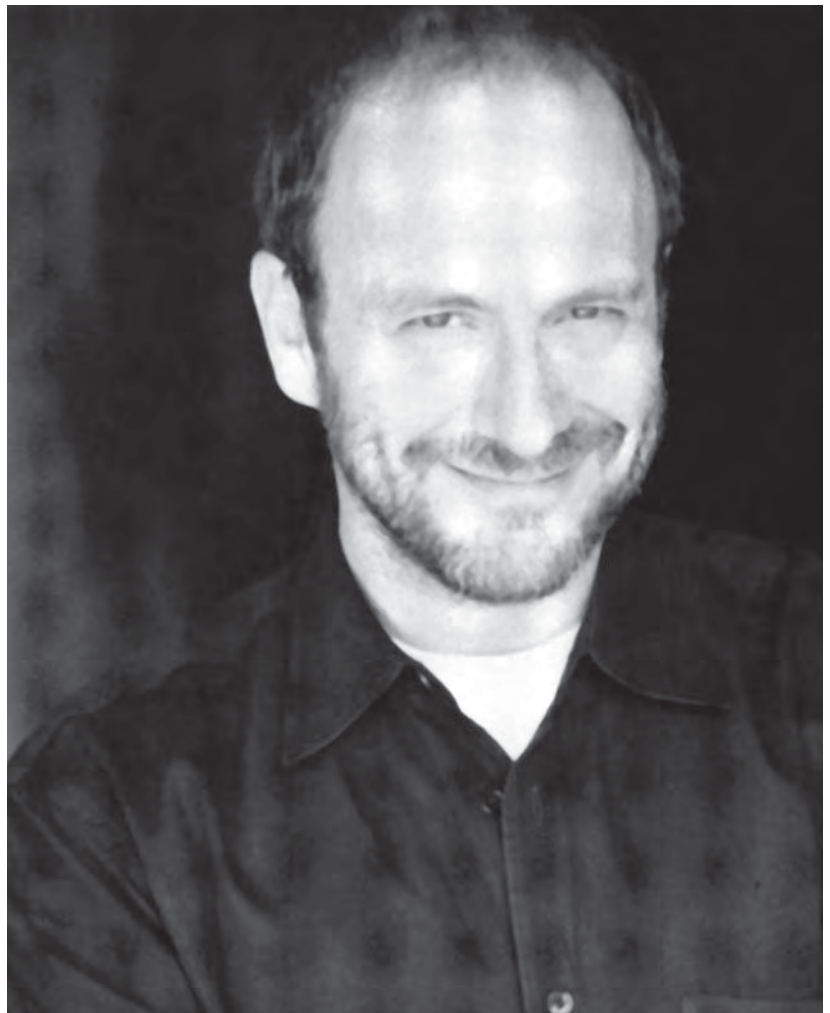
as in-between in some ways. She can't live in the fantasy world because she knows that reality always wins—and in this case, it does. So she goes with something that is less fantastical and more realistic because ultimately she's a realistic girl who is lucky enough to have an imagination. Jimmy has imagination too. Noah does not. The family is divided into people who are able to use their imaginations and people who are not. File has that capacity, and Lizzie will bring that out in him, just as she released a more realistic side of Starbuck. Starbuck leaves much more on the ground than when he arrived, not so afraid to confront who he is, to maybe stop running so fast away from himself. That's due to the experience he has with her. Everybody gives somebody something in this play, which is why it's so wonderful.

### **I know that you directed "Master Harold"... and the boys for Roundabout. Could you tell us about the different approaches to musicals and plays?**

When I started directing, I wanted straight plays to have the excitement and the visceral thrill of musicals, and I wanted musicals to be acted with the same integrity that straight plays are. So I don't approach the acting in any different way. And I'm very grateful to have a real rehearsal period (which I haven't had for a while, particularly in a musical) to be able to explore the characters' motivations and psychological makeup as I would do in a straight play. I approach the acting part of it exactly the same way in both, and the singing part of it exactly the same way I approach the acting. The story doesn't stop when you start to sing. It's just a different form of communicating. We read the lyrics before we sing them so that we use them as text. We don't think, "Oh I'm singing a pretty song here, I don't have to act." And the great thing about this score is that the songs actually have movement in them. They start one place, and end in another. They not only reveal character beautifully, but they also move the plot. You actually need the songs to tell the story, which makes them good songs. In a musical, if you can cut the song and tell your story just fine, you haven't written the right song. If the song doesn't include the key event in the scene, the transition to another place, it's usually just a stage wait. It has to mean something, do something, reveal something. Now in terms of the technical stuff, plays and musicals each use different skills—musicals use staging skills that I don't necessarily use in a straight play. And I enjoy working in music, because I love music, but truthfully, it's not all that different to me.

### **Are there any particular things you feel are important to take away from this show?**

I'd like people to ponder the cost of not accepting who you really are. Everybody has strengths and weaknesses, and everybody has beauty and imagination, and it's all fine. There's nothing to be ashamed of. These characters, ultimately, find less self-shame, and I think that that's something that we all struggle with. As a young person, if you can get rid of that early, it's a blessing. Because when you get to be my age, you struggle with those things that you haven't conquered and they just get harder to release. But if you can do it early on in life, you are so ahead of the game. 



LONNY PRICE

# Shades of the Actor

## **How are you preparing for the role of Lizzie?**

Well, I've been studying a lot about the Dust Bowl and the Dust Bowl era. I've been really trying to put myself in the decade of the thirties, not only in terms of what was going on economically and geographically and with the weather and the crops, but also the female social mindset of the thirties: that at age 29, 30 years old, if you're not married, you have no hope. You were really past your prime if you'd gotten that far and weren't married. I'm just studying that era right now. I think that's the most important thing for me.

## **Things are very different now. Back then, if you weren't married at twenty-six, that could be damaging to a woman.**

Oh, I'm sure. Whereas now you look at that age and it seems early. Women realize they have more time to have children. There are careers they can have, they have choices.

## **How does your process as an actress differ when you're doing a musical or a play or the other mediums, like television?**

I think the processes, in terms of researching and developing the character, are all the same. In the different mediums, there's just different ways of expressing that character. With film and television, one of the sayings is that you have to move and speak very quietly but think very loudly because the camera and the lens are so close to you and everything you're doing is being recorded - the twitch of an eye and whatnot. When you're on stage, you've got that distance and that space which you have to fill from an emotional standpoint as well as just from the purely physical standpoint. You know, the volume of your speaking voice, the volume of your singing voice, the size of your gestures—all of it has to be a little bit larger so that it can be read. It's about your mindset when you go into it, but in terms of what you're doing character-wise, that's all the same. And I even find that to be the case when I'm just doing concerts. With each song I sing, I try and really make sure that I delve into what the particular character in that song wants or needs...so the starting point is always the same.

## **In the script there is a lot made of the fact of Lizzie being plain. How is that being approached in this production?**

Well, we've looked at the script and made sure it's a little more relevant and more palatable for 2007. It can't

just be that Lizzie is plain. You can't say, "Everybody else in the town was beautiful, and there was one ugly girl"—that's not it. And so we really made it about the fact that this is someone who speaks her mind. She has no filter—whatever she's thinking, she says. She's very masculine in a lot of ways and she's surrounded by men. She's had no female role model in her life. The way we're setting the history is that her mother died giving birth to Jimmy, the youngest one. So Lizzie has had to become mother, wife, sister, caretaker, everything, at a very early age, 12 or 13. So she sort of thinks and acts like what would be considered a man in those times. She even says, "I don't want a man to keel over in a horse trough. I want him to stand up straight and I want to be able to stand up straight to him, and I want to be able to still be who I am and still be able to have a partner in life and why can't I do that? Why do I have to giggle and flirt and all that stuff?" And that's what seems to have been her problem. What's wonderful about it is that she's not the best-looking chick on the block, but her looks are not the main crux of her issues. The wonderful thing about Starbuck is that, even though he's a conman, he has this idea of hope and magic in him and he ends up changing a lot of people's lives. He changes Jimmy's life, he changes Lizzie's life, and even Noah has a nice little transformation in the end. He starts to believe in hope a little bit.

## **Do you feel an urgency with everybody in her family wanting Lizzie to get married?**

For her, the clock is ticking. Time has basically run out for her.

## **What is the biggest challenge of playing this role for you?**

Well, there are a couple of things: one, making sure that I don't hold back, because I'm someone that does have a filter, and Lizzie just does not. The mistakes that Lizzie makes are huge mistakes. Making sure that I turn off my filter so I can really commit to who Lizzie is is a challenge for me. The other one is letting go of what I already perceive as a possible problem with the audience getting over the fact that this is a color-blind cast. You know, in terms of accepting me as a woman from western Texas in the 1930's.

## **Was that a problem when you did *Carousel*?**

I don't know, I think I wasn't as aware as I am now... But you know, I have to learn to let that go, because I know

## DURING REHEARSALS, UPSTAGE CAUGHT UP WITH AUDRA MCDONALD.




AUDRA MCDONALD

I can play this part and I know who Lizzie is. So I have to learn to let go of wondering if the people in the audience are going to be willing to take that journey from the moment I walk in the door. So those are the challenges. I think the kids will have the least problem with it.

### **What you would say to somebody who says "I want to be an actor"?**

There are a couple of things I would say: one is, if there is a role you think you are right for, go for it. Do not be the one who says no to yourself. There are enough people in the world to do that. If there is something you truly believe in, you go for it with 150% of your being. The other thing is: be you. I remember when I first got

into the business I wanted to be Barbra Streisand. Well, I can't be Barbra Streisand because Barbra Streisand is already there. So stop trying to be Barbra Streisand and discover who it is that you are. And the other thing is discipline. It is hard work. So if you really really really want to do it, you have to go to the voice lessons, you have to study, you have to get on stage, no matter where, even if it's community theatre, or if it is some little group of players you put together on your stoop. Get on stage and get that experience because there is nothing out there to compare with that. No matter how many books you read or whatnot. No matter how many scales you sing, as important as all that is, practical application of the craft is the most important thing. Get your butt on stage. 

# Shades

# of Music

## **Why did you want to adapt *The Rainmaker* into *110 in the Shade*?**

Well, I'd always liked the piece. I had seen it the day I got out of the army after the Korean War. I was in what they call a "repo-depo," where you're just sitting around waiting for your papers to be processed. They had a television in the PX [post exchange] there and I of course, being the age I am, had grown up without a television (in fact, I had been on television a number of times before I ever saw television). Anyway, I saw *The Rainmaker* on, what was it? Playhouse 90, one of those really good 50's drama shows. I was very taken with it and it had always stuck in my mind, but I never had the idea of turning it into a musical. So Richard Nash approached us because David Merrick had seen *The Fantasticks* and liked it. David thought we might possibly be up-and-coming. And he got Dick Nash to come and see *The Fantasticks*, which he liked, and then Dick Nash then approached us with the idea for *The Rainmaker*. Now, why we wanted to do it: I'm from West Texas, Harvey is also from Texas, and the setting was very much like where I had grown up and the people I had grown up with. I felt very connected with it. Another thing was, we had only written in an experimental form before this and pretty much after this, but we wanted to try to write one thing in the sort of Rodgers and Hammerstein mode, just to see if we could. And this seemed like a good potential subject since we knew about the time period, and certainly about droughts.

## **At the Meet and Greet you talked about how the weather affects people from that part of Texas and how it affects the characters. Could you elaborate on that?**

Anybody who grew up in farm or ranch country feels a connection with the weather because it's like their life-blood. It's unpredictable. You win or you lose, you live or you die by the caprice of weather. And it is of course particularly true in the West, where droughts do come. Connecticut, where I live now, seems to be much more solid in terms of the weather than anywhere in the West, where it was really scary at that time—in the time of the Dust Bowl [when I grew up]. It becomes part of you and you learn to survive by both having humor and having hope. Without hope, you know you can't survive because you have to be able to believe that no matter how dry and no matter how barren it gets, life will come back and the earth will be reborn. That is very much under-

neath the story of *The Rainmaker*. The romantic story on top is of a woman who is almost becoming a spinster and who desperately wants to be fulfilled in terms of a family. That idea is backed up and augmented by the drought and both of them are about life...giving back to life, life coming back, being reborn through life. I loved [Roundabout's publicity] poster—this is the best poster we've ever had for *110 in the Shade*. I just think it's wonderful. The moment of the release—it's when the rain does come.

## **Do you think there are certain issues that reoccur in the work that you and Harvey have done? It feels like there is romance in almost every piece you two have collaborated on.**

I wasn't aware of that—it's interesting that you point it out. It's certainly true...maybe we are just drawn to it. In the case of *110 in the Shade* and *The Rainmaker*, it must have been part of my thinking, our thinking...something that runs frequently through Harvey's work is the balance between romanticism, a kind of glamorous or adventurous or romantic kind of life, and a more domestic life. In *The Fantasticks*, the characters give up their dreams to a certain extent and they think, "They were you—all the shining lights, they were you." They settle for a simpler, domestic, less swash-buckling romantic vision.

## **There seems to be this wonderful dynamic between men and women—that age-old battle of the sexes, so to speak—but lovely things also happen to the men and women in your plays. Do you see that too?**


I think that is true. I don't know how much I see my own work from the outside, but I respect other people's visions because they can see things I can't see. In the early work, I feel what we were writing about was a balance between romanticism on one side and a simpler life, a domestic life on the other. As time went on, has gone on, it became a thing about time and how you deal with time. I think that is what I have written about a lot for the past years. When we worked on a musical version of *Our Town*, I was drawn to the fact that it's about time and the usage of time. It's not really about small-town America. When the lead character goes back to her life, it is the minutia of the importance of the small things and how you use time. It is that concept that just blew my mind and influenced me in my later work. Like

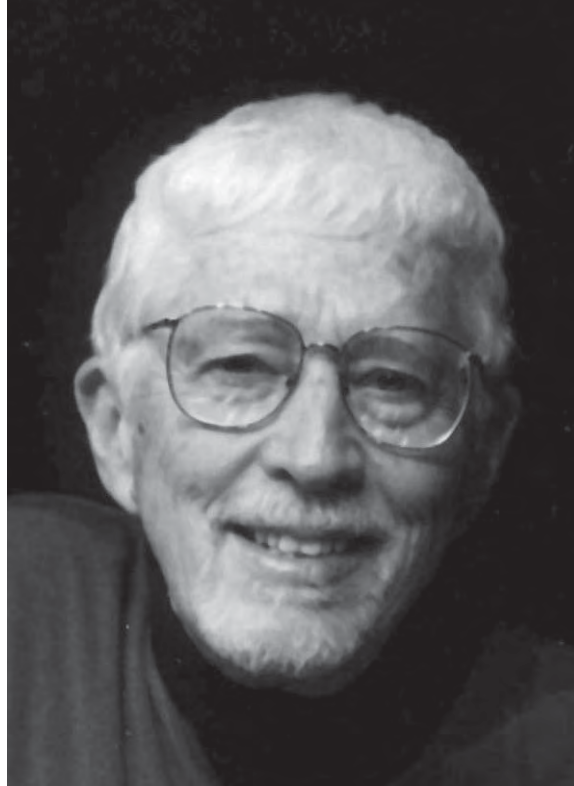


## UPSTAGE DISCUSSES *110 IN THE SHADE* WITH LYRICIST TOM JONES.

when Thornton Wilder said that it was his desire to look through the two ends of the telescope at the same time. In one way, you look the from afar at this little town, and these little lives mean nothing in this vast eternity of things. You look in the other end at the minutia of their lives, and it means everything. You put them side by side and you have this resonance because these two opposites are joined closely together—these two views of life. It just makes it more powerful.

### Who were you inspired by when you started?

I don't want to answer for Harvey, but I can tell you that more than anybody he is inspired by Richard Rodgers, whom he viewed as a demigod, being able to do these amazing things with such simplicity and economy, yet you hear them and they're with you forever. For me, I was never that caught-up in musicals when growing up. Not nearly as much as Harvey was. But, for me, Shakespeare is the one I think of whenever I work on something. Of course you would probably have to say that *110 in the Shade* is the exception, because in this case we were trying to work more in the Rodgers and Hammerstein mode. But for me, the things I most enjoy working on are in some way related to Shakespeare. By that I don't mean they're Shakespearean period, but that they're presentational. They accept the presence of the theatre. You and your audience find your reality by first admitting you are in the theatre and you are going to find a theatrical reality. For me, this opens the doors more than pretending that something is real when I know it's not. I admit that it's not real and yet I can believe it as reality. And also Shakespeare's heightened language and ability. There were so many things [I discovered] when I realized that I wanted to be a writer, which wasn't until after I finished six years of drama school as a director. What I had hoped for, what I had dreamed of, was a theatre like Shakespeare's—a theatre where you could move anywhere because you weren't having to move a lot of scenery, where you could move swiftly; and with heightened language, that had soliloquies, because it wasn't literally realistic—it can be very dramatic, even schmaltzy. I've looked around, and the place where that was accepted in my time was in the musical theatre. 



TOM JONES

# Shades

## The Dust Bowl

The time in American history in which extreme weather created drought conditions known as the Dust Bowl spanned about ten years. Shifting air and ocean temperatures were partially to blame for the severe changes in weather during the Dust Bowl Era. The extreme drought caused farmland to dry up and literally blow away in dense clouds of dust. This phenomenon greatly transformed the social and economic structure of the Great Plains region of the United States (which included Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas). The Dust Bowl was also caused by poor farming practice. The result was the destruction of nearly 50 million acres of land.

## Life in the Dust Bowl

In the 1930's, the life expectancy of the average male was roughly 58, and the average female lived to about age 61. Although women gained the right to vote in 1920, in the 1930's they were still struggling to expand their roles in government and business. Women made up about 24% of the United States workforce, but many women still stayed at home to take care of their families. During the Dust Bowl Era and the Great Depression, the average family income dropped from \$2,300 a year to \$1,500. The quality of life diminished greatly for the folks living in the Great Plains region, most of whom were farmers. In these agricultural times, the entire family worked together for the success of the farm. People who witnessed the dust storms described them as dense black clouds that rolled across the prairies and greatly impaired vision. The dust covered everything and even seeped inside houses and farms. The destruction of farmland caused over 2.5 million people to leave their homes and head to California for work, where they were met with a great deal of resistance.



Land and property destroyed by the dust.



Women and children trying to survive in harsh conditions.

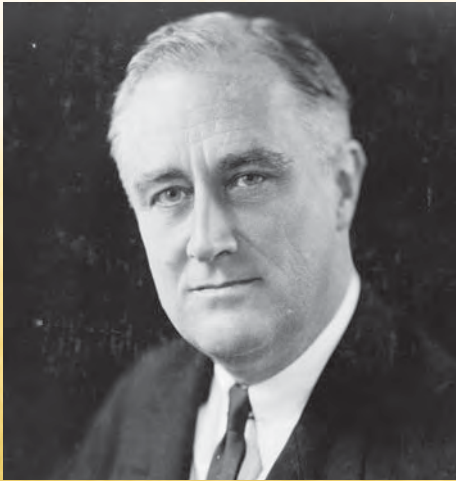


Children in a roadside refugee camp.

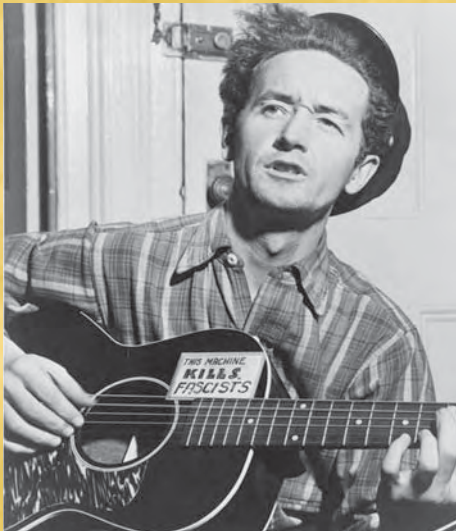


Dust bowl farmer with tractor and young son near Cland, New Mexico

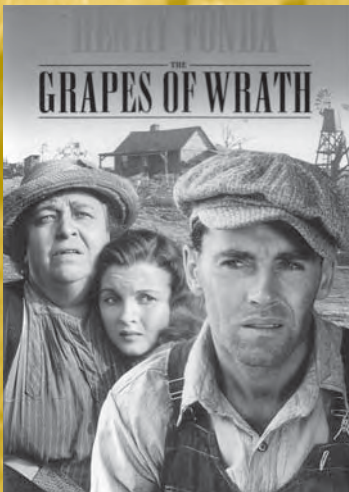
# of the World



Franklin Delano Roosevelt



Woody Guthrie



## Politics of the Dust Bowl

Prior to the infamous stock market crash of 1929, the United States enjoyed an era of prosperity. However, during the 1930's after the crash, the unemployment rate rose 25%. The politics of the time were greatly influenced by the devastation of the country's economic structure. Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR), elected as president in 1932, is most famous for his New Deal programs, which were intended to tackle the extreme poverty brought on by the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl. FDR's regulations significantly altered the structure of the United States government.

## Literature of the Dust Bowl

*The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck, the story of a displaced farming family trying to survive the Dust Bowl Era.

*Studs Lonigan* by James T. Farrell, a trilogy of novels about an Irish-American's struggle to move up in the world.

*Native Son* by Richard Wright explores racial prejudice and the plight of African Americans in the 1930s.

*Tobacco Road* by Erskine Caldwell depicts the troubles of poor southerners of the time.

## Music of the Dust Bowl

"Brother, Can You Spare a Dime"

"I Ain't Got No Home" by Woody Guthrie.

## Theatre

*Green Pastures* by Marc Connelly

*Waiting for Lefty* by Clifford Odets

*Mourning Becomes Electra* by Eugene O'Neill

## Film

"The Grapes of Wrath"

"Gone With the Wind"

A dust storm rolling in on the plains.

# Shades

## of Light

### **How do you prepare for a project like *110 in the Shade*?**

This show is about recreating a quality of life in a place where they are experiencing a drought. In my work, I try to emphasize the idea of the atmosphere of the piece and look for a way for the light to reinforce the structure of the drama on some level. But to start with, we have place, we have time. The piece roughly takes place over the course of twenty-four hours in a place, in a moment, and in a time where the sun is very present, even in the evening scenes or the scene in the middle of the night in Act Two. So, what I'm looking for in the piece is heat, even when it's cool. I'm also looking for interesting ways to articulate the word that's in the title of the piece, *shade*. I'm looking for ways to create an affiliation between where the sun is and where the sun isn't.

### **The set design is a somewhat abstracted version of the sun, which is also going to serve as the sky and the moon and everything else. Does that become harder or easier?**

In a weird way, it becomes easier because we have this emblem of sky, this emblem of sun. It is right there, it's part of the space. It actually can be literal in a very simple, almost mythic kind of way. That is essentially the only piece of scenery that we have, and that piece of scenery is interesting because it will cast a shadow. So when I'm up over its shoulder, up-left, up-right, on the side of the left, on the side of the right, into the space we are going to get the shadow of that architectural piece so I'm not going to have to create it artificially and I always prefer that. For this piece, I always look at the raw theatricality. The sun is at the top and the bottom, and the sky is in the middle so it has a great transformative quality.

### **The weather is an important part of this play. As a lighting designer, is it part of your job to contribute to creating the weather?**

Yeah, that's what I mean by atmosphere...that helps shape the story. There are many neat structural aspects to it. It takes place over twenty-four hours - it's kind of lovely that it ends in the same place that it begins.

### **What else do you consider when you design lighting?**

We are going to use the space as a sundial so that the sun comes up over the spectators' heads. Then it will go down behind the action. There are also the various qual-

ities of the music. We think about the concept of a piece of music where each bit has sunshine and warmth to it. With musicals, I've found it's trying to put styles together so that each part of it reflects back on other parts and you recognize kinship in the looks as opposed to the idea that the light performs chameleon-like functions. I'm very interested in keeping the whole together as well as the look, plus finding something definitive as well as interesting and appropriate for the room.

### **Tell me a little bit about rain. I understand that in the play version, the audience never sees the rain, but they do in the musical. Are you going to show the rain?**

Santo [the set designer] is the one responsible for the rain, and it's really going to rain. There are all sorts of rules about how you create rain in the theatre. Usually in theatre design, rain takes place at midstage. But Santo is doing something interesting and technically tricky: this rain is going to be right downstage in the curve of the playing space. In my experience, lighting rain is best done from the side or upstage. In this case, I won't have that option, so this is very much going to be a work in progress. That moment is also tricky because we don't exactly want a big downpour—it's more of a sun shower. In general, we don't quite know what the image will be yet. We are leaving a lot to accident to see what will work. In my experience, the original plan for lighting the rain often falls apart and you end up doing something different.

### **It sounds to me as if this is the challenge of the whole evening for the designers. Lonny referred to it as a rain curtain. Is it really a rain curtain?**

It is in fact. It's a curved track of rain. I think we'll try to control it in small segments so it can start in a trickle or a column and then fill out. Again, I think it's going to be a little bit of a work in progress. But I think Santo's idea is that, to put it in lighting terms, there will be several circuits of rain so that it all doesn't just come on as a sheet. I prefer that idea and that all goes back to the idea of the sun shower, those moments in life that are beautiful moments of dramatic progress. It is something that doesn't happen very often, which is what makes the show and how the writers have used this sort of strange moment special for Lizzie. That is also where it kind of


## UPSTAGE DISCUSSES *110 IN THE SHADE* WITH LIGHTING DESIGNER CHRISTOPHER AKERLIND.

has that cosmic quality too, to align with Lizzie's development. It makes it seem Greek in a weird way; the Greeks were always with the gods and the cosmos were represented by the sun and the water and the earth and the clouds, etc. It has many Greek qualities.

### **Tell me a little bit about who or what has influenced your artistic style.**

I just love the kind of elemental, simple, gritty storytelling. I'm influenced by directors, movies... In the theatre, I grew up in the 80's as an intern and a staff member at Hartford Stage. When I go to the theatre, when the curtain goes up, it doesn't matter what the style of it is—I tend to be moved by the notion that I am seeing something that I haven't seen before. So when a designer or a director does something that is new to me, I tend to be impressed and that informs whatever has driven my work on 585 productions in 18 years. I often get asked to do atmospheric pieces where lighting is in the title somehow—*A Light in the Piazza*, for example. In this show, there is an empty space for me to kind of carve up and draw up strokes that advance a story about weather and still create an appropriate home for the drama.

### **How would you advise a student who wants to be a lighting designer?**

I actually tell them to get invested in theatre before they get invested in being a designer. Designers tend to come to the theatre with visual talent: talent for articulating space, creating space, etc. So I'm more apt to try to get them involved in storytelling and raking up some storyteller within themselves. Simple lighting design that is not very connected to storytelling is just a technical thing to me, as opposed to something that has a spirit and is creatively woven into the way in which the theatre can work. 

# Shades of the Play

## **Tom Jones and Harvey Schmidt**

Jones and Schmidt, who met at the University of Texas, have been collaborating for over 50 years. They even worked together while they were serving in the army during the Korean War by sending music and lyrics back and forth to each other. One of their first and perhaps most famous works is *The Fantasticks* which is the world's longest-running musical. Other credits include *110 in the Shade*, *I Do! I Do!* and *Celebration*. Their work has earned them an Obie, a Tony and a Drama Desk Award.

## **Theatrical Terms**

**Nontraditional Casting** is the act of putting an actor of any ethnic group, sex, color or ability in a role traditionally written for a dissimilar actor.

**Metaphor** is an indirect comparison of two unlike subjects.

**Symbolism** is the use of symbols to represent emotions, objects, events, or relationships.

**Musicals** are theatrical productions typically of a sentimental or humorous nature that consist of musical numbers and dialogue based on a unifying plot.

## **Vocabulary**

**Cotton Gin**—a machine used to separate the cotton fibers from the seedpods of the cotton plant

**Sears Roebuck Catalog**—a mail-order catalog created by Richard Sears as a resource for farmers to purchase their supplies

**Rodeo**—a performance featuring bronco riding, calf roping, steer wrestling and bull riding

**Horse Trough**—a box-like drinking vessel for farm animals

**Old Maid** or **Spinster**—a woman who is unmarried and past the common age for marrying

***Pelléas et Mélisande***—a famous play by Maurice Maeterlinck about the forbidden love of the main characters

**Panatela**—a long thin cigar



# Shades

# of Dance

## **How would you describe your approach to creating the choreography for this show?**

There are not that many dance steps in the show, so most of it is what we call “musical staging” or “choreographed movement.” It’s all behavioral—it’s just things that you would do in life. It’s not dance steps like a kick or a pirouette.

## **I was listening to the original album, and it seemed like there was a big dance break in Act Two. Has that scene been removed?**

It has because it didn’t illustrate what we thought to be the major story of the show—Lizzie’s self-discovery. Agnes DeMille was hired to create the dances for the original Broadway production. There were a few large dance/production numbers that eventually got cut before opening on Broadway. One song that remained in the original, “Everything Beautiful Happens at Night” contained a large dance number that involved tap dancing and concerned the subplot of someone vying for Jimmy Curry’s girlfriend Snooky. We decided that it was better to cut that and keep the story moving along.

## **Are you using the revision or are you doing your own version?**

We are doing our own version with new orchestrations. It is a treat to have a dance arranger on a show with so little dance. He [the music arranger] is, however, creating a lot of great music for our moments of organized movement and making the arrangements a little more interesting.

## **What is the most challenging moment for you in terms of behavioral movement?**

The challenge is to make it all real and truthful. How would people during this time move? Also, most of the first act takes place under the sun, and that kind of heat makes you move differently. What’s more, we have actors playing older people in the show, and we have actors playing younger people. How does that affect them? It’s all of those kinds of questions. I actually like doing that kind of work but it is a challenge to decide how to incorporate all of it into the play.

## **I was privy to one of the actors coming up to you and saying, “Look man, I don’t dance.” Is that the actor playing Starbuck?**

Yes, it happens on every show. There is always that actor who is afraid of the choreographer. And on this show I find it very funny because there is no choreography, so they really have nothing to be afraid of. But you know, the movement is going to be very athletic, especially in his number. He’s going to be climbing, he’s going to be jumping up onto picnic tables...but he’s not going to need to do a pirouette, a kick, a lift, or anything like that. In a way, I have to be patient and get around the actors’ barriers in order to get the best work out of them.

## **It sounds like you have done a tremendous amount of research on previous productions of this show. What other kinds of research did you have to do in preparation for this?**

We have done a lot of Dust Bowl preparation and research on the Great Depression. We’ve read a ton of books. There’s also a lot of actual video material. We watched a lot of movies that were set in that time period, plus a great video that PBS did on the Dust Bowl. We also looked at the steps that were popular in that region and in that time. We tried to find out, could we use a polka or a two-step? What were the kinds of steps that the characters would know? It will have a western influence.

## **So when it comes to a character like Lizzie, the character played by Audra (who is in my estimation a beautiful woman), how will you help her become plain? Or is that the actress’s job?**

That is all of our jobs. The way that she moves on stage is going to be a big part of that. I think the impression this production is going for is not so much that she’s ugly and plain, but that she’s a forthright, strong woman. And you know, in that day and age, that wasn’t always the best choice.

## **I also wanted to ask you how your approach varies from project to project. How is this going to differ from *Spelling Bee*?**

I always approach it in the sense of character and story and the purpose of the number. I always say that the steps are the easy part, that anyone can do those. It’s the



## DURING REHEARSALS, UPSTAGE CAUGHT UP WITH CHOREOGRAPHER DAN KNECHTGES.



DAN KNECHTGES

story that's going to differ from other versions. My story of the song "Everything Beautiful Happens at Night" is much different than Agnes DeMille's story. But in many productions, the steps don't differ much. Agnes DeMille might use an arabesque at one spot, somebody else might use it at a different spot, but it's all the same thing. The difference to me is the story, and that's what's more important to the audience anyway. Usually, if the number really has no purpose other than to entertain, I generally put a story on it. Also, a lot of times on the dancier stuff I'll do what I call "dummy steps" so I get the structure, and then I'll go back and fill in and I'll say "take this section out and this is what the real section is going to be."

### Is there a choreographer that has influenced your work or inspired you?


Yeah, I would say the biggest influence on who I am as an artist is Michael Bennett. I really think he was the master storyteller and is an extension of Jerome Robbins, who really was the greatest of all the theatre choreographers. I just love the way many of his numbers worked on many levels above the basic clock level. They worked on a psychological level, on an emotional level, and he always did what I call "good show biz": making sure that everything has been structured in a way that the audi-

ence can understand so they don't need to work hard to know where to look, when to applaud, when to laugh. That to me is a big, big, thing. Michael Bennett is someone that I look up to.

### And how would you advise a young person who says they want to be a choreographer for the theatre?

I would say you have to do everything you can to do any job that comes your way, no matter how much you get paid for it. Or do jobs for free, because that's how I got started. I did a lot of jobs that nobody else wanted, and now I still get jobs from the people that I worked with and impressed in the past. I call it my bag of tricks. I have a large bag of tricks that I worked out and discovered from working on those shows that I now pull from.

### Did you ever train as a dancer yourself?

As a kid I did tap, jazz, and ballet. I did *The Nutcracker* as a kid and in college I danced in a dance company in Columbus, Ohio. But I always knew that I wanted to choreograph. I'm too bossy to be a dancer (laughs). 



*110 in the Shade*, Audra McDonald (center)

# Shades of the Audience

## Before the Play

Think about:

- ◆ The word transformation. What does it mean to you?
- ◆ Other characters from literature or plays you are familiar with that have been challenged with accepting who they are.
- ◆ Familiar circumstances in which you have wished you were someone else.

## During the Play

Think about:

- ◆ How Lizzie thinks of herself.
- ◆ The examples of metaphors or symbols for the characters that are present in the set and sound design.
- ◆ How does the composer express Lizzie's desires/dreams in the song lyrics? How do the song lyrics express Starbuck's desires?
- ◆ The transformations that occur with the different characters. How are those communicated through song?

## After the Play

- ◆ Create an abstract self-portrait. Using markers or other artist supplies, create a visual rendering that expresses how you truly perceive yourself and your dreams and goals.
- ◆ Create a list of your own dreams and goals. Create a list of adjectives that would describe how you truly see yourself. When possible, substitute metaphors or symbols for some of the words on your list. Using both of those lists, create the lyrics for a song that expresses how you truly see yourself.

Send your work to Roundabout, and we'll share it with the artists who created *110 in the Shade*.

Mail to:

Education Department

Roundabout Theatre Company

231 West 39<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 1200

New York, NY 10018

# When you get to the theatre...

BELOW ARE SOME HELPFUL TIPS FOR MAKING YOUR THEATRE-GOING EXPERIENCE MORE ENJOYABLE.

## TICKET POLICY

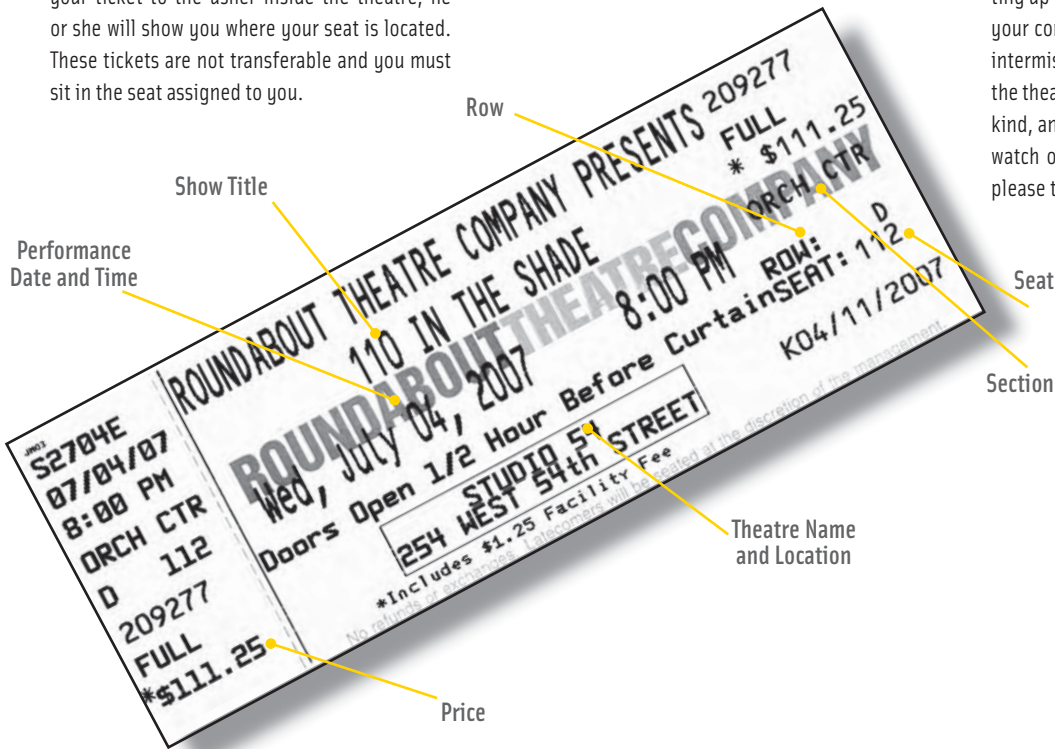
As a student participant in *Producing Partners*, *Page To Stage* or *Theatre Access*, you will receive a discounted ticket to the show from your teacher on the day of the performance. You will notice that the ticket indicates the section, row and number of your assigned seat. When you show your ticket to the usher inside the theatre, he or she will show you where your seat is located. These tickets are not transferable and you must sit in the seat assigned to you.

## PROGRAMS

All the theatre patrons are provided with a program that includes information about the people who put the production together. In the "Who's Who" section, for example, you can read about the actors' roles in other plays and films, perhaps some you have already seen.

## AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE

As you watch the show please remember that the biggest difference between live theatre and a film is that the actors can see you and hear you and your behavior can affect their performance. They appreciate your applause and laughter, but can be easily distracted by people talking or getting up in the middle of the show. So please save your comments or need to use the rest room for intermission. Also, there is no food permitted in the theatre, no picture taking or recording of any kind, and if you have a cell phone, beeper, alarm watch or anything else that might make noise, please turn it off before the show begins.



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