

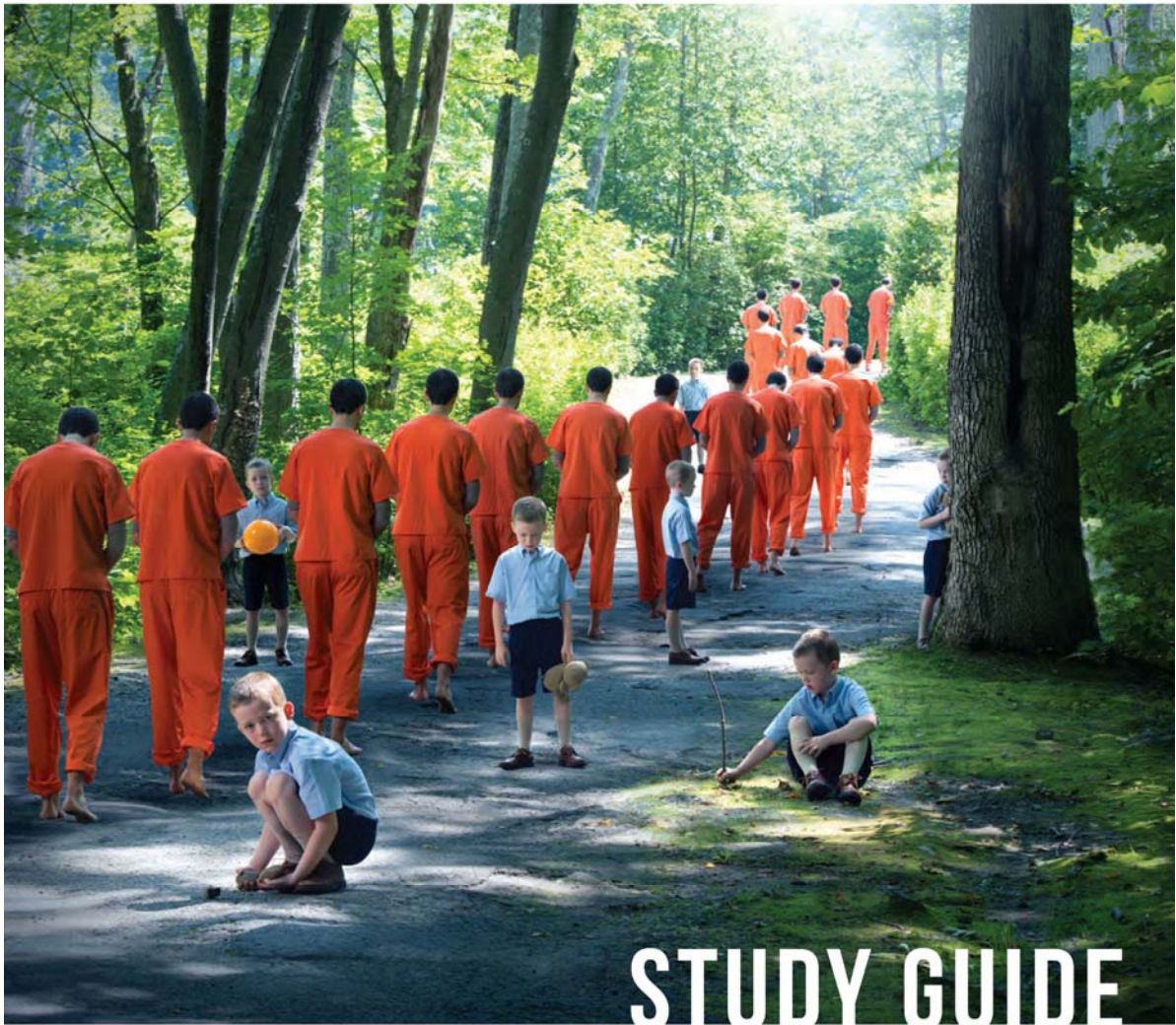
THE SANDRA FEINSTEIN-GAMM THEATRE

A NUMBER & FAR AWAY

DIRECTED BY JUDITH SWIFT

BY CARYL CHURCHILL

DIRECTED BY TONY ESTRELLA



STUDY GUIDE

GAMM
EDUCATION 

sandra feinstein-
GAMm
theatre

SEASON
29
2013
2014

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172 EXCHANGE STREET
PAWTUCKET, RI

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*This study guide was prepared by
Tracy Morreo, Susie Schutt and Steve Kidd*

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Prologue

Dear Educator,

The Sandra Feinstein-Gamm Theatre is pleased to offer you this study guide to share with your students designed to prepare them for our production of *A Number & Far Away* by Caryl Churchill.

This Study Guide is broken into five acts. In the first act, you will find a few more reminders for you and your students about the nature of performance and what is expected of all audience members attending the theatre. In the second act, you will find a biography of Caryl Churchill, and in the third act, the history of the plays, and a breakdown of the characters. In act four, Directors Judith Swift and Tony Estrella articulate their visions and ideas behind our production, and Resident Scholar Jennifer Madden discusses the major themes of the one acts and the relationship between them. Finally, we will close our Study Guide with act five, which examines the dominant themes in the two one act plays and offers questions for discussion. At the end of our study guide, you will be able to find information on how to learn more about The Gamm's Educational offerings.

As part of our Core Prep program, I would like to offer a workshop with your classroom/school before your visit and help prepare your students for the play. In these workshops, I will not only discuss the play and our production concept(s), but we will also get students out of their seats and up on their feet engaging in the themes, motifs and the language of the play. This type of kinesthetic engagement with language and literature ensures students deep comprehension and the sort of text-to-self connection that encourages students to invest in reading and literacy-learning.

Much of this work was discovered, developed and inspired by the ArtsLiteracy Project at Brown University. I had the good fortune to work with "ArtsLit" and the strategies and models for learning developed by the organization continue to serve as a foundational pedagogical tool for all Gamm Education programming.

Some benefits of ArtsLiteracy learning include:

- **Community Building in Your Classroom** (Applied Learning New Standards: A1; A2; A5)

- **Inspiration and Background on the Artist** (English Language Arts New Standards: E1; E2; E3; E5; E6; Applied Learning New Standards: A2; A3; A5)
- **Entering and Comprehending Text** (English Language Arts Standards: E1; E2; E3; E5)
- **Creating Text for Performance** (English Language Arts Standards: E1; E2; E3; E5)
- **Performing in Your Class** (Applied Learning Standards: A1; A2; A3; A4; A5)
- **Reflecting on Your Performance** (E2; E3; A1; A2; A5)

Moreover, the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) has developed GSE's (Grade Span Expectations) and GLE's (Grade Level Expectations) to help "capture the "big ideas" of reading that can be assessed."

We believe that all of our Literacy through Performance work helps to develop the following literacy skills.

WRITING

- W-2: Writing in Response to Literary Text (showing understanding of ideas in a text). A "text" covers not only books and plays, but film and other kinds of media.
- W-3: Making Analytical judgments about text (how good was it? What stuck out?)
- W-4: Creating a Storyline
- W-5: Applying Narrative Strategies (how did they tell the story?)
- W-14: Reflective Essay

ORAL COMMUNICATION

- OC-1: Interactive Listening (how well students listen; how much information they pick up hearing something once – asking a student to write a comprehensive account of a play certainly works)
- OC-2: Making Presentations (each senior in Rhode Island will be asked to put on a senior exhibition, capstone project or portfolio that includes a public demonstration on a particular subject. Learning about public performance is an obvious tie-in).

READING

- R-4: Initial Understanding of Literary Texts (where is the climax in a story? How would you set this play in contemporary society?)
- R-5: Analysis and Interpretation of Literary Text/Citing Evidence

- R-11: Reading Fluency and Accuracy (part of the benefits of reading a script out over and over in rehearsal is an increase in reading fluency and accuracy)

Furthermore, attending a production addresses several Common Core Standards in Reading: Literature Standards, Speaking and Listening Standards, and, of course, Theatre Arts Standards in Aesthetic Judgment, Cultural Contexts, and Communication.

Please see more exercise and strategies for ArtsLiteracy learning at www.artslit.org. 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.

Steve Kidd
Resident Actor/Education Director
The Sandra Feinstein-Gamm Theatre

A Look at the Gamm's 29th Season:

"Past, present and future collide in our 2013-14 season," says Artistic Director Tony Estrella. "Taking our cue from our centerpiece Shakespeare production, *Macbeth*, we offer five plays that examine time as defined by the Scottish king himself: "all our yesterdays" to "this petty pace from day to day," then looking forward to "tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow." I am incredibly excited to return to Shakespeare after the hiatus that followed last season's hit production of *Hamlet*, and also to present the Rhode Island premiere of four varied and powerful contemporary works that have already excited audiences the world over.

The pairing of Caryl Churchill one-acts, *A NUMBER* and *FAR AWAY*, ushers in the new season and puts a provocative science-fiction slant on a not-so-distant future. Season 29 continues with *GOOD PEOPLE*, South Boston native David Lindsay-Abaire's Tony Award-nominated play illuminating the gap between rich and poor in today's America. Dan LeFranc's innovative 2012 off-Broadway hit *THE BIG MEAL* follows, tracing five generations of a typical American family as they live their lives—from first kiss to final goodbye—without ever leaving the dinner table! Next, The Gamm reunites with its signature playwright for what promises to be a gripping production of William Shakespeare's timeless *MACBETH*. The season concludes with David Harrower's controversial *BLACKBIRD*, a darling of the Edinburgh International Fringe Festival, as well as a West End and Off-

Broadway hit, about the fallout from an illicit affair between a girl and a much older man.

ACT I: 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 are mere feet (and sometimes inches!) away from the actors. Thus, you the audience, play an active role in the experience. The actors can see and hear you and any distracting behavior (talking, text messaging, unwrapping candy, the ringing of cell phones, etc) 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!

The Nature of Performance

Controversial British playwright Sarah Kane once observed: "There's always going to be a relationship between the material and that audience that you don't really get with a film... People can walk out or change channels or whatever; it doesn't make any difference to the performance... It's a completely reciprocal relationship between the play and the audience."

The performance you see will never be precisely the same, for it will never have the same audience; every performance is unique. Theatre scholar Robert Cohen observed the essential paradox of live performance:

- It is unique to the moment, yet it is repeatable.
- It is spontaneous, yet it is rehearsed.
- It is participatory, yet it is presented.
- It is real, yet it is simulated.
- The actors are themselves, yet they are characters.
- The audience is involved, yet it remains apart.

"Theatre is not just another genre, one among many. It is the only genre in which, today and every day, now and always, living human beings address and speak to other human

beings... It is a place for human encounter, a space for authentic human existence..."

-Vaclav Havel, President of the Czech Republic and Playwright
(From Robert Cohen's *Theatre: Brief Version*)

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.

ACT II: About Caryl Churchill



About Caryl Churchill:

It is impossible to imagine the landscape of contemporary drama without Caryl Churchill, the author of more than 30 plays, a handful of adaptations, a clutch of radio plays. And what plays! Top Girls, Cloud Nine, Serious Money, A Number, Far Away, each a landmark in the history of our theatre culture. She has, as the playwright Marius Von Mayerburg has pointed out, "changed the language of theatre and very few playwrights do that". Only the greats deserve that accolade: Shakespeare, Chekhov, Ibsen, Brecht, Beckett, a roll call to which we could easily add Churchill.

- April de Angelis, The Guardian

Caryl Churchill is an English dramatist, acknowledged as one of theater's most influential writers, having written over forty plays and radio or television dramas and receiving multiple Obie Awards.

She was born on September 3, 1938 in London to a fashion model and a political cartoonist. Her family emigrated to Canada after World War II when Churchill was ten years old. She graduated in 1960 from Oxford University with a B.A. degree in English Literature. *Downstairs*, her first play

was written while she was at university and was staged by an Oxford-based theatrical ensemble student drama group in 1958. It won an award at the *Sunday Times* National Union of Students Drama Festival. Other early plays include *You've No Need to be Frightened*, *Having a Wonderful Time* (1960) and *Easy Death* (1962) along with several plays written for BBC radio including *The Ants* (1962), *Lovesick* (1967) and *Abortive* (1971). She married David Harter in 1961 and began to raise three sons while writing for the BBC.

Her first professional stage production, *Owners* premiered at the Royal Court Theatre in London in 1972. From 1974-75, she was Resident Dramatist at the Royal Court. She spent much of the 1970s and 1980s working with 'Joint Stock' and 'Monstrous Regiment' theater groups. Her 1979 play, *Cloud Nine*, "a farce about sexual politics" was her first play to receive wide notice. It became successful in both the US and Britain and in 1982 it won an Obie Award for best play of the year. *Top Girls*, performed at the Gamm for Season 21 in 2005, was first staged at the Royal Court in 1982 and features five historical female characters at a dinner party in a London restaurant. Her newest play *Love and Information* opened at the Royal Court Theatre in September 2012.

Act III: About A Number & Far Away

A Number was written in 2002 and, in 2004, the play made its American debut at the New York Theatre Workshop in a production starring Sam Shepard. An adapted screenplay, written by Churchill was shown on BBC TV in September 2008.

Synopsis: How would it feel to discover that you were just one of a number of identical copies of yourself? Acclaimed English playwright Caryl Churchill ponders this disturbing question and more in her gripping two-person play set in a near-future world in which people can be cloned. About 30 years before the play's beginning, a man named Salter consulted a genetic scientist to have a child created in the image of his first-born son. But now he must face the shocking consequences of his experiment gone wrong: three strikingly different incarnations of his son. Mesmerizing and provocative, *A Number* tackles the very nature of human individuality through a science-fiction lens.

Characters and Setting

A Number takes place in Salter's house.

There are two actors: one plays Salter, the other all his sons.

Salter, a man in his early sixties. He had his son Bernard cloned.

Bernard (B1), Salter's son, forty. First son of Salter.

Bernard (B2), Salter's son, thirty-five, first clone of his first son, made to replace original son.

Michael Black, His son, thirty-five, another clone of Salter's first son.

Far Away was first produced at the Royal Court Theatre Upstairs in London in November/December 2000.

Synopsis: A young girl, woken by a scream, can't sleep because of the disturbing things she's seen outside her window. Her aunt, eerily calm in the next room, tries to explain it away. But what is really happening? A charming young couple falls happily in love while making elaborate, fanciful hats to be worn in a parade. But where is the procession heading? So unfolds *Far Away*, Churchill's dream-like play that gradually becomes a dystopian nightmare. Genocide, environmental disaster, and everyday brutality are combined in this spellbinding fable of a society, and eventually a world, at war with itself. But is it all as far away as we would like to think?

Characters and Setting

Far Away takes place in Harper's country home and at a hat making factory.

Joan, a girl, later an adult

Harper, the girl's aunt

Todd, a young man

ACT IV: Our Productions

Who Made It Happen:

On Stage:

A Number

Salter

Jim O'Brien

Bernard 1/ Bernard 2/ Michael Black

Tony Estrella

Far Away

Young Joan

Lauren Durkin

Harper

Casey Seymour-Kim

Joan

Marianna Bassham

Todd

Alexander Platt

Prisoners

Arik Beatty, Caren Belli,
Shannon Carroll, Blanche
Case, Devin Gately, Nathan
Goncalves, Shelley Green,
Amanda Grossi, Ruth Horton,
Milly Massey, David Murphy,
Uly Schlesinger, Cecilia
Seaward, Christina Treglia,
Olivia Winters

Behind The Scenes:

Directed by Judith Swift and Tony Estrella

Set Design by Michael McGarty

Costume Design by Amanda Downing Carney

Sound Design by Charles Cofone

Lighting Design by Jen Rock

Stage Management by Jessica Hill

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Assistant Director: Steve Kidd

Production Manager: Jessica Hill

Millinery Design: David T. Howard

Assistant Stage Manager: JonPaul Rainville

Sound Technician: Stef Work

Props Master/Scenic Artist: Carrie Capizzano

Production Assistant: Siobhan Reddy-Best

Electricians: Mark McClure, Matt Terry, Marc Tiberis

Lead Carpenter: Joe Short

Construction Crew: Alex Eisenberg, Max Ramirez

Production Notes:

Directors' Notes:

The Far Away Near By

By Tony Estrella, *Director of Far Away*

Caryl Churchill, author of *Top Girls* (Gamm 2007), *Mad Forest* and *Serious Money*, among many other of the most provocative plays of the modern theater, celebrates her 75th birthday just as we are opening Season 29 with this stunning double bill. Over four decades Churchill has been at the forefront of our art form, and she continues to write plays for tomorrow. Both *A Number & Far Away* peek just over the horizon to see where the human race is heading. (Or might 'careening recklessly' be more apt?) A

Number is a classic father/son drama with an unsettling bioethical twist, while *Far Away* tells a parable of eco-human immolation. Together they offer a powerful up-to-the minute reckoning of who we are now and what we just might become.

Putting these two pieces together has been a dream of mine for several years. Over three short acts spanning a generation, we watch the rapid unraveling of the ties that bind us together as people and this society. Amazingly this is the first time they have played together as one evening of theater (to my knowledge at least). Though less than an hour in length, each of them, as London's *Daily Telegraph* put it, "contains more drama and more ideas than most writers manage in a dozen full-length works." So I couldn't help but wonder: If each play on its own has provided audiences around the world with a wholly satisfying theatrical experience, then how much more powerfully might they play back to back? Together, they portend a terrifying near-future. Like the horizon, it looms ahead just out of reach but is omni-present. Churchill animates the shapeless fears, those everyday anxieties of being that roil the ground beneath our feet and settle like a blur just at the edge of our vision. With stiletto-sharp theatrical language, Churchill gives them focus, articulating the panic of modern man and woman alive at the edge of catastrophe.

In *Far Away*, Churchill creates a vast epic in miniature. Over three short acts spanning a generation, we watch the rapid unraveling of the ties that bind us together as people and this society. In act one, an aunt desperate to shield her young niece from an unspecified horror, weaves a web of justifications that step-by-step implicates and eviscerates her innocence. In act two, that little girl has grown into a talented artist who worships at the altar of form while being willfully blind to the amorality of its content. Act three jumps ahead several years to find her family reunited but at desperate odds sheltering from a society in which almost every natural bond has disintegrated and, for the first time in history, the world is truly at war. *Every* living thing—animal, mineral and vegetable—has chosen sides and imminent oblivion is the consequence. In our own world of ever-present war, ethnic cleansing and genocide, buffeted as we are by unprecedented technological innovation and acceleration under a not-so-sheltering sky of a climate in revolt, Churchill's world doesn't seem at all that far away.

Nurturing Nature

By Judith Swift, *Director of A Number*

When one has not had a good father, one must create one. ~Friedrich Nietzsche

As the role of each gene is unearthed, the oft-debated balance of nature-nurture shifts a bit on the spectrum of parental influence. After all, if my child has the "shy gene," how can I be held accountable for her incapacitating reluctance to engage with her species? Or does it mean she has a proclivity for shyness that well-directed parenting could alleviate? Should I have directed her to an ashram where she could eat, pray and love artisanal herbs? Or should I have watched her destiny unfold over the rim of a gin and tonic? Might some aversion therapy with a tad of sadism have sufficed? And would I of social necessity bear the blame if the result of the path chosen were disastrous? Of course, this all presupposes that I am genetically predisposed to care and socially engineered to commit to observation, interaction and evaluation. All we need do is examine a family court docket to see that biology does not a parent make. And yet, we are predisposed to the myth of biology as the catalytic force in parent-child bonding. Social service agencies and judges tend to err on the side of reuniting "families" based on biology, more often than not with tragic results. But by the time those results are evident, said child is ready for juvie and moving fast into his own reproductive lineup.

Many years ago, back when one could smoke at your desk, I met with a credit union officer about setting up educational funds for my children. (Sidebar: one child always claimed she would use the fund for the New England Tractor Trailer School a.k.a. NETTS. "Whatever makes you happy," I would warble in my most carefree-I-can-tomatoes-bake-my-own-bread-eat-brewers-yeast-support-McGovern-voice.) The credit union gal swiveled around in her chair like a barstool pro, took a pull on her Virginia Slim, shook her bangled wrist while pointing a red lacquered finger at me and said, "Trust me. Give yourself an out clause on this deal. You never know when you're gonna get a lemon." How true and as we suck on that citric thought, consider: How many of us would like a redo of a child? And is that redo actually one of our parenting methods that rendered the child as collateral damage? If only we had realized Johnny was Danish Modern and not Mayberry Floral.

Well, in *A Number*, B1 was a lemon or metamorphosed into one from that sweet little ball of infant peach fuzz. The true meaning of better living through chemistry (or the science du jour of biotechnology) led to a

“natural” duplicate – Dolly was a little lamb - with a tabula rasa on the nurturing front. But is love lovelier the second time around? Peer through the microscope at Churchill’s masterpiece wherein rampant drama unleashed by cloning is equal to Turgenev’s *Fathers and Sons* but with far fewer pages and extras left offstage.

Richard Gelles, a renowned expert in the sociology of family dynamics, once theorized that the advent of the nuclear family was parallel to an increase in family violence and domestic abuse. With only mom, dad and 2.2 children, there was no doting grandmother or spinster aunt to buffer the demands of children and the exhaustion of parents. There was no lollygagging uncle to model the value of lazing by a trout-filled stream or grandfather to pound out “Heart and Soul” on the old upright with a kid who couldn’t catch a ball like his dad, the high school letterman. The smaller the family, the fewer potential sources for unconditional love – a myth we deconstruct quite early in life anyway - couples with an exponential growth in the likelihood of being a disappointment. In a world where cloning turns kids into a box of Kleenex to be defiled with parental phlegm for disposal, there is no hope for the child once viewed as a nice square of linen that could be washed clean of all manner of sins.

A man’s desire for a son is usually nothing but the wish to duplicate himself in order that such a remarkable pattern may not be lost to the world.

-Helen Rowland

Dramaturgical Notes:

By Jennifer Madden, *Gamm Theatre Resident Scholar*

Mining Abstract Truths

*We so-called developed nations are no longer fighting against ourselves; together we are all turning against the world. Literally a world war, and doubly so, since the whole world, meaning all men, imposes losses on the whole world, meaning all things. ~ Michel Serres, *The Natural Contract*¹*

*Everything’s been recruited. ~ Joan, *Far Away**

Both *A Number* and *Far Away* contain recognizable, intimate situations: A father and son rehash their painful family history, a woman comforts a visiting niece who is unable to sleep, and two young factory workers fall in love while on the job. The familiar, however, quickly becomes strange as the action and dialogue reveal lurking horrors hiding just out of view.

A Number (2002)

What if, while walking down the street one day, you came face to face with yourself? Bernard has such a disorienting encounter after he learns that he is not, in fact, "Bernard" but B2 — a clone made from the cells of an earlier, original son. More troubling, he learns he is only one of "a number." Multiple copies of the ur-Bernard roam the world. B2's chilling discovery echoes the fraught nature of modern identity, both its creation and ownership.

How much control do we have over the creation of our identity? Which shapes us more: Nature or nurture? Our role as author of our own identity is central to our agency and sense of self. Neuroscientist Sam Harris observes, "...Most of what is distinctly *human* about our lives seems to depend upon our viewing one another as autonomous persons, capable of free choice." Yet free will, Harris argues, is an illusion. Are our choices, predilections, everything else that defines "us" predetermined by genetics and prior circumstances? Who, then, are we? Technological advances make "identity" fluid, mutable, and up for grabs. Versions of ourselves, able to be manipulated and altered, circulate forever in the ether. Thieves assume our identities and go on spending sprees with our stolen credit cards, while social media sites freely license our uploaded image for their own purposes.

Far Away (2000)

Far Away follows the play's protagonist, Joan, through three defining periods of her life. As a little girl, Joan wakes from sleep into a nightmare upon hearing a shriek in the night. She lives in an unnamed country controlled by fear, suffocating menace, and barbaric violence. Joan quickly learns the valuable skills of acquiescence and looking the other way; the unacceptable and the horrific become routine.

As a gifted hat designer, adult Joan happily creates outlandish, frivolous hats for a ghastly public spectacle of condemned prisoners marching to their execution. Theatre scholar Una Chaudhuri describes Joan's hats as "colossal creations of grotesque proportions, bizarre shapes and riotous colors, they silently scream out the horror that results when aesthetics loses all concern for the material reality from which it works." Joan seems blissfully unconcerned with the grisly reality of the state-sponsored fashion shows, focusing on the more pressing issues of her art and inadequate pay. Joan's narrowed focus recalls another gifted artist: Hitler's favorite film director Leni Riefenstahl. Arguably a film maker of genius, Riefenstahl chose to focus solely on the formal, aesthetic properties of her art, willfully and conveniently losing sight of *what* she was actually filming (the glorification of the Nazi party).

Several years later Joan flees to the countryside hoping to escape a global conflagration in which countries, professions, age groups, animals, and even the natural elements choose sides. (For example, "The Bolivians are working with gravity. ...The cats have come in on the side of the French.") These bewildering, ominous alliances defy logic and reason and Joan is no longer able to function as an impartial, blissfully ignorant bystander as "far away" inches ever closer.

Caryl Churchill's two plays speak to each other in form and content. They are masterfully compressed encapsulations of post-millennial fear and pervasive dread: state-sponsored violence, environmental chaos, biomedical ethics, and the anxiety that technology will overtake and subsume us. We live in a climate of fear in which everything is a potential threat and enemy: the weather, social media, and every other person. Though seemingly inscrutable, Churchill's haunting obliqueness and the savage poetry of her metaphors capture the horrors of modern existence as directly and eloquently as any documentary.

1 Una Chaudhuri connects the work of Serres and Churchill in her online review "Different Hats".

ACT V: Themes and Questions for Discussion

The Pair:

- *Why do you think Artistic Director, Tony Estrella paired these two one-acts together?*
- *How did the set design aid in the telling of the two stories? How would you have changed it?*
- *What sort of atmosphere was created with the lighting and sound design? What made the design of each piece unique?*
- *How does Churchill reveal information about her characters and the world they live in? Why is this an effective mode of story-telling?*

A Number:

- *What is the meaning of the title, A Number?*

Human Cloning:

Churchill creates a world that appears like ours with the small difference that human cloning is possible. Human cloning is the creation of a genetically identical copy of another human being. Cloning

in biotechnology refers to processes used to create copies of DNA fragments (molecular cloning), cells (cell cloning), or organisms.

A Number was written in 2002, six years after Dolly the sheep was the first mammal to be successfully cloned from an adult cell. Dolly's cloning was publicly significant because it proved that genetic material from a specific adult cell that was programmed to express a distinct subset of its genes could be reprogrammed to grow an entirely new organism. Since Dolly, scientists have successfully cloned a number of other mammals including a horse, cat, dog, cattle, and a camel. In 2006, the Food and Drug Administration approved the sale of cloned meats. At present, in reality, the main non-religious objection to human cloning is that cloned individuals are often biologically damaged.

Questions for Discussion:

- *Do you believe Salter's reasons for cloning his son are ethical?*
- *How does actor Tony Estrella portray the different characters differently? What is the same?*
- *What are some of the potential pitfalls of cloning explored in A Number?*

Activity for the Classroom:

- Assign half the students to be "Pro-Cloning," and the other half to be "Anti-Cloning." Students must make an educated argument for whatever side they have been assigned. Allow the students adequate time to review articles and gather information. The teacher will serve as the moderator of the debate, allowing both sides equal time for both arguments and rebuttals.
- Have your students visit the gene mapping website www.23andme.com. Discuss: *What is the value of a site such as this? Would you take advantage of it? In what ways is it potentially dangerous?*

Nature vs. Nurture:

Nature vs. Nurture is the debate concerning the relative importance of an individual's innate qualities (nativism) versus personal experience in determining individual differences in physical and behavioral traits (behaviorism). Nature refers to biological and family factors, regardless of upbringing, such as physical and personality traits that are determined by genes. Nurture refers to social and environmental factors, such as childhood or upbringing. For example, one might be born with genes that code for average height, however malnourishment during childhood could result in stunted growth and a failure to develop as expected.

Questions for Discussion:

- *How does nature affect each of Salter's cloned sons?*

- *How does nurture affect each of Salter's sons?*
- *Are you ruled by nurture or nature?*

Identity:

Identity is defined as whatever makes an entity distinct and recognizable. Bernard (B1) seeks retribution for the way he was treated as a child and for the destruction of his personal identity upon discovering that there are multiple copies of him.

Questions for Discussion:

- *What defines the identity of Churchill's characters?*
- *What defines your identity?*

Far Away:

- *What is the meaning of the title, Far Away?*
- *Far Away is divided into three scenes. Why do you think Churchill chose these three moments in Joan's life to share? What does each scene show us about the society?*

Trust and the loss of innocence:

The first scene in *Far Away* appears to be a recognizable situation: a girl visits her aunt in the countryside. Slowly Churchill reveals that things are not what they seem, and that there is something sinister going on. In those moments Joan loses her innocence and begins to question whether she can trust the adult in her life. Joan is eventually willing to help her Aunt Harper because of the lies and justifications Harper has made, which ultimately make Joan culpable.

Questions for Discussion:

- *How does Harper manipulate Joan?*
- *How does Churchill manipulate the audience?*

Normalizing destruction:

In the second scene Joan and Todd calmly create beautiful hats for a parade. Just as in the first scene, Churchill parcels out information and we soon learn just what the parade is for. Joan utters the haunting line "It seems so sad to burn [the hats] with the bodies" and she and Todd discuss making changes to their work conditions and wages, not considering making changes to the disturbing nature of their work. This denial of the truth further implicates them in the outcome of the world.

Questions for Discussion:

- *What other ways do Todd and Joan seem to normalize the world around them?*
- *What is the significance of the hats?*
- *In what ways do we normalize destruction in our daily lives?*

War and the future:

In the final scene we learn that everything is at war, including animals and nature, creating a literal world war. This new war is unique in that there are not two sides; there are an endless number of alliances that are ever-changing. It is difficult to know who to trust, even gravity has an ally.

Questions for Discussion:

- *How does Churchill foreshadow the war?*
- *Was the war preventable?*
- *In what ways do you think this imagined future is possible?*

Epilogue

Thank you for joining us for *A Number & Far Away* 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 *A Number & Far Away*.

Our education program also provides classes for students in elementary, junior high and high school. Gamm Summer Intensive is the thing to do for summer time theatre fun! We hope you will join us for more student matinees at The Gamm!

Still to come:

GOOD PEOPLE

by David Lindsay-Abaire

- Friday Nov. 8

THE BIG MEAL

by Dan LeFranc

- Friday Jan. 10

MACBETH

by William Shakespeare

- March 7
- April 9, 15, 17

To learn more, find us on the web at www.gammtheatre.org or reach Steve Kidd at 401 723 4266 ext. 17.