BISHOP ARTS THEATRE CENTER
EDUCATIONAL STUDENT MATINEE STUDY GUIDE

The Women Who Compose for Broadway
Book by Marjorie Hayes

Directed by Ruth Cantrell
Regional Premiere

Recommended for Middle & High School Students

March 19 - 20, 2020 ~ 10:30am Student Matinee
March 19, 2020 - April 5, 2020 ~ Public Shows
The Bishop Arts Theatre Center (BATC) is an award-winning, multicultural theatre company with IRS 501 (c)(3) tax-exempt status. BATC was chartered in September 1993 in Atlanta, Georgia and founded by Teresa Coleman Wash. BATC’s organizational mission is to cultivate a diverse and vibrant arts community while creating opportunities for local and emerging artists through performances and education. The BATC offers a full season of theater performances, jazz concerts, a speaker series, and year-round arts education programs and has touted as being a cultural oasis for the next generation of acclaimed writers, directors, performers, and arts administrators. Each year, the BATC impacts over 25,000 a year within the DFW metroplex.

The Educational Student Matinee Program aligns with the TEKS

- 110.22. English Language Arts and Reading, Grade 6
- 110.23. English Language Arts and Reading, Grade 7
- 110.24. English Language Arts and Reading, Grade 8
- 110.31 English Language Arts and Reading, English I (One Credit)
- 110.32 English Language Arts and Reading, English II (One Credit)
- 110.33 English Language Arts and Reading, English III (One Credit)
- 110.34 English Language Arts and Reading, English IV. (One Credit)
- 110.35 Implementation of Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for English Language Arts and Reading, High School
- 113.17. Implementation of Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies, Middle School
- 113.30. Implementation of Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies, High School
THE STORY - Back for a fifth year, Down For #TheCount honors The Women Who Compose for Broadway, an evening of musical entertainment featuring the music of Nell Benjamin, Nancy Ford, Micki Grant, Mary Rodgers, Brenda Russell, Lucy Simon, Kay Swift, Jeanine Tesori, and more. Over the course of the last century, little recognition has been given to the women who compose Broadway scores and the barriers they have faced. Created by director, actor, UNT Professor, Marjorie Hayes, the show shines a light on these ground-breaking women who have made their mark on the Broadway stage. With a bit of historical context, the show celebrates the depth, breadth, and wit of their heart-stopping music.

CREATOR OF WWCB - Marjorie Hayes has created performances that engage audiences in the U.S. and Europe. She is thrilled to bring Women Compose Broadway to Bishop Arts Theatre. In 2016, she was astounded to find so few women had broken the glass ceiling as Broadway composers. She decided to create a compilation musical to celebrate these groundbreaking women. She was awarded an Institute of the Arts Fellowship and received project support from the University of North Texas. Women Compose Broadway had a workshop premiere at the Triad Theatre, NYC. As an actress, Hayes has worked Off-Broadway, in regional theatres, film and commercials. Ms. Hayes is a Professor of Acting and Directing at the University of North Texas.

DIRECTOR - Ruth is thrilled to be back in her native Dallas and directing at Bishop Arts Theatre Center once again. She has numerous directing credits ranging from the classics (ANTIGONE) to works staged at BATC. (THE FACE Of EMMETT TILL, (which earned her a nomination in 2016 for an Irma P. Hall Black Theater Award), THE SWING, DISSONANCE, and 7-10 SPLIT. She is an award-winning playwright.) Ruth’s works have been produced in theatres and universities in the US, Canada, Germany, Australia, and the United Kingdom. Her play, THE DOG DAZE OF SUMMER debuted at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe 2017 to rave reviews. Ruth Cantrell’s writing is persuasive and naturalistic.” Her children’s plays are published by YouthPLAYS. Ruth is the Emerita Professor of the Theater Arts at New Mexico State University. She is an alumna of the Kennedy Center Playwriting Intensive. She is a recipient of the New Mexico’s Governor’s Award for Excellence in the Arts. She is a member of the Dramatists Guild of American, (Ambassador for southern Arizona), Actor’s Equity Association and the New Play Exchange.
MUSCIAL DIRECTOR – Cherish Robsinson (Composer) is a multi-hyphenate musician, singer, and actor. She was recently seen in Sister Act at WaterTower Theatre as Deloris Van Cartier. BroadwayWorld (Dallas) hailed her as one of DFWs ‘Fresh Faces of 2017’. Robinson was also recently seen on The Colbert Show and Austin City Limits with Elle King—vocally producing and serving as a background vocalist for several songs reaching number one on the Billboard charts. Her voice and vocal production have been featured on ABC’s, Grey’s Anatomy and HBO’s, Big Little Lies. One of her greatest accomplishments was music directing, starring in, and composing her very first musical, SOLSTICE at Theater Three in 2018. Sharing her love of theater arts to others is a passion. She is a sought-after vocal coach and mentor to youth and adults throughout DFW. www.cherishloverobinson.com.

VOCABULARY

Advocacy – public support for or recommendation of a particular cause or policy

Cabaret- a traditional cabaret is held in a nightclub however; contemporary cabarets are a combination of a concert and a musical. Performers sing, act, and sometimes dance onstage. The atmosphere is casual

Composer- a person who writes music

Playwright- a person who writes plays

Suffrage Movement- seventy-two-year long battle for women’s right to vote in the United States

Gender Disparity- differences in women’s and men’s access to resources, status, and well-being, which usually favors men and are often institutionalized through law, justice, and social norms

Gender Inequality- unequal treatment or perceptions of individuals based on their gender

Cabaret Definition from Time Out London

Cabaret makes eye contact

There’s no fourth wall here-performers can see and hear and will let you know it. The word ‘cabaret’ means ‘room’ so what happens in a show depends on the dynamic between the performer and the audience in that place on that night.

Cabaret needs your energy

That’s because, however talented, a cabaret artist is not merely a performer but the leader of a collaboration. They can push a boulder so far on their own but with your help they can lift it over the top.
Cabaret is like church (in a good way)

When a cabaret show really flies, the feeling can be congregational and euphoric-everyone in the room has not just participated in but contributed to something special, something bigger than any one ego.

Cabaret can change the world

This is a cabaret’s secret power: it reminds us that what we do in any given situation has consequences. We all matter and we can all change things, and that applies outside the room as well as inside.

EXPLORE THE HISTORICAL CONTEXTS OF THE PLAY

The theatre scene around the world is grappling with gender inequality, with fewer opportunities for women playwrights and actors to shine on stage. However, directors and writers are addressing that imbalance with novel productions that give women more roles. The Women Who Compose for Broadway is an advocacy cabaret, a celebration of women composers, a field in which women are rare at the top. The cabaret is a great celebration during Women’s History Month.

Did you know? Around the time period of the Civil War, women in the U.S. had few rights but many expectations placed upon them. Women could not own land, vote, or sell property. Even as women were gaining freedom in the theater world, traditional views held that women’s place was in the home. Women who wrote for the theater or performed on stage were generally considered to be “improper.”

Let’s look at the suffrage movement – The Nineteenth Amendment became a part of the U.S. Constitution on August 18, 1920. Women got the right to vote in New Zealand in 1893. African American men received the right to vote in 1870, the 15th Amendment was ratified to prohibit states from denying a male citizen the right to vote. The 19th Amendment to the Constitution was important because: It guaranteed all women equal rights, at par with men, to cast their votes during elections and even participate in the Congress.

Why Do We Need Women’s History Month?

March is National Women’s History Month. March has been National Women’s History Month since Congress passed legislation in 1987. This national celebration is dedicated towards recognizing the achievements of American women that often go unnoticed.

Exercise: (Use a journal)

1. Think about three women you admire in your life.
2. Write down two reasons why you admire them.
3. Think about the obstacles they might have faced.
4. Do you ever feel restricted by society’s expectations of you? How do you cope with your feelings?
GENDER DISPARITIES

Women are an underrepresented population in so many careers especially in those jobs that pay higher wages. Broadway pays well so most of the work goes to men. This statement is similar in the Computer Science (CS) industry. The laws are there to encourage equality but the practice is not.

Let’s take a look at the Equal Pay Act of 1963:
The Equal Pay Act of 1963 functions to ensure pay equity. The act prohibits employers from establishing different pay scales or using different compensation practices based on an employee's gender, provided employees are performing job duties that require the same duties, have similar responsibility, and require equal effort.

Title IX - No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.

The cabaret highlights: Broadway producers are private, not corporations, or state agencies. They don’t have to follow all the guidelines of a job search that an equity and diversity department demands so sometimes women don’t get the job interviews they deserve.

Questions: (Create a discussion around the questions below)

1. Why don’t more women apply for music composition programs?
2. Why don’t more women go into Chemistry or Math? Traditionally male dominated fields.
3. What is the difference between sex and gender?
4. Do you feel the roles of women on stage and on television have increased? Why or why not?

Activity: READ AND DISCUSS LITERATURE BY AND ABOUT WOMEN

Have students read and discuss literature by and about women that addresses general topics as well as women’s struggles, feminism and sexism. Include short stories, fiction, non-fiction, plays, poems, graphic novels and speeches as well as spoken word, blogs, online pieces, etc. Be sure to include voices of all kinds of women: young, middle-aged and older, women of different races, lesbian and bisexual women, transgender and gender non-conforming women, women of different faiths, women who are immigrants and refugees, contemporary literature as well as literature written in past decades.

Read and discuss the literature as a whole class or create small book club where each club reads a different book or collection together. Some general questions to guide literature discussions include:

- What is the book/poem/story about?
- What is the overall theme or message of the book/poem/story?
- How are the characters developed?
- What is the main conflict and how is it resolved?
- What did you most like about the book? What did you like least about it?
- What does the book/poem/story reflect about the experience of women?
- How would the book/poem/story be different if it wasn’t written by or wasn’t about a woman?
Important Statistics

Since 2014, the Women Count report series collects and publishes analyses of production credits to assess gender parity in theater hiring decisions. The report series asks: whose plays are being done, who is directing them, and how many women are being hired for theatrical off-stage roles in New York’s theaters beyond Broadway? The goal of the report series is to change the conversation from anecdotes to action plans to support advocacy efforts on behalf of women playwrights, performers, and off-stage theater workers. Findings from the most recent five completed Off Broadway seasons reveal several areas in which women are dominant, some areas where parity is being approached, and many other areas where parity is far from the norm. This report does not analyze why such decisions hiring have been made. Rather, the series seeks simply to document the status of these decisions and to allow the field to consider ways to promote parity where appropriate. Highlighted findings from the report include:

- Women playwrights being produced Off Broadway range from season lows of 28% in 2013-14 to a season high of 42% in 2017-18.
- Women director credits by season range from a low of 37% in 2013-14 to a high of 47% in 2017-18.
- Set designer credits are generally less than one third women, ranging from a season low of 20% in 2015-16 to a season high of 32% in 2016-17.
- Lighting designers are overwhelmingly men among recent productions, with a season low of 11% credits for women in 2014-15 to a season high of 23% credits for women in 2017-18.
- Costume designers are primarily women, with a low of 70% in 2016-17, and a high of 74% women in 2013-14.
- Sound designer credits are one-fifth women across the seasons, with wide variation among producing companies. Season range from 13% women in 2016-17 to a season high of 21% women in 2017-18.
- Production stage managers, stage managers, and assistant stage managers are 70% women, more or less, in each study year, reflecting national trends.
- Only 1.8 percent of music programmed by major U.S. orchestras was written by women according to research in 2017.

Check out these supporting videos:

Gender Inequality in Film and Theatre

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BGB2qGp3xw8

Conquering the Gender Gap in S.T.E.M | Rebecca Baron | TEDxKids@BC

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PCWr6M1E9VQ

Check out these supporting articles on GENDER PARITY:

https://howlround.com/search?entity_type=All&content_type=All&essay_type=All&event_type=All&category=&keys=Gender+Parity

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