

HEC-TV Live! Presents Of Monroeville and Mockingbirds, Part 3: From Page to Stage

Date: January 13, 2008

Times: 1:00 to 2:00 p.m. CDT

Grade Levels: 7-10

Cost: NO CHARGE

Abstract:

How do you translate the timeless themes, locations and characters of the novel “To Kill A Mockingbird” to a theatrical production? Find out by interacting with the director, actors, designers and technical personnel that are bringing it to life on stage.

Program Description:

How do you translate the timeless themes, locations and characters of Harper Lee’s classic novel “To Kill A Mockingbird” to a theatrical production? Find out by joining us live from the stage of the Edison Theatre on the campus of Washington University in St. Louis. View a scene from the production. Meet director Carol North and members of the design team to discuss how the show came to life from the first phase of design to the final phase of implementation. View the lights, the costumes, and the scenery. Ask your questions of actors about how they formulated and performed their character. How would you choose to illustrate the themes of the story through a stage design and directorial point of view? Compare your ideas to those of the Metro Theater Company and Edison Theatre staff staging this new production. Have your students read the book this year? Will you be reading it later? Are you interested in your students better understanding the work of theatre professionals and how a story is translated through their eyes to the eyes of an audience member? If so, we hope you can join us for this program. Cost for the program is FREE.

Program Objectives:

1. The participant will explore the process of staging a play from its selection through casting and design development to rehearsal, construction and implementation of technical elements, and performance.
2. The participant will engage in a discussion about the collaboration necessary to successfully stage a production and explore choices made by those collaborators involved in producing, directing, acting, and technically designing (lights, costumes, scenery) Metro Theater Company and Edison Theatre’s production of “To Kill A Mockingbird.”
3. The participant will interact with professional theatre performers and technicians, watch a scene in performance, and engage in critical evaluation of the script, characterization, direction, and technical elements.

Program Format:

The program will focus on the production elements needed to bring Metro Theatre Company and Edison Theatre’s current production of “To Kill A Mockingbird” to life. Participants will view a scene from the play, see the set, lights and costumes, and interact with the folks who have done

the work. Students will have many opportunities to offer their ideas and ask questions of the theatre professionals throughout the program. You can learn more about Metro Theater Company at <http://www.metrotheatercompany.org> and more about Edison Theatre at <http://edisontheatre.wustl.edu/>. Topics for the program are included below. As you'll note, a central element of this program will include cast members performing a scene from the play. A copy of the scene will be sent to you after enrolling for the program. The videoconference program will consist of the following segments.

1. Welcome and Introduction—Student groups and experts will be introduced and welcomed to the program.

2. Background of the Play—We'll investigate the text of the scene to be performed as well as plot, time period, etc. of the play itself. Important elements of the style and structure of the play will also be explored as we create a context for the choices made for this current production of "To Kill A Mockingbird." Students will be asked for their ideas about the scene, the characters in it, possible ideas for staging and blocking the scene, and be able to ask questions of the play's producer, actors, and designers about their ideas on the scene. A copy of the scene will be sent to you once you have enrolled for the program.

3. Performance of the Scene—Students will watch the scene being performed as it will be staged by Metro Theater Company. Students will be able to ask questions of the actors and director about the scene and offer their ideas as well. Students will also have a chance to see the set, lighting and costumes involved in the scene and respond to those elements as well.

4. Role of the Designers—We'll discuss the process of creating a successful stage play through the eyes of the various technical designers on the show. We'll look at scene design and staging choices, lighting design and implementation, and costume design and construction. Students will be able to ask questions of these professionals about the choices they made for this production and why those choices were made, about life as a professional theatre designer, and training and experience needed for the career.

5. Closing Segment--Including summary of topics discussed and final questions from students.

Featured National Standards:

English/Language Arts

Standards Developed by International Reading Association and National Council of Teachers of English

2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, and aesthetic) of human experience.

3. Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, and graphics).

8. Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g., libraries, databases, computer networks, and video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.
11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.
12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

Theatre

NA 5-8.3 Designing by developing environments for improvised and scripted scenes

Students analyze improvised and scripted scenes for technical requirements

NA5-8.7 Analyzing, evaluating, and constructing meanings from improvised and scripted scenes and from theatre, film, television, and electronic media productions

Students articulate and support the meanings constructed from their and others' dramatic performances

Students use articulated criteria to describe, analyze, and constructively evaluate the perceived effectiveness of artistic choices found in dramatic performances

NA 9-12.2 Acting by developing, communicating, and sustaining characters in improvisations and informal or formal productions

Students analyze the physical, emotional, and social dimensions of characters found in dramatic texts from various genres and media

NA 9-12.3 Designing and producing by conceptualizing and realizing artistic interpretations for informal or formal productions

Students analyze a variety of dramatic texts from cultural and historical perspectives to determine production requirements

NA9-12.5 Researching by evaluating and synthesizing cultural and historical information to support artistic choices

Students identify and research cultural, historical, and symbolic clues in dramatic texts, and evaluate the validity and practicality of the information to assist in making artistic choices for informal and formal productions

NA9-12.7 Analyzing, critiquing, and constructing meanings from informal and formal theatre, film, television, and electronic media productions

Students articulate and justify personal aesthetic criteria for critiquing dramatic texts and events that compare perceived artistic intent with the final aesthetic achievement

Students analyze and critique the whole and the parts of dramatic performances, taking into account the context, and constructively suggest alternative artistic choices

Featured State Standards (Missouri):

Schools from across the country are invited to join in the program. Missouri state standards are provided for Missouri schools since partial funding for this program comes from various Missouri organizations.

Communication Arts Grade Level Expectations

1H: Apply post-reading skills to comprehend and interpret text

- question to clarify
- reflect
- analyze
- draw conclusions
- summarize
- paraphrase

1I Compare, contrast, analyze and evaluate connections between

- information and relationships in various fiction and non-fiction works
- text ideas and own experiences
- text ideas and the world by analyzing the relationship between literature and its historical period and culture

2C Use details from text to analyze character, plot, setting, point of view and development of theme

Theatre

GLE: PP1B8.9-12 Develop and apply skills to communicate ideas through theatrical performances—Acting

Use basic terms of theatre

Use advanced terms of theatre

GLE: PP1D9-12 Develop and apply skills to communicate ideas through theatrical performances—Directing

Evaluate the director's role in creating a production

GLE: EP1B7.8.9-12 Select and apply theatrical elements to communicate ideas through the creation of theatre—Acting

Identify cue, notes, on/off book, cheat/open out, and cold-reading

Identify ensemble and polish ensemble work

Identify centering, counter-cross, upstaging, emotional memory, motivation, obstacle, objective, tactic, action, pitch, rate, phrasing, volume, tempo, quality, and prepared audition

GLE: EP1B7.8.9-12 Select and apply theatrical elements to communicate ideas through the creation of theatre—Design and Technical Theatre

Identify technical elements of theatre to represent time and place, establish character, enhance mood and create dramatic environments for improvised or scripted scenes

Identify and apply stagecraft skills

GLE: EP1D9-12 Select and apply theatrical elements to communicate ideas through the creation of theatre—Directing

Define the director's responsibility to the author's intent, script, actors, designers, technicians and the audience

Identify the director's role in creating a production
Identify the skills necessary to block a scripted scene

GLE: AP1A7.8.9-12 Develop and apply skills to explain perceptions about and evaluations of theatre and theatrical performance—Analysis and Evaluation

Define the terminology and process of evaluation and apply this process to performances using appropriate theatre vocabulary

GLE: AP1B9-12 Develop and apply skills to explain perceptions about and evaluations of theatre and theatrical performance—Personal Preferences

Articulate, justify and apply personal criteria for critiquing dramatic texts and performances

GLE: HCC2A7.8 Develop and apply skills necessary to understand cultural diversity and heritage as they relate to theatre—Cultural Diversity and Heritage

Examine and compare characteristics of theatrical works from various cultures throughout history

GLE: HCC2B7.8.9-12 Develop and apply skills necessary to understand cultural diversity and heritage as they relate to theatre—Careers

Compare and contrast selected occupations in theatre

Participant Preparation:

1. Participants should come to the program with an interest and/or experience in literature, plays and/or theatre.
2. Participants should come to the program with some knowledge of the story elements included in "To Kill A Mockingbird."
3. Participants should think in advance of questions they wish to ask the program experts.
4. Participants should have pencil and paper ready to use during the program to jot down ideas and additional questions as they come to mind.

Pre-Program Activity Suggestions:

1. Have students learn more about the Metro Theater Company and their upcoming production of "To Kill A Mockingbird" by touring their website at <http://www.metrotheatercompany.org>.
2. Have students learn more about the story of "To Kill A Mockingbird" via the excellent resources provided by the National Endowment of the Arts Big Read project at <http://www.neabigread.org/books/mockingbird/>.
3. Have students read the excerpt from the play will be performed and discussed during the program. That excerpt is included with the program's preparatory materials and will be sent to you once you have enrolled for the program. Have them consider how they would stage the scene. What blocking seems necessary? How would the characters be costumed? What kind of lighting does it call for?
4. View the DVD "A Teacher's View of 'To Kill A Mockingbird'" that will be sent to you once you have enrolled for the program.

Post-Program Activity Suggestions:

1. Have students journal about their reactions to the experience. What new things did they learn about the world of a professional theatre company? What new insights did they gain in reading and/or staging plays? Do they view the role of theatre actors, directors or technicians any differently than they did before?
2. Have students re-read the scene from the play that was performed during the program. How has their understanding of the scene changed. How has their knowledge of various theatre professions changed? As a result, do they have any follow-up questions they'd like to e-mail the theatre professionals? The e-mail questions can be sent to us at live@hectv.org.
3. Have students read the stage version of "To Kill A Mockingbird" in its entirety. How does the scene rehearsed during the program fit in to the whole play? What is their reaction to the play? What do they think it has to say? What ideas do they have for how it might be staged, lit, costumed?

Vocabulary:

Blocking--where actors move on stage, how, and facing which direction

Business--Obvious, detailed physical movement of performers to reveal character, aid action, or establish mood

Cue--A signal, such as a word or action, used to prompt another event in a performance, such as an actor's speech or entrance, a change in lighting, or a sound effect.

Emotional Memory--A method of acting where actors remember actions/feelings from their own life that resemble character's in play

Ensemble--a sense of wholeness; everyone working together; working together as a unit toward a common goal

Motivation--the character's reason for doing what he/she does

Subtext--not what is said but how it's said; the actions and unspoken thoughts going through the mind of the character; between the lines; the underlying motivations for actions (including what character says to others)