

# upstageGUIDE



## CAROLINE, OR CHANGE



**ROUNABOUT  
THEATRE  
COMPANY**

A publication of  
**EDUCATION AT  
ROUNABOUT**



# upstageSPOTLIGHT

## CAROLINE, OR CHANGE

Book and Lyrics by Tony Kushner

Music by Jeanine Tesori

Choreographed by Ann Yee

Directed by Michael Longhurst

Starring Sharon D Clarke in an exhilarating, Olivier Award-winning performance, Tony Kushner and Jeanine Tesori's explosive musical launches to "the titanic dimensions of greatness" (Ben Brantley, *The New York Times*). With boundless imagination and transcendent songs, *Caroline, or Change* brings to life the changing world of 1963 Louisiana, where even the simplest acts shake the earth.

## A NOTE FROM ARTISTIC DIRECTOR TODD HAIMES

When we announced *Caroline, or Change*'s first Broadway revival as part of our season, the response was overwhelming. *Caroline, or Change* premiered on Broadway in 2004 among a landscape of musicals that included smash hits *Wicked* and *Avenue Q*. Although it had a different path to success than some of its companions, it is a testament to the musical's prescience and originality—not to mention the genius of its creators, Tony Kushner and Jeanine Tesori—that its reputation has only grown among critics and fans in the years since its debut.

Originally seen at the Chichester Festival in the UK in 2017, director Michael Longhurst's production received such acclaim that it transferred twice, eventually ending up on the West End, where it was nominated for multiple Olivier Awards. *Caroline, or Change* is one of those rare pieces of art that increases in importance and relevance as time goes by. In Michael's words, "The show is about how we all exist together—how we should share and acknowledge our privilege, not avoid it, in order to exist in greater peace." What could be more timely than that?

**WHERE:** Lake Charles, Louisiana

**WHEN:** November – December 1963

**WHO:**

### THE THIBODEAUXS

#### CAROLINE THIBODEAUX

39 years old. Works as a maid for the Gellman family. A divorcee with four children who is resistant to change in the world. Bitter, tired, devoted.

#### EMMIE THIBODEAUX

16-17 years old. Caroline's only daughter. Observant, rebellious, and outspoken.

#### JACKIE THIBODEAUX

10 years old. Caroline's son. Sweet and naïve.

#### JOE THIBODEAUX

Eight years old. Caroline's youngest son. Outspoken and skeptical.

### THE GELLMANS

#### NOAH GELLMAN

Eight years old. The son of Stuart Gellman. Shy, forgetful, and often looks to Caroline for comfort.

#### GRANDMA GELLMAN

Noah's grandmother and Stuart's mother. Concerned about her son's melancholy and admiring of his new wife.

#### GRANDPA GELLMAN

Noah's grandfather and Stuart's father. He is unconcerned with the social changes occurring in the South.

#### ROSE STOPNICK GELLMAN

Mid-to-late 30s. Recently married to Stuart and moved to the South. Very concerned for Noah's well-being.

#### STUART GELLMAN

Mid-to-late 30s. A clarinetist, recently widowed and remarried to Rose. Still mourning the loss of his first wife and struggling to connect with his son and new wife.

#### MR. STOPNICK

70s. Rose Stopnick Gellman's father. A politically progressive man who has no qualms about sharing his dissenting opinions.

### CAROLINE'S FRIENDS

**DOTTY MOFFETT** Early 30s. Caroline's high-spirited friend and a fellow maid. Recently started back at college and is embracing the progressive times.

#### THE WASHING MACHINE

#### THE DRYER

#### THE RADIO

#### THE MOON

#### THE BUS

Embodiments of the objects in Caroline's life, these figures serve as her confidants, reflect her opinions, and give her someone to talk to in her lonely life working for the Gellmans.

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# KEY COLLABORATORS: TONY KUSHNER AND JEANINE TESORI

## TONY KUSHNER

BOOK & LYRICS



**"[CAROLINE, OR CHANGE] IS THE CLOSEST THING TO AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL PIECE I'VE EVER WRITTEN."**

Dramatist Tony Kushner, best known for his Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award®-winning two-part play *Angels in America*, is one of the most acclaimed playwrights of his generation. Born in Manhattan, Kushner soon moved to Lake Charles, Louisiana with his family, where he grew up in the politically turbulent 1960s—much like young Noah Gellman in *Caroline, or Change*. Indeed, according to Kushner, *Caroline, or Change* is "the closest thing to an autobiographical piece [he's] ever written."

Kushner attended Columbia University for his undergraduate education, from which he received a Bachelor of Arts in Medieval Studies in 1978. Kushner then attended the Tisch School of the Arts at NYU, graduating in 1984 with a Master of Fine Arts in Playwriting. His early plays include *La Fin de la Baleine: An Opera for the Apocalypse* (1983); *Yes, Yes, No, No* (1985); and *A Bright Room Called Day* (1985).

In 1988, the Eureka Theatre in San Francisco commissioned Kushner to write a play that confronted the ongoing AIDS crisis. Part one of *Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes—Millennium Approaches*—premiered at the Eureka Theatre in 1991 to sold-out crowds and critical acclaim. Once Part 2—*Perestroika*—was completed in 1992, the Center

Theatre Group at the Mark Taper Forum produced the first full-length production of the play, which transferred to Broadway in 1993 and quickly established itself as an American classic. Following the success of *Angels in America*, Kushner continued to write at the intersection of the personal and the political, building a canon of plays that includes *Slavs!* (1994); *A Dybbuk; or, Between Two Worlds* (1995); and *Homebody/Kabul* (1999). After their partnership on *Caroline, or Change*, Kushner also collaborated with Jeanine Tesori on a translation of Bertolt Brecht's *Mother Courage and Her Children* in 2006.

In addition to his success on the stage, Kushner has had a prosperous career in film. A close collaborator of Steven Spielberg, Kushner co-wrote the screenplay for his movie *Munich* (2005), and also wrote *Lincoln* (2012). He adapted *Angels in America* for HBO (2003) and also penned the screenplay for August Wilson's *Fences* (2016). His adaptation of *West Side Story*, directed by Spielberg, is set to premiere on screen in December of 2020. In 2012, President Obama awarded Tony Kushner a National Medal of Arts—a testament to his prodigious creative contributions to the landscape of American theatre.

## JEANINE TESORI

MUSIC



**"[MUSICALS] ARE REALLY SLIPPERY. BUT I LOVE THE PUZZLE OF THEM."**

Composer and musical arranger Jeanine Tesori grew up in Port Washington, New York. With five Tony Award nominations and one Tony Win for Best Original Score, as well as three Drama Desk Awards to her name (not to mention countless other accolades), Tesori is one of the most decorated musical composers of our time. Though Tesori started playing piano at three years old and was writing songs as early as age five, she gave up playing at age 14 to focus on high school sports. It wasn't until she was a few semesters into her time at Barnard College, where she was studying Pre-Med, that Tesori realized she missed music and promptly changed her major to a Columbia University-based music program. After graduating in 1983, Tesori spent time as a conductor and dance music arranger but eventually left the world of conducting to write *Violet*, her first musical, with librettist Brian Crawley.

*Violet*, inspired by the short story "The Ugliest Pilgrim" by Doris Betts, premiered off-Broadway in 1997, and it was revived on

Broadway with Roundabout in 2014. In the 20 year interim, Tesori was busy composing music for a slew of critically and popularly acclaimed musicals. Her Broadway credits now include *Twelfth Night* (1999 at Lincoln Center); *Thoroughly Modern Millie* (2002); *Caroline, or Change* (2004); *Shrek The Musical* (2008); and John Guare's *A Free Man of Color* (2010). In 2015, Tesori and writer Lisa Kron made history by becoming the first female writing team to win a Tony for Best Original Score for *Fun Home*.

Tesori's impressive resume continues to grow. Her opera *Blue* premiered at The Glimmerglass Festival in the summer of 2019, and her recent collaboration with playwright David Henry Hwang—the musical *Soft Power*—premiered at The Public Theatre this past fall. With a multitude of projects in development and a movie adaptation of *Fun Home* in the works, new iterations of Tesori's genius are sure to be gracing our ears in the near future.

# THE MUSIC OF *CAROLINE, OR CHANGE*

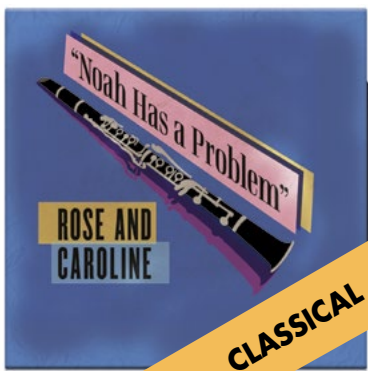
The musical composition of *Caroline, or Change* highlights specific qualities of musicality for each character. Composer Jeanine Tesori developed a specific musical vocabulary to help the characters express themselves within their individual worlds and the greater world of the entire piece. Throughout the play, you'll notice musical motifs that transform to reveal vulnerability and depth of character, and motifs that repeat to make moments feel familiar. Let's explore four unique musical sequences from the play; if you happen to glance at this prior to the performance, try to see how the musical qualities may contrast with or complement the story or the characters on stage.



## "MOON TRIO" AND "THE BUS"

Early on in the show, the musical composition begins to explore the differences between the human characters like Caroline and the anthropomorphic characters that amplify her inner thoughts, each with their

own musical styles. We're introduced to The Moon, who has a very gentle, airy, lullaby-like musicality that hovers, offering safety to Caroline. As Caroline continues to wait for the bus and Dotty reflects on the changes her friend is experiencing, lullaby tones begin to play against both Caroline and Dotty's soulful blues melodies. Here, Tesori demonstrates the multiple types of blues inspiration that she will paint into the sounds of many of her characters. All three characters are interrupted by the dangerous, deep gospel sound of The Bus—which reflects his lyrics, "the earth has bled"—leading to the reveal of John F. Kennedy's tragic death. Listen for the deep, soulful turn The Bus experiences and how he interrupts the lullaby of The Moon.



## "NOAH HAS A PROBLEM"

The fast-paced, energetic strings heard in this song become a continuous theme for the Gellman family. Rose's quick tempo changes amplify her inner monologue, where she is constantly questioning her choices in comparison to the slow,

gentler conversational moments she has out loud. Tesori also implements the instrumentation of the clarinet and cello section to define the Gellman family—not only because Stuart and Noah play those instruments, but also because they become a clear contradiction to Caroline's musical themes. Notice how each of the Gellmans has their own musical riff as they interrupt one another and how the music drastically changes with Caroline's entrance.



## "I HATE THE BUS"

Throughout the musical, Caroline's daughter Emmie eagerly accepts the changes occurring in the world around her, whereas her mother resents those changes.

After the Gellmans' Chanukah celebration, Emmie takes a moment to

reflect on the things that she wants. The simplicity in the music as the song begins reflects Emmie's gentle nature. There is also the sense that the music is waiting for something—perhaps waiting for Emmie to grow, to become stronger, and to fight for what she wants. Listen to how the music highlights the vocal power of the actress playing Emmie and how it swells with Emmie's growing desire for materialistic things.



## "LOT'S WIFE"

As the story progresses, we experience Caroline's distress and constant inner pain. She struggles to deal with change in the larger world and change within her family. Here, Tesori combines a spiritual working song with a contemporary blues song.

Tesori describes it as "ultimately a song about a mother's love and understanding that she has to go underground so that her kid can live in truly oxygenated air." The constant harshness in the orchestration pulls at Caroline's heartstrings while continuing to manipulate the tempo and soulful vocal qualities of the song. Notice how Caroline finally expresses all of her pain in the final moments of the show and how these final moments represent the musical climax that she deserves. •



# INTERVIEW WITH BOOK WRITER AND LYRICIST **TONY KUSHNER**

Education Dramaturg Ted Sod spoke with Tony Kushner about his work on *Caroline, or Change*.

**Ted Sod:** What inspired you to write *Caroline, or Change*?

**Tony Kushner:** Memories of my childhood in Louisiana, my mother's death in 1990, curiosity about writing a musical, hopes of striking it rich writing a musical—in other words, delusion—and all the usual stuff: trauma, guilt, revenge. *Caroline, or Change* tells a story I've been thinking about for many years. It's partly based on an incident from my childhood, grounded in memories from my early life. I wanted to write about race relations, the civil rights movement, and African Americans and Southern Jews in the early 1960s, a time of protean change sweeping the country, and to write about these things from the perspective of Lake Charles, Louisiana, the small, somewhat isolated town where I grew up.

I took notes over the years and dredged up various recollections, but I couldn't find the right vessel for the story I had decided to tell. I decided to write *Caroline, or Change* when the San Francisco Opera asked me to write a libretto for an opera for which Bobby McFerrin would write the music. Then Bobby decided he didn't want to write an opera. I think getting a commission from an opera company made it possible for me to start writing *Caroline, or Change*.

**TS:** Will you talk about your collaboration with Jeanine Tesori and George C. Wolfe on the original production? Any insights into how the three of you worked together? What was most challenging for you to write?

**TK:** I showed the script to George because I wanted him to direct it. He really liked it, and we talked about composers, and we both agreed that the one we most wanted to work with was Jeanine. We had both seen *Twelfth Night* that Nicholas Hytner did at Lincoln Center that Jeanine wrote the score for. That was the moment where everyone stood up and took notice of her as a composer. I contacted her, and we sent her the libretto, and she read it and politely said it wasn't for her.

A bit later I was asked to write lyrics for a musical version of *Don Juan DeMarco*, a film that starred Marlon Brando, Johnny Depp, and Faye Dunaway. Jeanine had been hired to compose, and I loved working with her. We did a workshop of it at Lincoln Center. Everybody was more excited than I was. I called Jeanine and told her, "I think I'm going to drop out of this project because I don't really believe in the story, but now that I've worked with you and fallen madly in love with you, I really would love to talk to you about why you don't want to do *Caroline, or Change* because I think we should do it together." George and I met with her, and what it really came down to was that it didn't look like a script for a musical; the songs weren't clearly demarcated and so on. She just couldn't find herself in the material—she couldn't figure out where to start. We did a reading of the script for her, and she got excited about it, but she still had reservations and didn't know how to start.

George had an idea that the appliances Caroline interacts with would somehow become inhabited by the ghosts of slaves who lived in the area around Lake Charles during slavery and that their energies were now in these machines. It gave Jeanine a place to start, so she wrote "The Bus Song," and it took off after that. We started back at



the beginning, and sequentially we moved through the whole script. I rewrote as we went along. Some things didn't change at all, and some things changed a lot. She wanted more for the kids to do, especially for Caroline's kids to do. I hadn't written it originally thinking about where the intermission would be, and we decided that it would probably be a song for the kids to sing after scene six. I went up to Provincetown with my husband, and I sketched out a version of "Petrucius Coleslaw," and then we talked about children's games.

The hardest thing to write was "Lot's Wife." It became clear pretty quickly that it was going to be the 11 o'clock number for Caroline, and I think we went through 18 versions of it. Everybody had opinions about it, and everybody kept arguing about it, and George was really great. He insisted that I stick with what I wanted it to be about and that I keep digging for it. Whenever you work with George, he is incredibly protective of his writers. He won't let anyone tell the writer what to do. Caroline is a very tough nut, and she's not going to crack that easily. It didn't feel right to me, what she sang in earlier versions. I finally came up with "Murder me God." I really feel like "Lot's Wife" is the thing that the three of us created together. It was George's idea to switch from third person to first person with the lyrics "Set me free" on the last repetition.

**TS:** How did you collaborate with Michael Longhurst, the director of Roundabout's revival? What information did you impart to him?

**TK:** Michael and I had a few conversations. As opposed to everything else I've ever written, I feel less anxiety about this musical in production

because I really feel that Jeanine's score is a roadmap. There's some room for maneuvering, but there's a template for the emotional life of the show in the score, and as long as you do the score as written, you're probably going to get it right. That's why I think it had such a good life after it finished in New York the first time.

I told Michael that the musical would reward specificity. There's a geographical specificity to *Caroline*. I'm from the South, and you can't approach it as a generic Southern story. It's Louisiana, and it's very much about that particular part of the world at that particular time.

The relationship between the Jewish family and this African-American woman and her kids—it's very much about that particular kind of society. Racial boundaries existed, but they weren't enforced with violence. The civil rights movement was taking a long time to get to this particular corner in the South. The civil rights movement hadn't really targeted Louisiana in the way it did Georgia, Mississippi, and Alabama. I explained to Michael that Lake Charles is not really a Baptist city. This part of Louisiana is Catholic and French and Spanish and Creole. It's a very mixed part of the world, and it doesn't have the same kind of savage watchdog presence that places like Mississippi and Alabama did and to a great extent still do.

I talked to him a lot about that, what parts of the play were autobiographical, and what parts aren't, and also about the Jewish family. The only thing that I was a little bit nervous about in England is that the British have a different relationship to Jews. It's very much an awareness of Jews as "the other"—as not British or not English. Again, I felt that it was important that the Southern reformed Jews be treated with specificity in that they're not in New York City, they're not people who spend their summers in the Catskills.

There were a lot of discussions about the historical, political, cultural background of the play because, as I said earlier, I think it helps to start with the specific.

**TS:** Given what you posit through the politics of *Caroline, or Change*, do you think America needs a new civil rights movement and new civil rights laws?

**TK:** Well, sure. It's not like there are civil rights movements periodically.

The African-American civil rights movement's beginning is an unprecedented, world-transforming political movement that's of vast complexity and is fed by many rivers and had many tributaries, and it's impossible to overstate how significant it was, not just in this country, but in the history of the world.

One way to answer your question is to say that the one thing that all liberation movements have in common is that they are often fueled by the hope that it is possible to achieve justice without sacrificing your rights or putting yourself in danger. Voting is a great way to achieve change because it doesn't, in any given election, usually necessitate people making heroic sacrifices. You just go to the poll, you make your vote, and you have some faith that it's going to be counted. There's a giant cultural, political upheaval that's going on now, and it may be necessary for us to turn to the example of other liberation movements in the past. There's none that's more glorious as an example and more stirring and valuable than the African-American civil rights movement, where people have had to fight on the streets and protest through non-violent civil disobedience to make it impossible for a political malevolence to continue. Once a system becomes locked in a certain series of gestures that are designed to oppress and destroy, it may be necessary to move outside the machinery of constitutional democracy, to force that machinery to respond in a progressive, sane, decent way. That's the point where you have to drop whatever it is you're doing and take to the streets and protest.

**TS:** What advice do you have for young people who want to write for the theatre?

**TK:** I would say read everything, starting with Aeschylus onwards. Read every single play you can get your hands on. One of the things that's unique about playwriting is that it is very much a craft and has a lot to do with practice and performance. Learn how a rehearsal room works, what actors do, learn how a director does what a director does—that's part of your training as a writer. Write and make sure that everything that you feel good about having written gets into the bodies and mouths of actors in front of an audience. Because there's no playwriting if it doesn't exist simultaneously on the page and the stage. You have to do what you need to do to make that happen. •



Sharon D. Clarke and the company of  
*Caroline, or Change* in rehearsal  
Photo: Jeremy Daniel



# Change in 1963

New York, March 2020

Upstage Guide

2019-2020 Season

10 Cents

**UNITED STATES** — While global and national events in the early 1960s affected people throughout the country, *Caroline, or Change* explores how individual perspectives on these issues differed greatly. Here are some major events that serve as a backdrop to the conversations we hear throughout the show.

"Some folks goes to school at nights. Some folks march for civil rights. Some folks prosper, then they's those...pickin coins from dirty clothes." — The Dryer

**JUNE 1953:**

## THE BATON ROUGE BUS BOYCOTT

In Baton Rouge, Louisiana, a boycott is organized by Reverend T.J. Jemison to protest segregation on city buses. It is the first large scale boycott of a Southern bus system by African Americans.

**MAY 1954:**

## BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION

legally ends racial segregation in public schools, although many schools remained segregated.

**JULY 1954:**

## VIETNAM IS DIVIDED BY WORLD LEADERS

The Northern section is under communist control; the U.S. supports an anti-communist government in the South.

**DECEMBER 1955:**

## MONTGOMERY BUS BOYCOTT

A year-long bus boycott begins when Rosa Parks refuses to give up her seat to a white man on an Alabama bus.

**JANUARY 1957:**

## SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

African-American leaders, including Martin Luther King, Jr., organize The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) to help connect community organizations across the South that were fighting for common civil rights goals.

**SEPTEMBER 1957:**

## THE LITTLE ROCK NINE

are blocked from integrating Central High School in Arkansas. Despite President Eisenhower's sending federal troops to escort the students, these students face ongoing harassment.

**SEPTEMBER 1957:**

## THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1957

protects voter rights and allows federal prosecution of those who suppress another's right to vote.

**FEBRUARY 1960:**

In Greensboro, NC, students stage the **FIRST LUNCH COUNTER "SIT-IN" PROTEST** against segregation at a Woolworth store.



Photo: State Archives of North Carolina

**APRIL 1960:**

African-American college students in Raleigh, NC form the **STUDENT NONVIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE (SNCC)** to help young people of color participate in civil rights actions.

**NOVEMBER 1960:**

**JOHN F. KENNEDY** defeats Richard Nixon in the tightest presidential race since 1884. His winning margin (112,000 votes) comes from the African-American vote.

**NOVEMBER 1960:**

In New Orleans, **RUBY BRIDGES**, a six-year-old Black girl, enters a previously all-white school protected by federal marshals from a crowd of angry racists.

**MAY 1961:**

**THE FREEDOM RIDERS**, an interracial group of protesters on New Orleans-bound buses, are harassed, attacked, and jailed.

**OCTOBER 1961:**

**PRESIDENT KENNEDY WARNS CITIZENS TO BE READY FOR NUCLEAR ATTACK AND BUILD BOMB SHELTERS.** The Soviet Union tests the —biggest hydrogen bomb in history.

**1961-1962:**

Fearful of the spread of communism in Southeast Asia, the **U.S. INCREASES MILITARY PRESENCE IN SOUTH VIETNAM TO 9,000 TROOPS.**

**JUNE 1962:**

**STUDENTS FOR A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY (SDS)** hold its first convention, resulting in the student manifesto, the Port Huron Statement: "Agenda for a Generation."



**OCTOBER 1962:**

Violent riots erupt when African-American **JAMES MEREDITH** attempts to enroll at the University of Mississippi. Kennedy sends 30,000 troops and law enforcement officers to restore order.



**OCTOBER 1962:**

**THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS,** a weapons dispute between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, almost leads to nuclear war until both sides agree to withdraw missiles.

**APRIL 1963:**

**THE BIRMINGHAM CAMPAIGN,** peaceful protests planned by the SCLC, results in law enforcement turning fire hoses and dogs on protesters, including children. Televised coverage builds wider support for the civil rights movement.

**JUNE 11, 1963:**

**KENNEDY GIVES A  
TELEVISED ADDRESS**

declaring civil rights are the most pressing domestic issue facing the country and promising to send new legislation to Congress.

**JUNE 12, 1963:**

**MEDGAR EVERS,** an activist and Mississippi field officer for the NAACP, is assassinated in front of his home by a KKK member.

**AUGUST 28, 1963:**

At the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, **MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.** gives his historic **"I HAVE A DREAM"** speech to over 250,000 people.



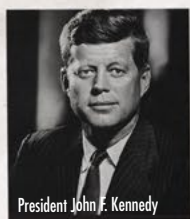
**SEPTEMBER 15, 1963:**

**BOMBING OF THE 16TH STREET  
BAPTIST CHURCH** in Birmingham, AL kills four young girls and injures others, fueling angry protests. Three Ku Klux Klan members are eventually convicted of murder.

**NOVEMBER 22, 1963**

While riding in a motorcade in Dallas, TX during a campaign visit,  
**KENNEDY IS  
ASSASSINATED**

## PERSPECTIVES ON THE JFK ASSASSINATION



Many people recall where they were on November 22, 1963; however, responses to Kennedy's assassination differed based on cultural experience. Many Jews flocked to synagogues to mourn. 80% of American Jews had voted for Kennedy and, many had approved of his strong financial and military support for Israel. Feelings in the African-American community were more complicated. Some feared that Kennedy may have been killed by a racist who resented his support of civil rights, but there was also a feeling that his administration had not fulfilled its promises to Black voters. Although he gave a passionate speech about civil rights in June '63, Kennedy's relevant legislation did not pass until the next year, with a strong push from his successor, Lyndon B. Johnson.

# JEWES AND CIVIL RIGHTS

Prior to the 1960s, Southern Jews tended to keep a low profile on racial issues. Many worked as merchants and depended on peaceful relations with white Christians. In the Deep South, Jews were pressured to join White Citizens Councils or else lose customers, bank loans, and police protection. In 1957-58, the KKK used the growing integration crisis to launch anti-Semitic violence on Jewish temples. As civil rights activities increased, only a small number of Southern rabbis spoke out in support; most Jews took a more conservative stance, and outside of the major cities like Atlanta and New Orleans, few Southern Jews participated in civil rights activities.

Northern Jews, many of whom held strong liberal views, participated passionately in the civil rights movement. Jewish organizations submitted legal briefs supporting school integration in the Brown v. Board of Education case and worked on other cases promoting racial equality. In the 1960s, large numbers of Jewish lawyers and students from the North came to Mississippi for voter registration drives and to help activists navigate Southern legal and prison systems. At least 30% of the white Freedom Riders were Jewish. Many Northern Jews also picketed segregated establishments, marched in demonstrations and protests, faced arrest and jail time, and as racist opposition escalated, risked violence and death in the fight for equality.



# INTERVIEW WITH ACTOR SHARON D CLARKE

Education Dramaturg Ted Sod spoke with Actor Sharon D Clarke about her work on *Caroline, or Change*.

**Ted Sod:** Why did you want to play the title role in *Caroline, or Change*? What do you find exciting about this role?

**Sharon D Clarke:** Caroline's a tour de force. She's magnificent. This musical takes in the assassination of JFK and the burgeoning civil rights movement by focusing on a disenfranchised single woman. It touches on so many ideas in such a humane, natural, and yet surreal way. I love the surreal elements of the story and the way that we tell it. The washing machine, dryer, radio, and other inanimate objects that Caroline sings to and has conversations with are a completely unique way to allow the audience to enter into this woman's mind. It's very rare that you see someone of Caroline's stature at the center of a story being told. I wanted to be a part of that. I wanted to honor people like my mum and dad who came over from Jamaica to a completely new country to try and make their way. The things they had to go through and put up with to make a life for themselves and for me. Stories that honor that kind of human spirit are definitely something that I am on board with.

**TS:** I'm curious how you went about researching what was happening in America at the time.

**SDC:** We did a lot of research. Michael Longhurst, the director, and Ann Yee, the choreographer, brought material to us from the time period. We read about the Alabama church killings and what was happening with the civil rights movement in America circa 1963, who the main leaders of the civil rights movement were, what was happening around JFK, what that meant to society, how it affected Blacks and whites, how it changed people's lives. We all did our backstories. We spent time looking at how old Caroline would have been when she had her kids and when her husband left. We had a very complete picture of who these people in the musical are. And then we had the added bonus of having Tony Kushner, who wrote the lyrics and book, come to talk to us. He spent an afternoon, and we sat in a circle, and he just talked to us. He told us about his experience, what the show was based on, what he had lived through, what it meant to him, what it's like in Lake Charles, Louisiana, and how the temperature felt. We were lucky enough to be imbued with the writer's perspective. We weren't asked to portray characters in the way they were portrayed before. We were given the agency to do what we wanted to do with it based on the text. To have the creative freedom to find the characters in that way was a joyous process.

**TS:** Please give us some insight into your process of interpreting this role.

**SDC:** My starting point is always, "What is this character's love? What is the love that grounds them, that propels them on, what is the love that holds them back?" Caroline has been brave enough to divorce a husband who has become abusive. But that has broken her heart. She still absolutely loves him. She has that dream state where she is thinking back to when they were young in 1943 and the love they had, bringing up the kids and how life was wonderful. She's not stopped loving him. She's praying to God to help her forget him, to help her let him go so that she can move on. She's broken, and she's hurt. It's the one time in the piece where you see what her happiness was and where her sadness comes from and why she's closed her heart to the world.



Sharon D Clarke

**TS:** Would you talk a bit about your understanding of the relationship between Caroline and Noah? Is it true that the character of Noah is based on Tony Kushner himself?

**SDC:** It's poetic license. Tony drew on truth in order to create all these characters. The stable, maternal figure in Noah's life is Caroline. She has been their maid, and she has known him all his life. So when he has lost his mother, and his father is withdrawn, he naturally goes to the one thing he knows, Caroline. They talk to each other. Caroline understands his loss; they have both lost their mothers to cancer. She understands what he's going through. But emotionally she can't invest in this child. She has four kids of her own. She doesn't have any money or standing in society, and she can't emotionally afford to take on another child.

**TS:** How do you see Caroline's relationship with her own daughter, Emmie?

**SDC:** Emmie's a tomboy; she's hanging out at the parking lot with her friends, dancing to the radio, and she's getting involved with this civil rights movement—which for Caroline spells trouble. Caroline's worried about Emmie attracting trouble to her family. She is coming from a different mindset: You keep quiet and you don't rock the boat. You don't upset your boss. You keep your head down. Emmie is having none of that—so, of course, they are going to rub up against each other. Caroline is being a protective mom the best way she knows how, which seems harsh to Emmie. But Caroline's doing the best she can do.

**TS:** I'm curious what you make of the title, *Caroline, or Change*? For me, it's brilliant because of the pocket change that goes missing in the play.



**And then there is the larger meaning of the word change. Do you feel that Caroline changes at the end of the piece?**

**SDC:** She doesn't have the capacity to change. In fact, she says "chargin's a danger for a woman like me." For me, she thinks as long as she can get her kids through their lives, that's going to have to be enough. She feels it's too late for her to change. She looks at her friend Dotty going to college and mixing with a new crew, and she knows she doesn't have the money to do that for herself. Dotty has a boyfriend, she doesn't have any kids, she doesn't have any dependents. Dotty has a completely different lifestyle from Caroline. Caroline does try to move herself forward because by the time we get to the second act, she's found out where Vietnam is. She had someone show her on a map, so now she knows where her son is serving. I think there are these myriad worries that don't allow her to change in the same way others in her community do. As you said, the word "change" in the title is multi-faceted: there's the change Noah goes through growing up and letting go, there is change in the household with Noah's father getting remarried, there is change politically—JFK has been assassinated—the civil rights movement is forcing change. The whole world is changing around her in a way that Caroline just can't. So for me, she's the one character that doesn't change.

**TS: What do you look for from a director, choreographer, and musical director when you are working on a musical role, whether it's a new musical or a revival?**

**SDC:** If they allow openness, honesty, and truth in the room, then the creative process is not stifled, and you are free to try things. You are allowed to fail. You are allowed to discover.

**TS: Can we talk a little bit about where you were born and educated, and if you had any teachers who had a profound influence on your work as an artist?**

**SDC:** I am London-born of Jamaican parents who grew up together in Morgans Forest in the parish of Clarendon, Jamaica, where they were next door neighbors and childhood sweethearts and came over to Britain in the 1950s. They weren't on the Windrush, but they were part of the Windrush generation. They made lives for themselves here and gave me a wonderful opportunity. I have been able to do what I love by being in London and being in the heart of theatre. It's such an absolute blessing.

I went to a normal, comprehensive school, very mixed, all kinds of creeds, colors, religious denominations. Lunchtimes were a thing of beauty because we would all just exchange food. We started tasting all sorts of food—from India and Greece. As that generation, we didn't stick to separate groups because our schools were so mixed. And I went to the Anna Scher Drama School in Islington. Anna Scher was an English teacher who saw kids just being kids on the street or hanging around in school and not really doing anything and she started drama classes, which dealt mainly in improv. We would look at classic pieces and plays, or play out different scenarios and themes, but we would then improv them.

I went to North London College to do a social work course because I knew that the acting industry could be precarious, and I wanted to have qualifications in something that I would love doing as much as acting. While I was waiting for my results from the social work college, I was in the common room, and there was a copy of *The Stage* lying about. I picked it up, and they were advertising for a job at the Battersea Arts Centre. I went along to the auditions and got that job, and I have been an actor and a singer ever since.

**TS: What inspires you as an artist?**

**SDC:** What inspires me is the people I work with. I have been very fortunate to work with some incredible people. People who are gifted,



Sharon D Clarke in rehearsal  
for *Caroline, or Change*  
Photo: Jeremy Daniel

talented, creative, and generous with their time and their wisdom and gifts. That's the directors I work with, the designers, actors, backstage crew, and on and on. When I am able to be in a room with them and watch their creative genius flow—that's what inspires me.

**TS: What is one of the most challenging experiences you've had in your career? And what did you take away from it?**

**SDC:** All roles are challenging for different reasons—that's why I like doing them—because they are going to teach me something about myself and my craft and how I can move forward. It can be challenging dealing with "foolishness." There was an instance where I was working on a show and the writer asked if I could be more Black. And, I said, "You may not have noticed, but I am Black," and he said, "Well, I know Black people." He meant for me to be more of a caricature, more stereotypical. And a director once asked me, a girl from Tottenham, London, "How does one pick cotton?" Like it would just be embedded in my DNA. It's those kinds of requests that I find challenging. Within the work, challenge is almost always a joy because it's always going to stretch me. No matter how afraid I might have been of something, there is always a reason why I have done it, and it has taught me something. I love challenges. They lift me.

**TS: Do you have any advice for a young person who says they want a career as an actor?**

**SDC:** It's always about the craft. If you want to become an actor because you think you're going to get famous—then it's not for you. So few actors are famous. You have to want to tell the stories. In order to tell those stories, you have to be part of a team. You have to be a team player. Find your family, your community. I also say go and usher. Ushering is fantastic because you can see craft happen nightly. You can get a nightly masterclass where you can watch a different actor each night, and you see how they deal with the audience. Are they generous on stage, do they upstage people? What is it about that performance that makes you lean in, what is it about it that makes you lean back or become disinterested? There's so much that you can learn from ushering, and you'll be getting paid a little bit of money, too. •



# 2004 AND 2020: BROADWAY, AMERICA, & CAROLINE, OR CHANGE

**2004:** George W. Bush is President, there is war in the Middle East, and tensions over economic instability are rampant. **2020:** Donald J. Trump is President, there is war in the Middle East, and the state of the economy is one of the most divisive subjects in the U.S. While these years share a discordant energy, there is one thing we can be proud of from both: *Caroline, or Change* is on Broadway.

## THE BUSINESS OF BROADWAY

Although Broadway is an art form that brings joy and catharsis to millions of playgoers a year, it is also a business. For a show to survive on Broadway, especially a new musical, it must navigate its way through a unique business landscape and establish itself as a prime attraction among the other shows on the Great White Way. *Caroline, or Change* entered a very particular Broadway marketplace in 2004—and re-enters Broadway in a vastly different economic environment today.

The original production of *Caroline, or Change* opened on Broadway at the Eugene O'Neill Theatre on May 2, 2004, after beginning previews on April 13. At the time of its opening night, the highest-grossing show on Broadway was *The Lion King*, followed closely by *Wicked* and *Mamma Mia!* Only two of these, *The Lion King* and *Wicked*, grossed over \$1 million dollars that week. As a whole, that week Broadway grossed \$15,153,456 across 31 shows. At the American Airlines Theatre, Roundabout was presenting *Twentieth Century* by Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur, where it played to over 90% capacity. At Studio 54, Roundabout was playing host to another classic and often underappreciated musical: Stephen Sondheim and John Weidman's *Assassins*.

The business of Broadway in 2020, however, is somewhat more expansive. For the week ending January 5, 2020, Broadway grossed \$43,095,641 (210.74% higher than the same week in 2004) across 36 shows. One show grossed over \$3 million, three grossed over \$2 million, and 18 shows grossed over \$1 million. The highest-grossing shows (which all grossed over \$2

million) were *Hamilton*, *The Lion King*, *Wicked*, and *Moulin Rouge!* Not only are *The Lion King* and *Wicked* still running, but they are also leading the pack.

## THE CITY AND COUNTRY AT LARGE: 2004

As *Caroline, or Change* spread its wings on Broadway for the first time, the country's economic fortunes were also beginning to take flight.

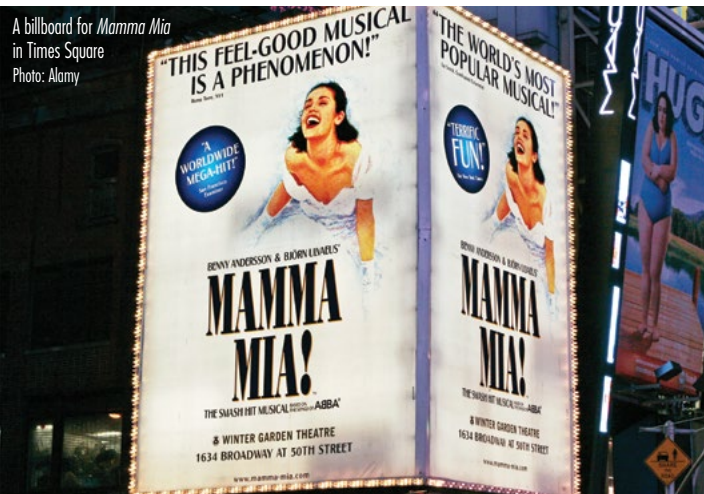
The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 had devastated New York City's economy. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the attack led to roughly 430,000 lost job months in New York City: equivalent to the loss of roughly 143,000 jobs a month for three months.

As 2004 approached, however, things were looking up. In the "arts, entertainment, and recreation" sector of Manhattan's economy, under which Broadway falls, "jobs remained constant, while average wages rose 1.9 percent, to \$52,231."

While the economy was indeed growing in 2004, it wasn't growing for everyone. Income inequality surged, as the richest were getting richer and the poor were staying poor. In an article for *The New York Times*, Paul Krugman wrote that, "In 2004 the real income of the richest 1 percent of Americans surged by almost 12.5 percent. Meanwhile, the average real income of the bottom 99 percent of the population rose only 1.5 percent. In other words, a relative handful of people received most of the benefits of growth. There are a couple of additional revelations in the 2004 data. One is that growth didn't just bypass the poor and the lower middle class, it bypassed the upper middle class too. Even people at the 95th percentile of the income distribution—that is, people richer than 19 out of 20 Americans—gained only modestly. The big increases went only to people who were already in the economic stratosphere."

## THE CITY AND COUNTRY AT LARGE: 2020

From late 2019 into early 2020, the economy of both New York City and the U.S. has continued to grow. According to the city comptroller, the city's economy grew by 2.4% in the latter half of 2019. While this growth was the slowest it had been in two years, it was still faster than the overall U.S. growth rate of 1.9%. This, though, is still a positive marker—despite a slower rate of growth, Gross Domestic Product growth is still higher than it was at this point one year ago.



A billboard for *Mamma Mia!* in Times Square  
Photo: Alamy

## RECKONING WITH HISTORY

Another divisive issue plaguing the country in the years since *Caroline, or Change* first opened is the debate over whether statues honoring Confederate soldiers should be removed or left in place. However, as happens when the Confederate statue is destroyed in *Caroline, or Change*, this debate almost always leads to drawn-out conflict.

One of the best examples of this conflict is over New Orleans's Liberty Place Monument. According to *The New York Times*, the monument "commemorated a violent uprising by white Democrats against the racial integration of the city's police force and the Republicans who governed Louisiana...From 1932 until 1993, the monument bore a plaque that said, in part, that the 'national election of November 1876 recognized white supremacy in the South and gave us our state,' the city statement said. In 1993, the City Council voted to remove the obelisk, but instead the plaque was covered with a new one that read: 'In honor of those Americans on both sides who died in the Battle of Liberty Place' and called it 'a conflict of the past that should teach us lessons for the future.'" Amidst candlelight vigils and protests, New Orleans Mayor Mitch Landrieu finally ordered the statue's removal in 2017.

This debate has even flared in Lake Charles, where *Caroline, or Change* is set, as recently as 2015. In July of that year, the Lake Charles City Council "voted 4-2 against a resolution requesting the Calcasieu Police Jury remove the [South's Defender's Monument, depicting a Confederate Soldier], with council members Mary Morris and Rodney Geyen voting in favor of the resolution. After the meeting Morris told KPLC, 'Everybody wants their family, their children, to know about history and we all want to know about history, but for the African Americans it was a dark time in their history.'"

## IS BROADWAY READY FOR CAROLINE?

Tony Kushner himself notes that the events of *Caroline, or Change* predicted the future better than he expected. In referencing the removal of Confederate statues, he stated, "'I really hoped it would happen someday. I did take my best shot at guessing what might be of lasting significance, and I'm proud of that.'"

Not only has the country caught up to the plot of *Caroline, or Change* since its original production, but Broadway has also made itself a more hospitable environment. When the original production opened in May 2004, there were 21 other musicals running on Broadway and only one other was a drama. In his review of the original Broadway production, *New York Times* critic Ben Brantley notes that Tonya Pinkins (playing Caroline), "finds herself having to win over midtown audiences who prefer their musical stars brassy, outgoing and panting to please."

In recent years, though, the criteria for what it takes to make a "hit" have shifted. While *Caroline, or Change* was originally produced by The Public Theatre, most of its companions on Broadway in 2003 were purely commercial runs. Shows like *Wicked* and *Taboo* were seen out of town before coming to Broadway, but the trend of musicals transferring from not-for-profit theaters within New York was relatively new at that time. In contrast, the last five winners of the Best Musical Tony Award were transfers from not-for-profit, off-Broadway theatres—including both *Fun Home* (2015) and *Hamilton* (2016) also coming from The Public.

Another change in 2020 is that audiences are also embracing musicals that deal with weightier, more muscular topics. Also opening on Broadway this season are *Sing Street*, *Girl from the North Country*, and *Jagged Little Pill*, all of which transferred from the not-for-profit space, and all of which engage in one way or another with issues like racism, poverty, and drug addiction. Compared with shows like *Avenue Q* and *Wicked* that trade in comedy, puppetry, and magic, the musicals keeping *Caroline, or Change* company this season feel more in line with its tone.

Broadway, now more than ever, has become a place where people go not only to escape but also to confront the darkness in the world around us. In this way, *Caroline, or Change* provides a perfect vessel for us all to reflect and grow. •

The marquee for Roundabout's 2020 revival of *Caroline, or Change* at Studio 54





# INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR MICHAEL LONGHURST

Education Dramaturg Ted Sod spoke with Director Michael Longhurst about his work on *Caroline, or Change*.

**Ted Sod:** The last time I interviewed you was in 2012 when you directed Nick Payne's *If There Is I Haven't Found It Yet* here at Roundabout. Will you tell us about some of the seminal career changes and directing assignments that have happened in the intervening years?

**Michael Longhurst:** After *If There Is I Haven't Found It Yet*, I was still a freelance theatre director. I continued to work with Nick Payne. My production of his play *Constellations*, which started at the Royal Court, transferred to the West End and then to Broadway at the Manhattan Theatre Club with Jake Gyllenhaal and Ruth Wilson. I directed a bunch of productions on and off the West End including Simon Stephen's *Carmen Disruption* at the Almeida, Caryl Churchill's *A Number* at the Young Vic and Florian Zeller's *The Son* at the Kiln. Classics included *'Tis Pity She's A Whore* and *The Winter's Tale* in the candlelit Sam Wanamaker Playhouse at Shakespeare's Globe and the UK premieres of several American plays including Joshua Harmon's *Bad Jews*, Branden Jacobs-Jenkins's *Gloria*, and Francis Ya-Chew Cowhig's *The World of Extreme Happiness*. I directed a high-profile revival of Peter Shaffer's *Amadeus* at the National Theatre, which incorporated a 20-piece orchestra and opera singers that were fully integrated into the staging. Next came *Caroline, or Change*, which started at Chichester in 2017 before going to Hampstead in 2018 and then the West End in 2019. And, most recently, I became the artistic director of the Donmar Warehouse taking over from Josie Rourke in March 2019. We're just coming to the end of my first season there, for which I directed a revival of David Greig's *Europe*, and we currently have *Teenage Dick* by Mike Lew running.

**TS:** Why did you choose to direct the musical *Caroline, or Change*?

**ML:** Daniel Evans, who is Artistic Director at Chichester, is also a musical theatre star. He was in *Sunday in the Park with George* at Roundabout—he's very passionate about them. We had had a conversation back when I directed *The History Boys* for him in Sheffield, and he asked me if I was interested in directing one, and I said I'd love to, and that resulted in an offer to do this several years later. I didn't know *Caroline, or Change*, but I remembered its reception in the United Kingdom when we had the original New York production come over in 2006.

It's such a brilliantly complex and rich piece of work, and I was really drawn to it because of that—the characters are portrayed very three-dimensionally, which maybe is not always the case in musical theatre. Jeanine's soaring music thrillingly combines African-American and Jewish musical styles and is constantly changing so the composition evolves with the characters' thought structures and the drama. I love the fact that Tony has written an intimate domestic portrait that is also, absolutely, a state-of-your-nation in 1963 and which also combines his flourishes of magical realism. This is my first professional musical, and it was a big opportunity to work in a new genre. I'm a massive Tony Kushner fan, so it was a bit of a dream to get to work on it.

It's a heartbreaking portrait of the corrosive psychological effects of racial and socio-economic disadvantage and the incredible strength, resilience, and bravery needed to survive and make change.

Michael Longhurst



**TS:** Did you know you had something special during rehearsals or previews at Chichester?

**ML:** I must say even when we opened the show in Chichester, you could feel a really profound reaction in the audience to the material and to the production, and that is a huge testament to the brilliance of Sharon D Clarke's performance. It was so exciting to see Sharon have the opportunity to step into such a gargantuan role, and she stopped the show. Sharon has always been an amazing theatre actor and performer, but this role presented her at a whole new level to UK audiences.

**TS:** How do you hope audiences will respond to the musical in 2020—especially here in the U.S.—where the subject of race relations has become a lightning rod under President Trump?

**ML:** I remember, just as we started rehearsals, reading in the American press about Confederate statues being taken down, which felt incredibly exciting given the subplot of the story. Tony Kushner reveals himself to be a prophet once again. But almost immediately, Charlottesville happened. We're doing a musical that feels incredibly urgent. Given the length of time it takes to make a musical, it's remarkable to be involved with one that politically feels so timely and important.

"Change come fast and change come slow" is the key motif of the play, and I think the story is going to become even more relevant as we shift into these new times. I think there's a real necessity to tell this story now in order to remind ourselves of what was and to fight for what needs to be.

**TS: How have you collaborated with Tony Kushner on this project?**

**ML:** As I was preparing to direct this show the first time, I had a series of extensive conversations with Tony on the phone, really just trying to find my way into the nuance of the piece as an English director—particularly race relations in 1963 in Lake Charles. And to understand what that was like in this household he and Jeanine are portraying and in the context of the wider picture. The piece is partly autobiographical—it's about a Jewish family in Lake Charles, and that's an incredibly small community. So Tony and I talked a lot about the specifics of race relations between the Jewish community and the African-American community in his hometown, about Jim Crow laws, and how civil rights progress was manifesting locally.

I was very keen to make sure that I understood what the dinner party was like for Emmie when she was with the white family. How does privilege function in this "polite" family? He would tell me amazing stories and anecdotes of his childhood, and all of this fleshed out the world of the play. And then he came into rehearsals and did a Q&A with the cast, which was beautiful because there were details he could share that were just gold for us. He talked about giving up the cello as a kid and having a big fight with his dad about not wanting to play it anymore. It was wonderful having him there, sharing like that.

**TS: Can you talk about the atmosphere you try to create in a rehearsal room? What is your process on this musical like?**

**ML:** Fundamentally, I believe my role is to make a rehearsal space that empowers actors to do their best work, where we collectively interrogate the specifics of the story so we can bring it to life in the most thrilling and moving way.

I'm not Jewish, I'm not African American. So, working on *Caroline, or Change* was about helping a British cast understand those perspectives. During the early part of rehearsals, we were doing research together; we were creating timelines and watching documentaries in order to get a sense of the world and deliver it accurately.

**TS: I am curious what you looked for in the American actors you have cast. Were there specific traits that you wanted?**

**ML:** Because this show is entirely sung, we always have started with the voice. Stage one is about who can deliver the score. The next stage is accessing the psychological insight that they can bring to the character. The standard of talent in New York is thrilling. There's a greater diversity of talent—more people to choose from working in the field. We were really able to choose the best people.

**TS: Your musical director is Chris Fenwick, correct?**

**ML:** Yes, Chris Fenwick is the musical director in New York, a long-term collaborator of Jeanine's over here. Nigel Lilley, who was the original musical director, is the musical supervisor now. Nigel had helped me find some singers for a play I directed. So, I absolutely trusted his ear since I had auditioned performers with him in the past. Nigel's precision working with the actors to deliver the score and his skill translating the dynamics of Jeanine's score and the psychology behind why those dynamics exist was invaluable.

For me, it is akin to directing Shakespeare. The structure of the verse dictates the rhythm and meaning. It's the same with a musical score. I have such respect for the artists who can sing a set melody but make it feel like an utterly fresh thought.

It's really fulfilling as a director to have co-creators in the room. Directing plays can get very lonely sometimes, whereas in musicals there's actually a really nice tag team of who is leading the room that can happen.

**TS: Ann Yee is the choreographer. Why did you choose to collaborate with her on this musical?**

**ML:** Ann Yee is an American and just a wonderful person to collaborate with. She had worked in England, and I had met her years earlier. We had done a little bit of work together, but I hadn't worked extensively—so it was great to finally be working on a musical that justified bringing her back over to England.

There's a complex domestic family portrait in this musical and a lot of magical realism, and our collaboration was about how to harness the playfulness. We also had to make sure that these forces were swirling around Caroline and putting pressure on her. We explored the Radio as a Greek chorus rather than a step-tapping trio. That idea allowed us to bring the anthropomorphized appliances in the show to life.

With Ann's choreography, every floor pattern and movement was discovered and then set with the performers. Ann's work was all about understanding the intention of a character and how that might manifest in space. And for certain characters, that was polished into tighter choreography, but sometimes it was just about the dynamic of the space and realizing the story on Fly Davis's abstract minimal design, which uses a revolve in order to convey the cycles of life, work, and change. •



Director Michael Longhurst in rehearsal for *Caroline, or Change*  
Photo: Jeremy Daniel



# A SINGING WASHER, RADIO DRYER, BUS, AND MOON

***Caroline, or Change* features singing household appliances: a Washing Machine, Dryer, Radio (played by a Supremes-esque trio of women), as well as a city Bus and the Moon. In giving these objects bodies, emotions, and behaviors, writers Tony Kushner and Jeanine Tesori have utilized two literary devices: symbolism and anthropomorphism.**

## THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ANTHROPOMORPHISM

Anthropomorphism is the ascription of human characteristics to nonhuman objects. Anthropomorphism comes from the Greek words “anthropos” (human) and “morphe” (shape or form). People from all cultures ascribe human consciousness and motivations to nonhuman things: trees, animals, deities, computers, and more. Anthropomorphic characters are common in children’s literature. Musical theatre, too, has a long tradition of anthropomorphic characters, from the singing felines of *Cats* to the cursed household objects Lumière, Cogsworth, and Mrs. Potts in *Beauty and the Beast*.

Research suggests that there are two main reasons humans anthropomorphize. The world, both natural and man-made, is fraught with mystery, uncertainty, and risk. In order to understand it and decide how to move forward, humans use what they know best—themselves—to explain what’s going on and predict what might happen next. Ascribing human behavior to a forest, for example, can reduce uncertainty and fear about that environment. Anthropologist Steward Guthrie suggests that all religion is built on anthropomorphism: the attribution of human characteristics and behavior to nonhuman events such as weather or crop failure leads to an understanding or construction of the divine and its relationship with mortals.

Secondly, anthropomorphism reflects humans’ need for social contact. Studies have shown that the experience of loneliness can trigger the same physiological pathways as physical pain. Humans are hard-wired for socialization, and, in the absence of relationships, see human qualities in objects and use them to invent new social connections.

Looking at *Caroline, or Change* from this perspective suggests that Caroline, isolated and alone, has turned to conversation with the objects in her world to alleviate her loneliness. In anthropomorphizing appliances like the Gellmans’ Washer and Dryer, Kushner and Tesori allow for Caroline—a naturally taciturn and emotionally distant character—to share her innermost feelings with the audience in a way that is consistent with her personality. The objects are played by Black actors, based on an idea from George C. Wolfe, director of the original production, that the ghosts of enslaved people who had lived in the area and who had come to inhabit the machines. Times had changed, but the source of manual labor remained the

same. Caroline, struggling to move into the future, is in constant conversation with the past.

## OBJECT AS SYMBOL

Objects on stage are often symbols: rather than just being what they are, they can also stand in for a value or an idea. For example, Laura’s glass animals in *The Glass Menagerie* symbolize her fragility. Lena’s plant in *A Raisin in the Sun* symbolizes her dreams for her family and of owning a home with a yard.

In *Caroline, or Change*, the moon is used as a universal symbol that conveys the same message to all the characters. She represents change—change in the seasons, change of day into night, and on a broader scale, the social changes Caroline, Dotty, Emmie, Noah, and the Gellmans are experiencing through the civil rights movement and the steady march of progress in the late 20th century. It is the Moon who vocalizes one of the show’s principal motifs: “Change come fast and change come slow,/ but change come...” Her presence is a signal for the audience that a shift is coming, and helps to cement the salient theme of change as an important part of the show.



Keira Keeley and Patch Darragh  
in *The Glass Menagerie*

## THE RADIO TRIO

The Radio is played by a trio of women singing close harmony, much like the “girl groups” that dominated American music in the early 1960s. The “girl group” sound emerged as a blend of barbershop quartet and rhythm and blues, and it was made popular in Vaudeville in the 1920s by the Three X Sisters, a trio of white women from Maryland and Brooklyn. In the late 1940s, doo-wop, a style of popular music in which a small group of backing vocalists use nonsense words or syllables to support a lead singer, was developed by teenagers in African-American communities. Girl groups of all races quickly adopted elements of the doo-wop sound.

The first Black girl group to go mainstream was The Bobbettes, a group of young teenagers from Harlem, New York. Their 1957 hit “Mr. Lee” was about a math teacher they disliked. Soon, The Shirelles, a girl group from New Jersey, hit number one on the pop charts with “Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow,” written by Carole King. Producers Barry Gordy—the founder of Motown Records—and Phil Spector, began searching for and developing their own girl groups. By 1963 the radio waves were dominated by groups like The Crystals, The Ronettes, and The Marvelettes.



The most successful of these was The Supremes, who went on to release 12 U.S. number one hits between 1964 and 1969.

The trio of women singers has made many appearances in musical theater over the years. Other examples include Crystal, Ronnette, and Chiffon in *Little Shop of Horrors*, The Dynamites in *Hairspray*, the Dreamettes in *Dreamgirls*, and the Schuyler Sisters in *Hamilton*.

In this production of *Caroline, or Change*, director Michael Longhurst and choreographer Ann Yee have conceived of the Radio trio as a Greek chorus. The Greek chorus is one of the oldest techniques in theater and originated in the Classical tragedies of Ancient Greece such as *Oedipus Rex*, *Antigone*, and *Medea*. It often stands in for the people, delivering judgments and sharing their opinions on a play's action. Here, the Radio is paying homage to both 1960s girl groups and Ancient Greek theatre. This marriage of musical and theatrical traditions fits in exactly with *Caroline, or Change*'s tone and style. •

Publicity photo of The Shirelles in 1962. Clockwise from left: Shirley Owens, Beverly Lee (top), Addie “Micki” Harris, and Doris Jackson.





# DESIGNER STATEMENTS

## FLY DAVIS—SET AND COSTUME DESIGN

The design of a show is about creating a framework for a piece of theatre and helping the audience to understand and invest in it. I believe the designer's input is becoming more and more of a dramaturgical role, both vocally and aesthetically. This means, as a designer, you collaborate wholly with the director, choreographer, sound, and lighting designers from page to stage. All of our disciplines have to work harmoniously as a package to create and support the wonderful worlds of the plays, musicals, and operas.

As Tony Kushner and Jeanine Tesori have gloriously given us a piece which could be described as more of a play-opera, along with the presence of personified objects like the radio, washer, and dryer, it meant Michael Longhurst, the director, and I could give the design and some of the costumes more of an operatic gesture.



Costume sketches by Fly Davis for the Radio in *Caroline, or Change*

In the world of costumes, we start the show by delving into the isolated mind of Caroline with her comfort characters: the Washing Machine, Dryer, Moon, and Radio, and we were able to have 3D surrealist fun from the '60s. The Radio are mood setters, and they change in color. They hint at being like The Supremes, but we have turned down the dial of naturalism and upped the futurism of their attire. The Washing Machine, the cooling influence on Caroline, is covered in bubbles, spraying mist in the air, and the Dryer is acting as a conscience and temptation with light-up coils of red hot electricity and a rusted boiler suit and red makeup across his eyes. The Moon waxes and wanes in her light and dark costumes, ancient, eternal, and of course, sequined and fabulous. We only ever see Caroline in her maid's uniform until she goes to church, when she changes

into her best dress and hat. That's the only change we see in her. The Gellmans, on the other hand, are constantly changing clothes, especially Rose, who loves to shop. Her stepson, the pampered Noah, is very much at odds with Caroline's poorer children, who practically live in the same clothes but nonetheless are richer in many ways than Noah.

Costume sketch by Fly Davis for the Moon in *Caroline, or Change*



For the set, we have created an environment which isn't rooted in naturalism; we are not saying that we are literally in this or that room, inside or outside at times—it is slightly more fragmented and abstract. We have enlarged a late 1950s pattern to help realize the sense of domestic claustrophobia of that time. The split levels connected by the stairs reinforce the class and race divide of the wealthy white Jewish family upstairs and out of reach with their unattainable materialistic goods like a TV—"they got everything."

Caroline is described by Rose as the "negro maid" toiling away in the hot, "horrible basement" on a very low wage, 16 feet below sea level, surrounded by the noisy swamps of Louisiana. Caroline is working on her double turntables, hinting at her resistance to change and constant routine and cycle of her life, work, and how they are intertwined. Both history, with JFK being assassinated, and Emmie, Caroline's rebellious daughter, disrupt this rhythm—we alter the architectural framework of the design, rupturing the space, creating caverns between characters, sparking the need for change, acceptance, and healing.

We've opted to put our wonderful band on stage; raised and split in two, they frame the space. They are visible and absolutely part of our production, as the music is the heart and soul of the storytelling. Jack Knowles, our lighting designer, occasionally illuminates them even more, along with the twinkling Moon, with a series of light bulbs hinting at being stars in the universe. The darkness is key in the design, it surrounds the playing space and creeps onto the walls and the floor almost like a watermark from a deluge. We connect it to loss, the great unknown, the characters' futures, and where Noah and Caroline's children dare to dream bigger.



### JACK KNOWLES—LIGHTING DESIGN

One of the most striking things from listening to *Caroline, or Change* for the first time is the journey that it goes on through changes in rhythm, style, and emotion. It instantly informs and guides the lighting, being something that the lighting dances with throughout every moment of the show.

This is a musical that uses a range of different techniques to communicate the nuances of the narrative to the audience. It flits between the dank reality of the damp, overheated basement in the middle of the swamp to the fantasy world that Caroline creates, bringing to life appliances and twisting the importance of key things in her life—such as the Moon. The lighting has been designed to echo these worlds and to guide the audience through them. Using clear languages that support the fantastical, bold colors and shapes accompanying the Radio, Dryer, and Washer in what is otherwise a world of muted pastel tones that exist in the basement. This allowed me to explore what each “character” was bringing—not only in what they say or their role in the narrative, but also the emotion they bring and the effect that they have on Caroline.

The whole process for the visual world of the musical has been a collaborative process. The world which Fly Davis has created through the set and costume design supports the boldness of the lighting, generating statements and giving room for the visual elements to work in sync. Working alongside Mike, the director, and Ann, the choreographer, we were able to explore how we could tell the narrative through various components and elements. In such an abstract design, the lighting adds clarity and supports the emotional journey of the characters and has been developed closely with the physical use of space in a really exciting way.

### PAUL ARDITI—SOUND DESIGN

I hope that when you visit us at Studio 54 for *Caroline, or Change*, you will enjoy what you hear as much as what you see. I want you to hear every word clearly (for this is the only inviolable rule for sound designers of musicals!) and appreciate how beautifully our 12 superb musicians deliver Jeanine Tesori’s intricately devised mix of rhythm and blues, classical, klezmer, Motown, and jazz. You may notice that our drummer and percussionist aren’t in view. They have a massive battery of instruments, including a drum kit, vibraphone, timpani, bells, Chinese opera gong, tam-tam, and a length of chain on a washboard—all of which are housed in a studio we have built in the theatre basement.

It’s my job to make the sound from this studio blend perfectly with the visible musicians on the platforms above the stage. I’m also responsible for designing the loudspeaker system in the auditorium so that every member of the audience can hear everything, no matter where they’re sitting. Sound system design is a bespoke task and varies hugely according to the architecture of the theatre and the nature of the show. I’m also responsible for hiding wireless microphones on all the actors—usually in their hair or wig. Our director, Michael Longhurst, has given me the additional unique challenge of Stuart’s clarinet. Is Stuart playing it for real, or is there some sound design magic involved? You decide. Finally, listen out for the sounds of Louisiana—the insects and frogs and the water. They will be all around you. •

Set Model by Fly Davis  
for *Caroline, or Change*



# UP FOR DISCUSSION

## BEFORE THE PLAY

### **MUSICALITY:**

How would you describe the musicality of your life?

What music would you utilize to describe your everyday routine?

### **TIME PERIOD:**

*Caroline, or Change* takes place amongst the backdrop of the civil rights movement.

Based on other articles and information in this guide, how do you think this time period will affect the story?

### **CHANGE:**

Personally, how do you handle change? What kinds of changes have you gone through in your life?

What are different kinds of changes an individual may experience?

## DURING INTERMISSION

### **MUSICALITY:**

Discuss how musical conversations might feel like a different kind of reality. What might conversations in this story be like if they weren't sung? In your opinion, how do sung conversations add to the story?

### **THEATRICAL ELEMENTS:**

In what ways do the technical elements in the production (lighting, sound, scenic, etc.) help to create a concept for the story? What do you notice about how all of these elements work together to create the world of the play?

**RELATIONSHIP:** Caroline is at the center of many different relationships—with her children (Emmie, Jack, and Joe), with Rose and Stuart, with Noah, and with all of the appliances. How does Noah and Caroline's relationship make you feel? Why do you think they have a special bond that might be missing from Emmie and Caroline's relationship?

## AFTER THE PLAY

### **TIME PERIOD:**

The focus of *Caroline, or Change* is on a very specific area of Louisiana where there was a high Jewish population, many of whom kept a low profile in terms of the civil rights movement. What do you notice about the relationship between Caroline and the Gellmans? How does it speak to relationships amongst different races today?

### **HUMAN AGAIN:**

In many forms of entertainment, voice is often given to animals and objects to give them human personalities; you can reference the article, "A Singing Washer, Radio, Dryer, Bus, and Moon" on p.16 for more information on anthropomorphism. Tony Kushner and Jeanine Tesori utilized Caroline's appliances to give Caroline a way to express her inner thoughts. What makes this way of characterization special to this piece? How do the appliances serve as an extension of Caroline's character?

### **METAPHORS:**

"Nothing ever happened underground/ in Louisiana/ cause they ain't no underground/ in Louisiana./ There is only/ underwater" says Caroline at the beginning of the musical. "Why does our house have a basement?/ Underground is underwater" Noah questions at the end of the play. How do these two moments make you feel after seeing the course of the story? Why do these two characters have a connection to the "underground?" What other metaphors did you notice throughout the production?



# BRINGING YOUR CHARACTER TO LIFE

Human life is made up of many interpersonal relationships, but what about the relationships that exist within our environment and all of the inanimate objects that exist within those environments? In *Caroline, or Change*, objects that surround Caroline's life are able to articulate what they feel, describe their environment, and transcend Caroline's thoughts. But what would the things in your life say about you? This activity will help you bring to life an inanimate object through a characterization activity that can also help if you aspire to create a character on stage!

TIP: Often when crafting a character, you as the actor or writer get to make choices based on already known facts. In this activity, extend your imagination to make choices based on these facts to bring a character to life!

## OBSERVE

**LOOK AT AN OBJECT THAT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU. OBSERVE ITS DETAILS.**

1. How old is the object?
2. What physical qualities make this object unique?
3. Where is it from?
4. Does the object have any family?
5. What types of noises does it make?
6. Is it one color or multiple colors?
7. What can it do?
8. What is its purpose?

## IMAGINE

**USING THE INFORMATION ABOVE, IMAGINE HOW TO TRANSFORM THIS OBJECT INTO A HUMAN CHARACTER.**

Name:

Age:

What's their personality like?

Do they have likes/dislikes? What are they?

What do people say about them?

What might they look like? What makes them stand out?

## PHYSICALIZE

**BRING THEM TO LIFE!**

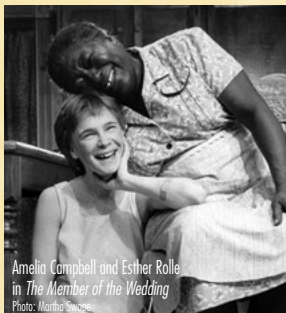
The final step in creating a character is stepping into their shoes and bringing them to life! Think about the following guiding questions to help you embody your character.

1. Describe this character's posture.
2. What is a gesture that might associate with this character's personality?
3. How does this character move?

# ROUNABOUT ARCHIVES

## RACE RELATIONS IN THE MID-20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

One of the themes of *Caroline, or Change* is that of the relationship between the Black maid, Caroline, and Noah, the white son of her employer. The complicated bond between the two unlikely friends (mother/friend and child/confidant) has been explored previously at Roundabout.



Amelia Campbell and Esther Rolle  
in *The Member of the Wedding*  
Photo: Martha Swane

In 1989, Roundabout staged a play adaptation of Carson McCullers's 1946 novel, *The Member of the Wedding*. The production reunited actor Esther Rolle (perhaps best known for her work on the 1970s television show *Good Times*, Rolle was a dancer and stage actor who

worked with the Negro Ensemble Company) with director Harold Scott (one of the original repertory members of Lincoln Center Theatre and the first Black Artistic Director of Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park, Scott went on to be Head of the Directing Program at Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers). Both were involved in Roundabout's staging of Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* (at the Union Square Theatre, 1986). That production has a unique history at Roundabout because it had a limited engagement tour, which included a stop in Los Angeles. Much of the New York cast toured with the production, but notable replacements included Rolle as Lena "Mama" Younger (replacing Olivia Cole) and Danny Glover as Walter Lee Younger (replacing James Pickens, Jr.).

A PBS taping of the Los Angeles cast under director Bill Duke (also a respected actor) was part of the American Playhouse series, which aired on public television in February 1989.



Sketch by Set Designer Thomas Cariello  
for *The Member of the Wedding*

This film version was based on Roundabout's staging of the play. The theatre set designer who designed both *A Raisin in the Sun* and *The Member of the Wedding*, Thomas Cariello, donated his original drawings and elevations created for both productions to the Roundabout archives.

In her review of *The Member of the Wedding*, Deborah Stead, writing for *The New York Times*, teased up the challenges of race relations in this coming-of-age drama. Stead quoted Rolle as she reflected on working with a Black director with whom she shared common life experience: "I could see myself doing this play— [Scott]'s someone who can handle and deal with the relationships, understanding that this was in the more shameful days of our country."



The 1989 Roundabout Broadway Softball  
team, "The Members of the Wedding"

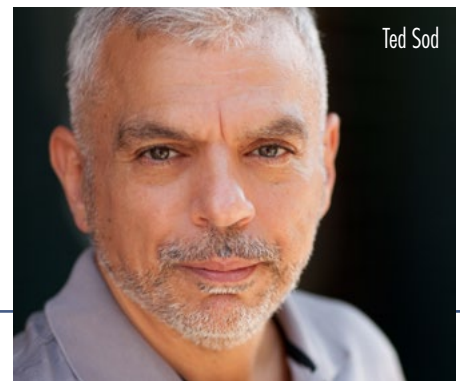
Because Rolle had a close relationship with Roundabout, she was an active participant in offstage activities as well. The archives include photography depicting her at the Broadway Softball League games, happily ensconced among crew on the bleachers in Central Park. That season, Roundabout's team was called "The Members of the Wedding." The archives also include the subscriber newsletter "About Roundabout" from the Fall of 1988, mentioning Rolle's return as well as the PBS airing of *A Raisin in the Sun* with an image depicting her with Danny Glover.



Sketch by Set Designer Thomas Cariello  
for *A Raisin in the Sun*

For more information on the Roundabout Archives, visit <https://archive.roundabouttheatre.org>  
or contact Tiffany Nixon, Roundabout Archivist, at [archives@roundabouttheatre.org](mailto:archives@roundabouttheatre.org)





**Olivia Jones: Tell us about yourself. How and when did you become Roundabout's education dramaturg?**

**Ted Sod:** I was born in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania and educated at King's College. I have a BA in Theatre. In 2001, I was freelancing as a director, actor, playwright, and teaching artist. I auditioned to be a teaching artist at Roundabout (RTC) under Margie Salvante and Renee Flemings and was hired. Margie decided I should be facilitating the post-play discussions and pre-show talks that were happening at RTC at the time, and the rest, as they say, is an 18-year history.

**OJ: Describe your job at RTC. What are your responsibilities?**

**TS:** I read all the plays and musicals before the season begins and isolate salient themes. I research the history of the plays/musicals if they are being revived and read biographies of the writers. For new plays, I read about the author's life because the great acting guru Stella Adler once said, "If you want to know what a play is about, you must look into the life of the playwright." I interview many of the artists and RTC staff members who make our productions possible. I edit those interviews and get approval from the subjects before they are published as part of our playgoers' guide, Upstage. I write and rehearse pre-show talks and facilitate the Lecture Series—which is more of a salon and functions as an in-depth look into specific

aspects of every production. All these jobs sound like fun and they are, but they are extremely labor-intensive and involve excellent public speaking skills. It isn't easy keeping the attention of 100-200 well-educated New Yorkers, so I must be prepared and on point. I also work very closely with the Community Partnership apprentices and consider myself a mentor to them.

**OJ: What is the best part of your job? What is the hardest part?**

**TS:** I love interacting with our audiences—many of whom I know by face, but not by name—and whom I find extremely bright and eager to engage in conversations about the plays and musicals they have just seen. The hardest part is when I have gotten to know a longtime subscriber couple and one of them loses their spouse, and the survivor comes up to me with tears in their eyes to explain why their beloved isn't joining them that evening.

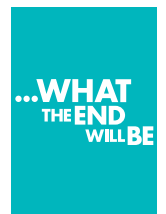
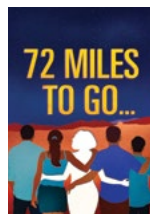
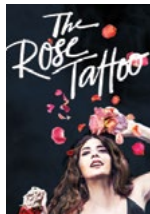
**OJ: Why do you choose to work at Roundabout?**

**TS:** I have said many times that I have the best job in the world and that I truly love the subscribers at Roundabout and I do. I am often asked by people how they can get a job like mine, and I reply without irony, "Murder me!" •

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

CLICK [HERE](#) TO VIEW THE WORKS CITED PAGE FOR THIS GUIDE.

### ROUNABOUT THEATRE COMPANY • 2019–2020 SEASON



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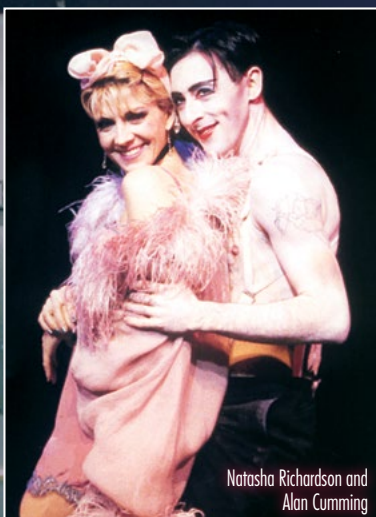
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# IN THIS THEATRE

## Studio 54

1. Studio 54 was originally built as the Gallo Opera House in 1927. It was later transformed into the New Yorker Theatre in 1930.
2. Through the 1970s, Studio 54 was home to CBS's "The Johnny Carson Show." It then became the most legendary nightclub of the disco era before closing in 1986. Andy Warhol and Elizabeth Taylor, among other famous celebrities, were known to frequent the nightclub.
3. Studio 54 remained vacant until Roundabout Theatre Company produced its landmark Tony®-Award winning production of *Cabaret* here in 1998. *Cabaret* has been on the Studio 54 stages twice because of its immense success: in 1998 and again in 2014. Both runs starred Tony Award-winner Alan Cumming.
4. Today, the interior decoration of Studio 54 pays homage to the nightclub with fixtures such as the disco ball and the wallpaper.
5. The theatre can seat 1,005 audience members.



Photos: Joan Marcus

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