

RAGTIME



Ragtime, The Musical, presented by The Hotchkiss Dramatic Association

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Introduction from Allen Babcock:

We began our journey during the first days of school when 119 students auditioned for the production. 56 Hotchkiss students and two faculty children were cast in the production. After settling in we began rehearsals and the process of learning all the music, choreography, physical blocking and character development work of the show.

Ragtime is a show about identity and how the differing peoples of this country shaped its progress in “an era exploding, a century spinning.” It is about points of contact between people of differing worlds. Race and religion play into the entirety of the plot. This show is about people celebrating who they are and hopefully seeing beyond those who seek to perpetrate evil in our world. I often say that Ragtime is hopeful despite not being happy. Ragtime addresses topics of hate, violence, love, compassion, the “American Dream,” political correctness, workers rights, unions, objectification and status of women, and justice. Ragtime asks big questions but leaves us hopeful that if we let the best parts of our humanity shine through we all can “ride on the wheels of a dream.”

The production team of Ragtime is staffed by faculty members Mr. Marcus Olson (Director of Theatre) serving as General Producer and Properties Master, Mr. Derek Brashears (Resident Designer and Technical Director) our Production Designer, Mr. Parker Reed (Instructor in English) our Co-Costumer, and by Theatre Professionals Mr. Danny Musha serving as Music Director, Ms. Sarah Cuoco as Choreographer, Mr. Graham Stone (Hotchkiss'08) as Sound Designer, Mrs. Sandy Cuoco as Co-Costumer, and by Hotchkiss Students Allison Whyte & Michael Sansbury as Assistant Stage Managers, Maya Ghose as Production Stage Manager and Bronwyn Donohue as Assistant Director. We were blessed to have Professional Actor Stan Brown visit our rehearsals early in the process. He worked individually with some actors and also gave feedback to the entire cast and ran a couple of acting exercises. All were fabulous and enthused for the process and excited to make this monster of a show a reality!



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Interview with Bronwyn Donohue, Assistant Director

What do you do as the assistant director?

This is actually my third time assistant directing. The thing about assistant directing is that it really has no job description which means it differs greatly from play to play. For *Ragtime*, my biggest job was working one-on-one with the actors on their beat-to-beat action. Together we figured out what they wanted, the different ways they tried to get it, and what was standing in their way. During runs, I would take notes on aspects of the show that needed improvement. I blocked one scene in the show, did a lot of paperwork and organizational things, and was a confidant for the cast.

How did you get the job?

I got the job near the end of *Dog Sees God*. We were backstage fixing scenery and I told him I had no idea what I was going to do theatrically the following year. He turned towards me, smiled, and said, "You know, a musical is very different from a play." I'd worked with Babcock long enough to know exactly what he was saying. To be honest, though glad

of the opportunity, I was mostly relieved I had a plan for the following autumn.

Do cast members speak directly to Mr. Babcock about their concerns? Do you play any role in-between?

Certain cast members often spoke to me about their concerns. I wish, though, that others had done so more. I often heard about the cast complaining to each other but never bringing their concerns to either Mr. Babcock or me, and because they did not alert us of problems, we were unable to fix them.

What has been your favorite scene to work on?

My favorite scene that I worked on would have to be "Our Children." It was the only scene in the show that was "mine". Thirty minutes before rehearsal, Mr. Babcock unexpectedly came to me and told me to block the scene. Though I had listened to all the music on repeat for months, "Our Children" was that one song I always skipped because I didn't like it as much. I quickly listened to it over and over again and tried to figure out the characters and their actions. Through analyzing the song, it quickly moved from being one of my least favorites to one of my favorites.



Who do you think has been your biggest mentor in this process?

I had two mentors on this show, one creative and one emotional. When I had questions and frustrations about the text, I would go to Mr. Babcock for help. No one knew the play better than he. Though he often left me with more questions than answers,—making me find the answers for myself,—he made me a better director. One of my biggest challenges with the show was that Mr. Babcock was both my director and my advisor. When I was having troubles with the Director, I couldn't really go to my advisor for help and advice. Early on I decided I needed outside support so I went my old advisor, Mr. Zackheim, my mental mentor.

Interview with Colin McCalla '16

What are difficulties playing the role of Tateh?

Tateh is an interesting character that develops greatly throughout the show. While playing his nuances and change can be difficult, it's easier due to the fact that his main objective remains consistent: taking care for his daughter. Finding that relationship with the little girl was difficult at first but soon it became natural.

Do you find that your relationships in the play have affected your real life relationships?

Yeah, it was interesting developing that relationship with the little girl, as that was my first time doing something like that on stage. Being the youngest sibling I wasn't really able to draw from personal experience, but it was an interesting lesson in fatherhood.

How was your first experience being in a play? Would you do it again?

I definitely enjoyed it. It was a larger time commitment than other shows I've done. I'll probably do more straight plays here as it will most likely take less time. I'm not sure I'll do the musical again next year, depending on what it is.



Interview with Jadon Joyner '14

Who are you in the musical?

I am Coalhouse. He is the leader of the Harlem chorus and he experiences arguably the most conflict during the show.

What are the difficulties in playing this role?

My character has a giant arc; he goes from being hopeful, to happy, to sad, to angry, and it is difficult to show all these emotions to the audience... while still singing.

Do you find that your relationships in the play have affected your real life relationships?

I feel that plays always help me build relationships with others in the cast. Even if I have a very negative experience with someone in the actual script, the relationship that we have outside the show is great.

How do you manage your emotions in the play?

It is definitely hard, especially with a play that hits so close to home. This is a very racial play and there are a couple times in the play when I almost don't have to act and I just let my true emotions flow. But this play is incredibly important and needs to be shown.

How was your experience being in a play? Would you do it again?

It has been a great experience and I am a bit upset for waiting so long to do a musical. It has also been far more work than I expected. In college, I will definitely do a musical.

Interview with Maisie Bull '15

Who are you in the play?

I am Mother. I'm sort of the leader of the New Rochelle chorus and I'm really the only character who has relationships with the other two choruses - Harlem and the Immigrants.

How did you prepare for your character?

My character is very complex. My goal is make the audience love Coalhouse, and if they hate him, at least understand him. To prepare for this character, I have to really just be in tune with everyone around me.

What are some difficulties in playing your role?

The biggest difficulty would be that I am not in fact a middle-aged mother who has to deal with the issues of that time. I can find things in my own life that relate to the struggles that Mother goes through, and I would like to think I'm at least a little bit accurate in the emotions, but I'm far from understanding what it's really like to be that person.

Do you find that your relationships in the play have affected your real life relationships?

Very much so. I have made so many new friends whom I absolutely adore! I've become so close with people I never thought I could relate to and I just think that's the most amazing thing ever. And as for the friends I had before, they are just as supportive as they ever have been.

How do you manage your emotions in the play?

Well I don't think it's a secret that I'm quite an emotional person - just look at my songs... But this year has been different than years past. The environment seems to be more supportive simply because there are so many of us and we all understand that the possibility of a breakdown is very high in any and all of us. We all worked together to make this the best possible experience.

How was this show different from previous shows?

Well, Ragtime is a huge cast. In Bat Boy, we bonded on a freaky level. We were practically a cult and the post-show-depression hit hard for all of us. It's harder to bond with everyone when there are so many of us, but I think we did a very good job. We finished blocking way earlier than we have in years past, despite the unprecedented size of the show. The sets are insane! The story line is so important to our history and each character has his or her own arc that someone in the audience can relate to.

How did you prepare for your character?

I have tried to bond outside of rehearsals with the people that I'm bonding with onstage. I find that if you establish a loving bond with someone who's supposed to be your family member, it's easier to understand the pain of seeing them for the last time, and portraying that pain onstage. Once you understand what you're supposed to be feeling, and you truly feel it in the moment of the scene, it comes across as real. Don't think of it as playing someone, think of it as being someone. Be in the moment and make discoveries as you go.



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