

GAMM
THEATRE

STUDY GUIDE

AN OCTOROON

BY BRANDEN JACOBS-JENKINS

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GAMMEDUCATION

We thank the following foundations and corporations for their support of PLAY during our 37th Season: Rhode Island Foundation, Fain Family Foundation, Rhode Island State Council on the Arts, Mabel T. Woolley Trust, Ramsey-McClusky Family Foundation, Carter Family Trust, Providence Shelter Fund, and June Rockwell Levy Foundation.

This study guide was prepared by Andy Pollard, Kate Hanson, Susie Schutt, and Jon Del Sesto

ACT I

WELCOME

Dear Educator,

We are so excited to be back! It was difficult for us to be dark, as we say in the business, after shutting down *Assassins* mid-run in March 2020. While we have been busy teaching classes online, nothing beats being in the theatre with you and your students. Thank you for continuing to support our work. We are so glad to have you back!

The Sandra Feinstein-Gamm Theatre is pleased to offer you this study guide to prepare you and your students for our production of *An Octoroon* by Branden Jacobs-Jenkins and directed by Joe Wilson Jr. In this guide you will find background information about the play and playwright, an inside look at our production, as well as activities for your classroom and questions for discussion. We recommend using this study guide before your visit to The Gamm, as well as after to debrief with your students.

We would like to offer a pre-show visit with your classroom/school before your visit to help prepare your students for the play. This will whet students' appetites for the performance and encourage them to question and explore the themes of the play. This visit will last about a half an hour and is offered to your classroom free of charge. Most student matinees are followed by a talkback with the production team and offer students the opportunity to debrief the performance immediately and ask questions of the actors, director, designers or playwright. Talkbacks range in length but we encourage you to stay and participate in the dynamic discussion. We also offer longer workshops that will get students out of their seats and up on their feet engaging in the motifs and the language of the play. Kinesthetic engagement with language and literature ensures students deep comprehension and text-to-self connection that encourages students to invest in reading and literacy-learning.

Attending a production addresses several Common Core Standards in Theatre Arts Standards in Aesthetic Judgment, Cultural Contexts, and Communication, as well as many of the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards in Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening. We have included a list of standards that align with attending a performance and using our study guide.

We would love to hear from you about your experiences using this study guide. It is a great help to us as we build on our education program from year to year. We look forward to seeing you at The Gamm!

Susie Schutt,

Director of Education & Drama Therapist, susie@gammtheatre.org

Kate Hanson,

Associate Director of Education, kate@gammtheatre.org

HEALTH & SAFETY

For performances through February 20, 2022, guests will need to be masked as well as fully vaccinated (or provide a verifiable negative COVID-19 test result) in order to be seated. Proof of vaccination or testing must be presented at time of entry (a paper/electronic card or RI DOH test result).

“Fully vaccinated” means your performance date is:

- at least 14 days after your second dose of an FDA/WHO authorized two dose COVID-19 vaccine
- or at least 14 days after your single dose of an FDA/WHO authorized single dose COVID-19 vaccine

Guests who are unvaccinated (including children under 12) must provide proof of either:

- negative COVID-19 PCR test taken within 72 hours of the performance start time, or
- negative COVID-19 antigen “rapid” test taken within 6 hours of the performance start time

For all guests:

- Masking will be required for all in attendance except while actively eating or drinking.
- Please consider mitigating risk factors before the event, and after you leave. While vaccinated people are much less likely to become very sick from COVID-19, recent data has shown some vaccinated people experiencing “breakthrough” infections.
- If you are sick or have COVID-19 symptoms (fever, sore throat, chills, cough, shortness of breath, congestion, nausea, or vomiting), please do not attend your ticketed performance. You may contact the box office to reschedule. If you are unable to attend a different performance of the same show, your ticket may be donated back to The Gamm as a tax-deductible contribution.

Other ways The Gamm is committed to your health and safety:

- Our staff, performers, and volunteers are all fully vaccinated.
- We have adopted contactless mobile ticket scanning to reduce physical touchpoints.
- Face masks are available for those who require them.
- We have installed air filters in our lobby, theater spaces, dressing rooms, and offices.
- Our HVAC system has been serviced and upgraded, as required by Actors’ Equity Association, the union of professional actors and stage managers in the United States.
- Drinks only (not food) will be allowed in the theater. You may enjoy food and drink in the lobby.
- Hand sanitizers are available in common spaces, and enhanced cleaning protocols are being implemented.

Thank you for your support and cooperation.

THEATRE AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE

What is so exciting about attending the theatre - especially in a smaller space such as The Gamm - is that it is live! Live theatre is different from other forms of entertainment; unlike film and television you are encouraged to pay close attention and actively engage your imagination.

You, the audience, are mere feet away from the actors; therefore, you play an active role in the experience. **The actors can see and hear any distracting behavior such as talking, text messaging, unwrapping candy, the ringing of cell phones, etc.** This can affect the actor's concentration, disrupt the performance, and ruin the experience for other audience members. So we ask that you refrain from talking or making any noise during a performance. *Thank you!*

TIP:

Discuss with your students the particular demands and benefits of attending a live performance. Perhaps have them brainstorm how theatre is different from film, television and sporting events.

COMMON CORE GUIDE.

Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2] *See Themes and Questions for Discussion*

Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3] *See Themes and Questions for Discussion*

Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.4] *See our Activity for the Classroom*

Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7] *See examples throughout our study guide.*

Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.9] *See our Resident Scholar's interview with the playwright.*

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details and well-structured event sequences. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.W.3] *See our Activity for the Classroom*

Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.1] *See Themes and Questions for Discussion*

Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally. [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.SL.2] *See examples throughout our study guide.*

ACT II

PLAY & PLAYWRIGHT

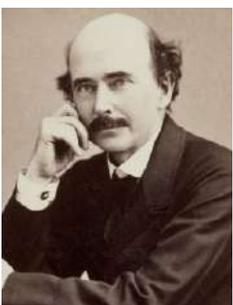


BRANDEN JACOBS-JENKINS

Branden Jacobs-Jenkins' is a Brooklyn based playwright whose plays include *Neighbors* (Public Theater); *Appropriate* (Actors Theatre of Louisville, Victory Gardens Theater, Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company, and Signature Theatre; Obie Award Winner "Best New American Play"); *An Octoroon* (Soho Rep; Obie Award Winner "Best New American Play"); *War* (world premiere, Yale Rep; LCT3); *Gloria* (Vineyard Theatre; Pulitzer Prize finalist 2016); *Everybody* (Signature Theatre; Pulitzer Prize finalist 2018); and *Girls* (Yale Rep).

He is a Residency Five playwright at New York's Signature Theatre and is a graduate of the Lila Acheson Wallace American Playwrights Program at the Juilliard School. In 2016, he was a recipient of the MacArthur Fellowship (commonly known as the "Genius Grant").

Additionally, his work has been seen at the Vineyard Theatre, the Matrix Theatre in Los Angeles, Company One in Boston, and the HighTide Festival in the United Kingdom. His honors include the Paula Vogel Award in Playwriting, the Helen Merrill Playwriting Award, the inaugural Tennessee Williams Award, a London Critics' Circle Award for Most Promising Playwriting, and the Steinberg Playwriting Award. Jacobs-Jenkins has taught at NYU, Queens University of Charlotte, Juilliard, Hunter College, and the University of Texas at Austin. In 2021 he joined Yale University's Faculty of Arts and Sciences as a professor in the practice of theater and performance studies. He holds an M.A. in performance studies from NYU.



DION BOUCICAULT

Heralded by the New York Times as "the most conspicuous English dramatist of the 19th century," Dion Boucicault was born Dionysus Lardner Boursiquout on December 26, 1820, in Dublin, Ireland. Boucicault enjoyed tremendous success as a playwright, actor, and theater manager.

He opened his first play, *London Assurance*, a six-act comedy, at the age of 21 at Covent Garden in 1841. In the next four years, Boucicault would produce 22 plays on the London stage. In 1859 he took over management of the Winter Garden Theatre in New York City, where his play *The Octoroon, Or Life in Louisiana in Five Acts* premiered to immense success and quickly became one of the most popular melodramas of its time, second only to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

Boucicault's work is considered the quintessential example of sensation drama, itself a branch of Victorian melodrama. About 150 plays are credited to Boucicault, who, as both writer and actor, raised the stage Irishman from caricature to character. To the American drama he brought not only a careful construction that would define popular theater for years to come, but also a keen observation and eye for detail. His willingness to address social themes within meticulously structured drama would be his lasting legacy, and would prefigure the development of drama in both Europe and America.

ABOUT “AN OCTOROON”

OBIE AWARD WINNER FOR BEST NEW AMERICAN PLAY

Judge Peyton is dead and his plantation, Terrebonne, is in financial ruins. Peyton’s handsome nephew George arrives as heir apparent and quickly falls in love with Zoe, a beautiful, one-eighth black “octoroon.” But the evil overseer, M’Closky, has other plans for both Terrebonne and Zoe. From the author of *Gloria* (Gamm 2018) and *Appropriate*, this raucous, irreverent retelling of a hit 19th-century melodrama is **“this decade’s most eloquent statement on race in America today.”** (New York Times)

“Super oxygenating . . . as though the theater has given us a violent shake and a pep talk.” (Time Out N.Y.)

“Bizarrely brilliant. Extraordinary.” (The Guardian)



ACT III

OUR PRODUCTION

by **BRANDEN JACOBS-JENKINS**

directed by **JOE WILSON, JR.**⁺

SET DESIGN

Michael McGarty

COSTUME DESIGN

Liza Alexis

LIGHTING DESIGN

Dawn Chiang

SOUND & VIDEO DESIGN

Peter Sashsa Hurowitz

FIGHT CHOREOGRAPHY

Normand Beauregard

PRODUCTION DRAMATURGY

Rachel Walsh

PRODUCTION MANAGEMENT

Jessica Hill Kidd

STAGE MANAGEMENT

Kristen Gibbs*

THE COMPANY

Grace **Angelique M. C'Dina**
Playwright/Wahnotee/Lafouche **Jeff Church***
Dido **Jackie Davis***
Zoe **Shelley Fort***
BJJ/George/M'Closky **Marc Pierre***
Assistant/Pete/Paul **Jason Quinn**
Dora **Alison Russo***
Minnie **Michelle L. Walker**

CREATIVE TEAM

Assistant to the Director/Media Curator **Erik Robles**
Voice Coach **Candice Brown**
Movement Director **Jackie Davis**
Assistant Costume Designer **Meg Donnelly**
Technical Director **Max Ramirez**
Assistant Technical Director **Alex Eizenberg**
Technical Production Supervisor **DJ Potter**
Assistant Stage Managers **Anaís Bustos*, Jessica Corsentino**
Master Electrician **Alex Foley**
Carpenters **Alex Brassard, Petra Favazza**

COVID Compliance Officer

Jessica Corsentino

TIP:

Before coming to the theater, discuss with your students the various professions in the theater. It takes more than just actors! When they arrive, ask them to notice evidence of those professions at work.



GAMM EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

While actors, directors, and playwrights are the most well-known, there are many jobs and careers that make theater successful. Each of our study guides focus on a different theater career by highlighting a Gamm employee.

GAIL HULBERT | DIRECTOR OF MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

What does your job entail?

I do whatever it takes to sell tickets...within reason! For example, I write press releases about the shows and other things happening at the theater, I write copy for promotional materials and select photos for things like the season brochure, I decide what's going into each play program, I come up with special ticket offers, and I work with theater reviewers to make sure they are attending and reviewing our shows. I also handle crisis communications when the need arises.

Why is your job important to The Gamm's success?

The Gamm puts on great plays. But no one is going to see them if they don't know they are happening. Our productions should be experienced by as many people as possible. Also, ticket sales account for about half of our operating budget, so we need to sell tickets to stay open. As a professional theater, we pay our staff, actors, and crew. They work in theater not just for the love of it, but also to make a living.

What led you to your position at The Gamm?

I was working as a freelance journalist when I decided that I wanted to volunteer for an arts organization. A friend invited me to see a Gamm production when the theater was in Providence and I loved it. Some members of the theater's board of directors were at that performance and they invited me to join the board, which I did for about a year. Eventually, the leadership offered me the job of full-time marketing manager. A couple of seasons later, I was promoted to a director.

Why theater?

I actually felt I would have more impact on people's lives working in theater than as a journalist. In theater, people are required to engage and are forced to think critically.

What, if any, other professions are you curious about?

I'm also a painter. It's a true passion of mine. I often wonder what it would be like to be a full-time artist.

What special skills does your position entail?

This job requires great attention to detail and excellent writing skills. It also requires a good eye for design and creative thinking. You also must be willing to collaborate with many departments including production, education and fundraising.

What is your favorite flavor of ice cream?

Ben & Jerry's Coffee, Coffee, BuzzBuzzBuzz.

examine this than to do a play that takes place on a slave plantation? To collectively deal with this guilt as a culture, we have created this pastoral, fuzzy lens over the past. It's like when people say, "I want to go back to the way things were." I don't want to go back to 1950! We like to create a kind of haze over the past as something we should aspire to. But there are people who have a very different relationship to the past. We like to say, "This isn't who we are." But this play is saying, "This is precisely who we are." This is the true first step on this journey of reconciliation. We all bear responsibility for how we have benefited from harmful tropes and used them for our personal gain and advantage. This play is asking us to examine how we have been complicit. And these are harmful tropes not just around race, but also class and misogyny. It's not a play just about race.

There will likely be moments of profound discomfort for the audience.

Not just in the audience. There have been moments of discomfort in the rehearsal hall and in our production meetings. But there have also been profound moments of joy, happiness, and laughter. And I think this is what the play is challenging us to do: Approach all of these issues with grace and joy. If it isn't joyful, we are going to have a very difficult time getting each other to engage with anti-racism as it has uniquely gripped this country. We have to do this with a full heart. Because this play is funny! Apart from being uncomfortable, it will also make you laugh and then make you have to deal with the fact that you are laughing! The play is folding back on itself and asking us all to go on a journey where we can see you and you can see us, and we are all participating in an art form whose origin is simply to get people to feel something. I think we have gotten away from wanting to tell stories that make people feel something. There is a level of artistic pandering to what kinds of stories we tell and what kinds of stories we sell. The theater ought not simply be a place where we recycle old narratives.

What role do you think humor plays in *An Octoroon*?

Laughing together over things that are traumatic is as old as time. Speaking from an African American experience or as a member of the gay community, we have always used humor as a way to deal with trauma and to take back power. This is in the spirit of what black performers have done in this country. We have used old tropes and turned them on their ears in the same way Br'er Rabbit [a character in *An Octoroon*] was appropriated for nefarious reasons. In the traditions of black vaudeville, black humor, black exploitation films, and of R&B artists, all of these things are a way of taking back a narrative for the purposes of therapy and healing. The tradition of using humor to deal with pain transcends culture.

Do you think this play is particularly important to do in Rhode Island?

Yes, I have lived in many places but there is a social stratification here that is palpable. As New Englanders, we feel that we can be immune to racism. We don't want to have these kinds of conversations because we think that these are things that happened long ago and down south. But the fact is, the money that funded the slave trade was generated in Bristol and Newport. We funded this atrocity. Many of our largest educational institutions were built by money from the triangle slave trade. This is real, even if you are just talking about the stratification of our neighborhoods – Federal Hill versus the West end, Johnston versus northwest Rhode Island, and so on. These communities can be very siloed and lack a cultural interaction which can create a hostile climate for people of color.

This play addresses the myth that people in New England need to hear. It makes me think of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s letter from Birmingham Jail written in part to address white clergy who needed to step up to support the civil rights movement. There is a very liberal pocket of people in this community that are protected by power and privilege. Being "liberal" doesn't immunize one from perpetuating harm. That is a message for everyone in this play: Know that we have all participated in, and been complicit in this complicated web of race and of using race to stratify. I love this region. It is my favorite place I have lived anywhere. I have lived here for 17 years, but we have a lot of work to do.

ACT IV

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

TIP:

Assign these questions for homework or in-class writing and then discuss your students' answers before and after the show.

THEMES AND QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION OR WRITING

1. How did the set design aid in the telling of the story? What would you change and why?
2. What sort of atmosphere was created with the lighting, sound, and music?
3. What does the Gamm poster (also the cover of this study guide) tell you about the play? What sort of poster would you design for this play and why?
4. Why do you think the playwright chose this title? How does the title relate to the story?

A PLAY IN A PLAY IN A PLAY...

The Gamm's production of *An Octoroon* is built upon nearly 200 years of American theatre and history. Originally, *The Octoroon* was written by playwright Dion Boucicault as an adaptation of *The Quadroon*, a novel by Thomas Mayne Reid. The play premiered in New York in 1859, just months before the outbreak of the civil war. Fast forward to the 21st century and Boucicault's once controversial piece is appallingly outdated, as modern audiences feel offended instead of entertained by the blatantly racist caricatures, predictable plot structures, and white savior complexes running rampant throughout the play. However, The Gamm's production is not *The Octoroon*, it is *An Octoroon*, a play by Brandon Jacobs Jenkins, that builds a satirical frame around Boucicault's original piece, told by a modern playwright re-engaging with the piece on his own terms. *An Octoroon* brings the play and the playwright onstage to be scrutinized together.

Questions

- Long story short, we are watching a play about a playwright presenting his own play on another playwright's play which is actually a play based on a novel. Yikes! How on earth is the audience supposed to know what's going on? Do you think this production successfully communicated all these layers and history? Is it even necessary for audiences to understand this background? Why or why not?

(QUESTIONS CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

- Boucicault's *The Octoroon* sparked public debate when it first premiered, but the play itself didn't necessarily take a stand for or against abolition. Boucicault was clearly a businessman, and knew that a noncommittal yet controversial story would bring in wider audiences without alienating many patrons. Scholar Jane Kathleen Curry tells us that "attempts to read political messages or motivations into Boucicault's work are often difficult to sustain, since his plays always courted popular approval (and profit) over ideological force." What do you think of Boucicault's approach to this play? What are the pros and cons of presenting controversial subject matter that doesn't take a stance on the issues it portrays? What, if anything, is Brandon Jacobs Jenkins doing differently in his version?
- Why do you think Brandon Jacobs Jenkins writes himself into his own play? What's the purpose of presenting the writer instead of only their work? Do you think stories speak for the writer or speak for themselves?

MINSTRELSY

Minstrelsy is a form of American theatre defined primarily by white performers exploiting, exaggerating, and ridiculing the real-life circumstances and experiences of Black people. This highly popular form of entertainment persevered past its birth in the 1830s through the civil war, reconstruction, and the Jim Crow era up until the 1930s where it finally fell out of popularity. The practice of "blackface", in which white actors painted their faces in exaggerated imitation of Black features, was a central component of minstrelsy, and these performers created many of the character tropes still used to portray Black people today. While some might assume that minstrelsy's blackface has roots in the American South due to the genre's focus on black degradation and slavery, minstrelsy was actually developed and most popular in the North. The appropriation and caricaturization of Black culture used in minstrelsy shows provided northerners with their first and sometimes only glimpse of the Blackness, particularly in southern slavery states, which reinforced Black stereotypes and strengthened white audience's beliefs in white supremacy.

Questions

- In what ways does the Gamm's production of *An Octoroon* engage or subvert the history of minstrelsy in American theatre?
- Before seeing the show, what did you already know about minstrelsy? What questions do you have now?
- After the civil war, many Black American performers sought work by participating in minstrel shows. For some, this allowed for a reclamation of the genre, an opportunity to promote their own political views, and a humanization of Blackness in front of white audiences. For others, the presence of Black performers provided a stamp of authenticity for minstrel shows which continued to depict the same racist themes. Like their white counterparts, Black actors in minstrel shows also wore Blackface. How would you characterize *An Octoroon's* engagement with this history of Black performers in Minstrel shows?
- Minstrel shows relied on stories driven by stereotypes and caricatures which were reused performance to performance. Are there examples of commonly used character types in the media you consume today?

“BR’ER RABBIT WANDERS THROUGH, UNSEEN” [CONTAINS SPOILERS]

Brandon Jacobs Jenkins includes a small but powerful character in *An Octoroon*, Br’er Rabbit. Br’er (or “brother”/“frère”) Rabbit is a trickster figure that appears throughout regional folklore in Louisiana, and his origins have been traced back to African folklore, Native American folklore, and Cajun folklore. In folk storytelling, this rabbit trickster is often seen outsmarting the much larger and more powerful animal characters, using wit and manipulation to avoid falling prey to its predators. Some folklorists argue that tales of overlooked tricksters like Br’er Rabbit have persevered due to his appeal to oppressed peoples, who may have found solace and inspiration in a small, overlooked, and unassuming character who overcomes the bigger, stronger, and overconfident oppressor.

Questions

- Br’er Rabbit appears in the background of several critical moments in the play (when George reveals his love for Zoe and she confesses her status as an octoroon, when Whanotee discovers Paul is dead and smashes the camera, at the end of the play wandering around with a gavel and tomahawk). Why do you think the playwright chose these specific moments? What seems to be his role in each of these scenes?
- After Paul is killed and Whanotee destroys the camera, the stage directions say that “Br’er Rabbit wanders through it, or not”. Later, the stage directions say that Ratts could perhaps be played by Br’er Rabbit. Why would these directions be ambiguous? Is the playwright leaving the decisions about how exactly to include Br’er Rabbit up to the director, or is there some other purpose?
- In the opening act, BJJ talks about how he once tried writing a play about talking farm animals to avoid talking about people and making the play about race, to which his literary manager says “Oh my God/You’re totally deconstructing African folktales aren’t you?” and BJJ responds, “Bitch!/ I’m not fucking deconstructing/ any fucking African folktales!” Does this exchange alter any of your responses to the previous questions?



ACT V

ACTIVITIES FOR THE CLASSROOM

ACTIVITY: BE A SET DESIGNER



The Gamm's *An Octoroon* challenges the audience's expectations from the moment they walk into the theatre. Before the play has even started, the set is designed to surprise, with floor level seating, disco decor, and a clear view of the backstage area in which the cast and crew are visible even when they're not actively performing. The goal of the set design is to subvert the audience's expectations, so that they are both out of their comfort zone and curious about what's happening in front of them.

As a set designer, your work is the first thing that people see and will immediately set the tone for the audience's experience. In this activity, you will create a sketch or draft of the set for your own version of *An Octoroon*. Just like the Gamm's set designer Michael McGarty, your goal is to subvert the audience's expectations for the show, so get creative! Your design should include the following:

- 2-3 reference photos of the style of decor you would like to incorporate
- The shape of the stage and where the actors will be able to perform
- Necessary furniture pieces, and whether they are fixed in place or can be moved about the stage
- Designated audience seating/viewing area
- The "borders" between backstage and onstage, however you wish to define them

ACTIVITY: BE A DRAMATURG

An Octoroon is saturated with history, unconventional language, highly contextual references, and a plethora of challenges for both actors and designers. For productions like these, theatre companies will often hire a dramaturg (typically pronounced with a hard G, but sometimes will be written and pronounced with a soft g for “dramaturge”), who specializes in breaking down scripts and researching all of the questions that may arise throughout the rehearsal process. Dramaturgs are there to provide the team with reliable information and facilitate the uncomfortable conversations that may arise as everyone learns their roles. Dramaturgs are not fact checkers or historical accuracy police. Rather, they are an intellectual resource that any member of the team can use if they want more in depth answers on the content of the play.

In this activity, you will put yourself in Rachel Walshe’s shoes, the dramaturg for *An Octoroon*. The biggest part of a dramaturg’s job is to anticipate questions that may arise throughout the rehearsal process, and have thoughtful yet accessible answers ready to go. These questions can be both factual about the historical context of the play, or they could be political questions about what it means to be performing this production in one’s own community. For each of the two parts of this activity, you can either answer your own questions, or answer another student’s questions.

- PART 1: Make a list of 3-5 historical questions that you think the production team would ask (eg: What is a “fancydance”? How did antebellum photography work?). Next, provide concise and researched answers for each question, along with at least one reference for your information where one could choose to learn more about the topic.
- PART 2: Make a list of 2-3 questions that you believe the actors and production team should openly discuss during rehearsals (eg: how will each of us justify embodying racist and appropriative caricatures to our friends and family in the audience?). Next, create a bullet point plan of how you might sensitively, and candidly, navigate these conversations as a team. Offer follow up questions and/or suggestions that could help your team reach a consensus.



ACT VI

EPILOGUE

THANK YOU!

Thank you for joining us for *An Octoroon* and for working with this Study Guide to ensure the best, most comprehensive theatrical and educational experience. Please be in touch if you would like us to visit your classroom before or after you attend *An Octoroon*.

Our Education Department provides classes and camps for students of various grade levels. We hope you will join us for more student matinees at The Gamm!

To book a matinee, contact Brittany at brittany@gammtheatre.org 401-723-4266 ext. 112. To learn more about Gamm Education, find us on the web at www.gammtheatre.org or reach Susie Schutt at 401- 723- 4266 ext. 121.



COMING NEXT

IRONBOUND

BY MARTYNA MAJOK



At a bus stop in a run-down New Jersey town, Darja, a Polish immigrant who gets by on a cleaning job, pragmatism, and sheer will is done talking about feelings. It's time to talk money. Over the course of 22 years and three relationships, Darja negotiates for her future with men who can offer her love or security, but never both. Award-winning playwright Martyna Majok's *Ironbound* is a darkly funny, heartbreaking portrait of a tough woman for whom love is a luxury — and a liability — and survival is the only measure of success.

DIRECTED BY RACHEL WALSH
MARCH 17 - APRIL 10