



## STUDY GUIDE

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# NO CHILD ...

Written & Performed by Nilaja Sun, Directed by Hal Brooks

*"For two or three months ... I don't write anything down. And I dream about it ... Then I can start to rant, rant, rant. And then I write it down very quickly ... I've listened to the kids long enough to understand where a lot of their issues lie, where a lot of their humor comes from."*

-- Nilaja Sun, 20 June 2006 (Broadway.com)

## The Creative Team

**NILAJA SUN (Writer/Performer)** is the solo writer and performer of the Off Broadway smash *No Child...* which concluded its run at the Barrow Street Theatre in June 2007. For her creation and performance of *No Child...*, Nilaja garnered a Lucille Lortel Award, two Outer Critics Circle Awards (for Outstanding Solo Performance and the John Gassner Playwrighting Award for Outstanding New American Play), a Theatre World Award, an Obie Award and the piece was named Best One-Person Show at the U.S. Comedy Arts Festival in Aspen.. In her long-term relationship with Epic Theatre Ensemble, Nilaja has appeared in *No Child...*, *Einstein's Gift*, *Pieces of the Throne*, *Time and the Conways*; she was also named the first Artistic Associate of Epic Theatre. Her other New York credits include *Huck and Holden* (Cherry Lane Theatre), *The Cook* (Intar), *The Adventures of Barrio Grrrr!* (Summer Play Festival) and *Law and Order: SVU*. She most recently completed work on Columbia Pictures' *The International*, starring Naomi Watts and Clive Owen. As a solo performer, Nilaja's projects include the critically acclaimed *Blues for a Gray Sun* (INTAR), *La Nubia Latina*, *Black and Blue*, *Insufficient Fare*, *Due to the Tragic Events of...* and *Mixtures*. A native of the Lower East Side, she is a Princess Grace Award winner and has worked as a teaching artist in NYC for nine years.

**HAL BROOKS (Director)** directed Nilaja Sun's Obie Award winning *No Child...*, which ran at the Barrow Street Theatre for over 300 performances. He also directed the acclaimed Off Broadway hit and Pulitzer Finalist *Thom Pain (based on nothing)* by Will Eno at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Soho Theatre in London and the DR2 in NYC. Most recently, he directed the world premiere of Lee Blessing's *Lonesome Hollow* at the Contemporary American Theater Festival and Athol Fugard's "MASTER HAROLD"... *and the boys* (Weston Playhouse). He served as the Artistic Director of the Rude Mechanicals Theater Company of New York where he directed the Off Broadway premieres of Don DeLillo's *Valparaiso* and Will Eno's *The Flu Season* (Oppy winner). Recent credits: *I Am My Own Wife* (Weston Playhouse), Rinne Groff's *What Then* (Clubbed Thumb), *Six Years* (Humana Festival), *Intimate Apparel* (Southern Rep), *Benefactors* (PA Center Stage), *Big Wyoming* (NY Stage and Film). Other New York credits: Keith Reddin's *Almost Blue*, Beckett's *Rough for Theatre #1*, *Caught* (Don Quixote Project). Upcoming directing endeavors include *Widows* by Ariel Dorfman and *Lady* by Craig Wright as well as the tour of *No Child...* He has worked at NYTW, New Dramatists, Naked Angels, INTAR, Magic Theater, McCarter Theater, Berkeley Rep, American Conservatory Theater, Syracuse Stage and the Virginia Stage Company. Hal was a Drama League Fall Directing Fellow in 2003, is a proud member of the Lincoln Center Theater Directors Lab and SSDC and is a 2007-2009 recipient of the NEA/TCG Career Development Program for Directors.

## **NO CHILD: Cast of Characters**

Jackson Barron Cofford III – *the janitor at Malcolm X High School and the narrator*

Nilaja Sun – *a teaching artist for a class of tenth graders at Malcolm X*

Ms Tam – *a former investment banker, now a tenth grade teacher*

Mrs. Kennedy – *the principal at Malcolm X and staunch supporter of the play*

The Security Guard

Ms. Projensky – *the teacher who replaces Ms Tam, recently emigrated from Russia*

Mr. Johnson – *the teacher who replaces Ms Projensky, a strong supporter of the play*

Señora Guzman – *Jose's grandmother*

--- The Students ---

Coca – *who believes in love*

Jerome – *who secretly memorizes the role of Ralph Clark*

Brian – *who has a taste for music and Red Bull*

Shondrika – *who has a talent for art*

Xiomara – *who prefers the character of Liz Morden*

Jose – *who is dedicated to his brother*

Chris – *who learns to overcome his stage fright*

Phillip – *who learns to act with feeling*

## **NO CHILD IN WASHINGTON ...**

**By Miriam Weisfeld, Woolly Mammoth dramaturg**

“I don’t know nothing about no No Child, Yes Child, Who Child, What Child,” says the school janitor who narrates NO CHILD... “I do know there’s a hole in the fourth floor ceiling ain’t been fixed since ’87, all the bathrooms on the third floor, they broke. Now, who’s accountable for dat?” Nilaja Sun’s one-woman play chronicles her experience as a teaching artist in the Bronx, where she worked with exactly the population targeted by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, the NCLB Act seeks to “close the achievement gap” between minority students and their white counterparts. NO CHILD... drives home the disconnection between federal policy and the reality of daily life in an urban school. Nowhere is that disconnection more striking than in Washington DC’s own heavily minority school system.

In 2003, the Department of Education approved the District of Columbia Public School accountability plan. The NCLB Act requires that states and school districts design their own tests to measure student progress by race and economic status. These standardized tests must target achievement in reading, writing, and math. The statistics gathered from the tests hold schools “accountable” for low achievement and help determine a school’s allocation of federal funds. NCLB also requires teachers to pass qualification tests, and allows students in low-scoring public schools to transfer to charter schools instead.

At a June 9, 2003 press conference, DC School Superintendent Dr. Paul L. Vance told reporters that the school system must implement “a rapid growth in achievement to meet the rigorous goals envisioned by NCLB.” Three years later, Superintendent Vance had resigned. His replacement, Clifford Janey, was fired last June. Mayor Fenty cited a need for “radical change” in the DCPS; he did away with the Superintendent job altogether, hiring Michelle Rhee in the newly created position of School Chancellor. Last September Rhee took up the challenge of steering a school system that the Washington Post calls “among the worst-performing in the nation.”

Yet that same month, President Bush told reporters at the White House, “The achievement gap is beginning to narrow, and the promise of America is expanding for children of all backgrounds. In short, NCLB is working for all kinds of children in all kinds of schools in every part of the country.” Had local authorities overstated the crisis in DC public schools, or had the Department of Education overlooked the students in its own backyard?

According to standardized test results, the achievement gap between minority and white students in DC had indeed narrowed by three to six percentage points by 2005. However, many teachers complain that these statistics measure memorization and test-taking skills rather than learning. They say the evaluation requirements punish innovative teachers in struggling schools. One DCPS teacher writing anonymously on the American Federation of Teachers website argued that NCLB “is opening up markets for uncertified teachers [in charter schools] even as it demands that teachers in regular public schools meet stricter requirements.” Teachers all over the country have voiced their concerns, and in 2005 the

National Education Association sued the Department of Education over the labor policies allowed under NCLB. Defenders of NCLB accused the teacher's union of protecting apathetic and ineffective workers. The controversy over No Child Left Behind has pitted a network of local teachers and administrators against federal policymakers in an unprecedented debate over why schools fail many minority students.

Nilaja Sun is neither a politician nor a member of a teacher's union. An actress and long-time teaching artist, she spent six weeks at one Bronx school working with urban minority students to put on a school play. Sun believed that art could instill a sense of pride and personal responsibility in students who received little positive reinforcement from an overwhelmed school faculty. Fortunately, the City of New York shared her vision and funded her artistic residency with a small grant. NCLB earmarks no federal funding for the arts. Since the standardized tests specifically measure achievement in reading, writing, and math, local school districts must determine what – if any – funding to grant other subjects.

Sun discovered that it takes more than money to make an impact as a teacher. With humor and brutal honesty, *NO CHILD...* shows us the labyrinth of challenges that impede learning at one public school. Metal detectors, crumbling facilities, poor nutrition, language barriers, abuse, and lack of parental support stand in the way of her students' education. In fact, these problems often prevent students from simply arriving in the classroom each morning.

The National Education Association mentions many of these same problems in their recommendations for a new version of the NCLB Act. The law was scheduled for reauthorization in 2007. The NEA has begun collaborating with Congress on a new draft that might meet "the real needs of children," as the teacher's union puts it. The NEA's suggestions for a new draft include investing in school facilities; improving student-teacher ratios; increasing cultural sensitivity; early intervention on behalf of students who require medical or social services; incentives for teachers who take on added responsibilities; and providing adult education and parenting classes for the families of students. The teacher's union also suggests rewarding achievement in science, history, foreign languages, and the arts.

After the NEA requested more adjustments to the first draft of a reauthorization bill, Congress slowed action on the law. Both the Senate and the House acted to delay a vote on NCLB until 2008. The future of the federal policy remains uncertain. Nilaja Sun and *NO CHILD...* arrive in Washington just in time to remind us of the individual futures at stake.

## OUR COUNTRY'S GOOD Timberlake Wertenbaker

*"I don't know how they felt. But it must have been incredible for these convicts to go out and put on a play in front of their officers ... The idea is that if you can start this rehearsal, you can stop the brutality."*

*"Even though it is set in the 18th century, it is a modern play. I'm trying to write about how people are treated, what it means to be brutalized, what it means to live without hope, and how theater can be a humanizing force."*

-- Timberlake Wertenbaker, 30 September 1990 (NY Times)

### The Playwright

Born in America, but raised in Basque country, Timberlake Wertenbaker attended primary school in France and St. John's College in the United States, where she studied philosophy and Greek. She also studied briefly at the Sorbonne in Paris. After trying her hand at publishing and journalism (both in the United States and Europe), she moved to Somerset county to train horses. In the 1970s, she went to work as a language instructor in Greece – and began to write her first plays.

Many of her early works, including *New Anatomies* (1981) and *Abel's Sister* (1984), premiered in London before receiving productions in the States. In 1988, Wertenbaker completed her most renowned play, *Our Country's Good*. The work drew its inspiration from *The Playmaker* (1987), a novel by Australian writer Thomas Keneally. *Our Country's Good* received an Olivier Award for Best New Play and the New York Times Drama Critics' Circle Award for Best New Foreign Play. The Broadway production received six Tony Award nominations in 1991. Wertenbaker has also made a name for herself as a dramatic translator, particularly of the works of French playwrights Pierre de Marivaux and Jean Anouilh and of Greek tragedians Sophocles and Euripides. Her most recent works include *Galileo's Daughter* (2004) and *Divine Intervention*, which she completed in 2006.

## **OUR COUNTRY'S GOOD: Cast of Characters**

Captain Arthur Phillip – *the open-minded Governor-in-Chief in New South Wales, Phillip believes that theater can improve life in the colony, but he lacks support from some of the other officers*

Major Robbie Ross – *a merciless commanding officer, Ross despises Australia and believes that convicts cannot be reformed; in his opinion theater can only make matters worse*

Captain Watkin Tench – *a relentlessly pragmatic officer, Tench often stands with Major Ross*

Reverend Johnson – *the only character who is neither an officer nor a prisoner, he supports the play so long as it reinforces traditional morality*

Second Lieutenant Ralph Clark – *the director of the play and one of low-ranking officers, he originally takes part in the performance because he wants the favor of Phillip; but as time goes on, Ralph begins to understand and perhaps love the convicts*

Midshipman Harry Brewer – *the Provost Marshal, he struggles with his feelings for a female prisoners and his guilt over the hanging of Handy Baker*

Captain/Advocate General David Collins Captain Jemmy Campbell, Lieutenant Will Dawes, Lieutenant George Johnston, Second Lieutenant William Faddy – *other British officers*

An Aboriginal Australian – *the lone Australian, he watches the story unfold from a distance*

John Arscott – *a convict and an actor, he nearly loses his place in the play after Ross accuses him and several other convicts of stealing*

Black Caesar – *a convict and the only African actor in the company*

Ketch Freeman – *a convict, an actor, and the designated hangman in the colony*

Robert Sideway – *a convict and actor, he hopes to start a theater company one day*

John Wischammer – *a convict and the only Jewish actor in the company, Wischammer is eloquent and very knowledgeable about theater; he also writes a new prologue for the play*

Mary Brenham – *a convict and one of the most dedicated actors, Mary falls in love with Lieutenant Ralph as they rehearse the play*

Dabby Bryant – *a convict and outspoken actor*

Liz Morden – *a convict and an actor, Liz is condemned to death for stealing and refuses to defend herself*

Duckling Smith – *a convict and an actor, she is in love with Harry Brewer, although she suspects that he hanged her former lover*

## OUR COUNTRY'S GOOD: A Synopsis

Act I begins on the deck of a dark convict ship. The year is 1787 and the passengers are bound for a new penal colony in South Wales, Australia. Second Lieutenant Ralph Clark watches passively as an officer beats one of the prisoners.

On January 20, 1988, an Aborigine watches the arrival of the Convict Fleet. In Sydney Cove, the new governor and several officers calmly discuss the pros and cons of hanging prisoners, suggesting that hangings function as “theater” for the convicts. The governor offhandedly remarks that he would rather see “real plays.”

Alone in his room, Ralph expresses his hope for promotion and longing for his lost love, but midshipman Harry Brewer soon interrupts him. Remembering that the governor would like to produce a play, Ralph asks Harry to recommend him as a director.

After the governor names him director, Ralph chooses *The Recruiting Officer* as his first play. Written in 1706 by Irish playwright George Farquhar, the Restoration-style comedy tracks the exploits of two love-struck British officers. During an impromptu audition, Ralph reads a scene with several female convicts – but he has trouble explaining the humor of the play.

Later on, the officers debate the worth of the play and of theater in general. Major Ross and Captain Tench feel that criminals “have a habit of sin and vice,” but the governor feels that the performance of a play might break them of those very habits. Even Ralph concurs that, “in a small way, this could affect all the convicts and even ourselves.”

Meanwhile, Harry’s lover (the convict Duckling Smith) chastises him for separating her from her friends. He pacifies her with the offer of a role in the play. The other women actors (Mary Brenham, Dabby, and the fierce Liz Morden) struggle with learning their lines and becoming their characters.

Before the first rehearsal, Mary makes copies of the script and John Wishammer helps her define the difficult words. At the rehearsal, Ralph surprises the prisoners by addressing them all as “ladies and gentlemen” and observing theatrical customs. His work proves difficult, as fights and posturing often disrupt the scenes. The rehearsal ends when Ross announces the escape of several convicts and the theft of some food, which he blames on the play.

At the start of Act II, four of the actors appear in chains, including Wishammer and Liz (whom Ross has accused of stealing the food). Mary and several other actors appear and insist on continuing rehearsals, even inside the prison cells. Meanwhile, Ralph tells the governor that he cannot continue with the play with half of his cast is in chains. But the governor insists that he go on, claiming that convicts have intelligence and abilities that “have nothing to do with the circumstances into which they were born.”

As Harry slowly succumbs to illness, and the aborigine again watches the convicts from afar, the next play rehearsal begins. But Ross refuses to unchain Liz. When Ralph insists that his actors need to rehearse with modesty and dignity, Ross responds by humiliating Sideway, Dabby, and finally Mary. Sideway and several others launch boldly into one of their scenes –

drowning out Ross with their lines. Ross then tells an officer to start beating Arscott and, although Ralph encourages her to act over his cries, Liz cannot go on.

Later, as Ketch measures Liz for her noose, she asks him to tell Ralph that she did not steal the food. Soon after, a disastrous rehearsal begins. While Ralph reads the new prologue that Wisehammer has written for the play, Wisehammer warns Mary not to fall in love with an officer. When Wisehammer kisses Mary in a scene, Ralph lashes out at him. An intense fight about the nature of theater begins and the cast cannot make it through one scene.

That night, Harry grows deathly ill and Duckling vows to love him – even though he may be responsible for the death of her former lover, Handy Baker. Meanwhile, Ralph comes upon Mary as she rehearses her lines. He begins to perform some dialogue from the play with her; as they kiss, the love scene from *The Recruiting Officer* becomes real.

The next day, the officers discuss the fate of Liz. Several of them do not want to hang her, but feel that they have no choice because she refuses to defend herself. Ralph tries to explain that her refusal is part of the convict code of honor. Ross laughs him off and then lashes out against England, insisting that the officers are prisoners too – that they were sent to the colony as punishment for losing the war in America. Then, at last, Liz asserts her innocence “for the good of the colony” and “of the play.”

Backstage, on opening night, the convicts stage their curtain call. Dabby suggests that they all attempt escape in the confusion after the play, but Mary insists that they cannot betray Ralph in that way. Sideway suggests that they start their own theater company instead. Before curtain, Wisehammer recites his new prologue, calling the convicts “true patriots all; for be it understood/We left our country for our county’s good.”

Regretfully, Ralph explains that they cannot perform such a prologue for an audience full of officers. For the good of the production, Wisehammer must leave it out. *Our Country’s Good* concludes as the Australian premiere of *The Recruiting Officer* begins.

## OUR COUNTRY'S GOOD: Quotations

Nilaja Sun has sprinkled actual lines from *Our Country's Good* throughout *No Child*. Below are the most prominent ones:

*CAPT. WATKIN TENCH: We are talking about criminals, often hardened criminals. They have a habit of vice and crime. Many criminals seem to have been born that way. It is in their nature.*

*CAPT. ARTHUR PHILLIP (Governor): Rousseau would say that we have made them that way, Watkin: 'Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains.'*

In this scene, Major Robbie Ross, along with Jemmy Campbell and Watkin Tench, attempt to persuade the governor that the performance of a play will accomplish nothing. As Watkin sees it, criminals are violent from birth and officers are disciplined. How could a play ever change that? But Phillip, in quoting philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, argues that men are not born in a certain mold, but that society forces them into one. In the second classroom scene of *No Child*, Ms Sun and Shondrika read these lines aloud, prompting a discussion about whether people are born into a certain life or whether they can create their own.

■ ■ ■

*2ND LT. RALPH CLARK: In my own small way, in just a few hours, I have seen something change.*

In this scene, Ralph tries to explain to his skeptical superior officers that this play can make a real difference in the lives of the convicts. Earlier that day, he has read a scene from the play with Mary Brenham and the vicious Liz Morden. And in that short time, he felt that the two women “seemed to acquire a dignity ... and to lose some of their corruption.” In *No Child*, Ms Sun uses this crucial line to teach Phillip to speak clearly and perform with energy.

■ ■ ■

*CAPT. ARTHUR PHILLIP (Governor): The theatre is an expression of civilization. We belong to a great country, which has spawned great playwrights: Shakespeare, Marlowe, Jonson, and even in our own time, Sheridan. The convicts will be speaking a refined, literate language and expressing sentiments of a delicacy they are not used to. It will remind them that there is more to life than crime, punishment. And we, this colony of a few hundred will be watching together, for a few hours, we will no longer be despised prisoners and hated gaolers. We will laugh, we may be moved, we may even think a little. Can you suggest something else that will provide such an evening, Watkin?*

As the scene goes on, Major Ross and Captain Watkin argue that no play can encourage free thought or responsible behavior. But Phillip insists that, through the words of a great writer, people can transform – becoming refined and enlightened performers. He also asserts that, in watching a performance, audience members escape the rigid confines of their daily lives. Similarly, when Jerome recites this speech for the first time, he and Ms Sun both transform: he becomes a captivating actor and she finds the drive to continue with the play.

■ ■ ■

MAJ. ROBBIE ROSS: *This is a hateful, hary-scary, topsy-turvy outpost, this is not a civilization...*

CAPT. WATKIN TENCH: *It's two hours, possibly of amusement, possibly of boredom ... it's a waste, an unnecessary waste...*

CAPT. ARTHUR PHILLIP (Governor): *The convicts will feel nothing has changed and will go back to their old ways ...*

JOHN WISEHAMMER: *You have to be careful with words that begin with 'in.' It can turn everything upside down. Injustice. Most of that word is taken up with justice, but the 'in' twists it inside out and makes it the ugliest word in the English language ...*

CAPT. ARTHUR PHILLIP: *Citizen must be taught to obey the law of their own will. I want to rule over responsible human beings...*

CAPT. ARTHUR PHILLIP: *Unexpected situations are often matched by unexpected virtues in people. Are they not? ...*

JOHN WISEHAMMER: *A play should make you understand something new...*

CAPT. ARTHUR PHILLIP: *Human beings have an intelligence that has nothing to do with the circumstance into which they were born...*

Towards the end of the show, Nilaja Sun uses these particular lines to represent her students' performance of *Our Country's Good*. These eight lines belong to several different characters and occur during several different conversations: Major Robbie Ross revealing his contempt for Australia at the end of the play; Captain Watkin Tench expressing his skepticism about theater at the beginning; and John Wisehammer considering the fine line between justice and injustice in his first conversation with Mary. Captain Arthur Phillip's lines all come from his debates with Ralph Clark, as he tries to convince him that theater can change the colony and its inhabitants for the better. But overall, these short speeches capture the range of views that *Our Country's Good* represents – as well as the diverse opinions and spirits of the tenth graders that perform them.

■ ■ ■



### For Further Discussion ...

1. What character in *No Child ...* appeals the most to you? Which character undergoes the greatest transformation?
2. What role does Janitor Barron Cofford play in *No Child ...*? How does the presence of a narrator affect this story? Or any story?
3. Whom would you call the main character of *No Child...*? Why?
4. Why are rehearsals for the play so difficult at first? Why do Ms. Sun and her students finally agree to push forward?
5. Why did Ms. Sun choose *Our Country's Good* for her class? What are the similarities (and differences) between her story and the story of Ralph Clark?
6. In both *No Child ...* and *Our Country's Good*, the principle characters believe that art and theater can change their society for the better. Do you agree or disagree? Are the arts a critical part of education? Why?
7. Both *No Child ...* and *Our Country's Good* include a play-within-a play, which requires that actors play actors. Why do the playwrights employ this technique? Can you think of any other writers that do? How does it affect the audience's experience?
8. Do you think that either play expresses a political point of view? Do you agree with that view? Can a play be both fully political and fully artistic?

## Quotations On Education & Art...

*Education is the soul of a society as it passes from one generation to another.*

- GK Chesterton, writer (1874-1936)

*We had better teach our children to be better citizens than ourselves.*

- George Bernard Shaw, playwright (1856-1950)

*No one has yet realized the wealth of sympathy, the kindness and generosity hidden in the soul of a child ... the effort of every effort of every true education should be to unlock that treasure.*

- Emma Goldman, anarchist (1869-1940)

*The human mind is our fundamental resource.*

- President John F. Kennedy (1917-1963)

*Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.*

- William Butler Yeats, poet (1865-1939)

*Science and art belong to the whole world, and before them vanish the barriers of nationality.*

- Goethe, writer (1749-1832)

*Art does not solve problems, but makes us aware of their existence ... it opens our eyes to see and our brain to imagine.*

- Magdalena Abakanowicz, artist (b. 1930)

*All children are artists. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up.*

- Pablo Picasso, artist (1881-1973)

*The theatre, for all its artifices, depicts life in a sense more truly than history.*

- George Santayana, poet (1863-1952)

*I hear, and I forget. I see, and I remember. I do, and I understand.*

- Chinese Proverb

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## EDUCATION & OUTREACH at Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company

*Woolly Mammoth's award-winning Education and Outreach program has been a pioneer in theater outreach in the Washington community. Founded in 1991, the program has served over 1,000 DC youth and adults through workshops, productions, and classes. Located for many years on the transitional 14th Street corridor, Woolly Mammoth has been an engaged member of our neighborhood in the best way that we know how: through the powerful art of theatre.*

### **The Art of Playmaking**

*Playmaking* is a ten-week class on playwriting and related theatre skills that Woolly brings to DC public schools and other non-profit service agencies. This program has been a part of Woolly Mammoth's relationship with its surrounding community for more than a decade. As each student learns how to write a short play with the help of a Woolly Mammoth teacher, important life lessons are learned such as self-esteem, self-discipline, creativity, communication, improved reading skills and teamwork. Their finished works will be read in the classroom by professional actors before an audience of peers and school staff members. Our partners for 2008 are The National Center for Victims of Crime, Metro Teen AIDS, and The SEED School of Washington, DC. If you would like to apply for partnership, please contact Louise Andrews, Director of Education & Outreach at (202) 312-5276 or [louise@woollymammoth.net](mailto:louise@woollymammoth.net).

### **Community Playbuilding**



The participants of *Playmaking* are encouraged to take part in *Community Play Building*, another long-standing Woolly program. Community residents conduct interviews in their own neighborhoods, and out of these interviews we construct a play. This play then receives a production at a theatre in the community or at Woolly Mammoth. The intent of the project is to give voice to the community, to build bridges between local citizens and organizations, and to document parts of the oral history of the community which might otherwise be lost. By bringing the work back into our own space we give Woolly Mammoth's audience members a real-life image of our city's diversity.

Our community projects have included an ambitious mural project involving artists, residents and businesses of the Shaw and Cardoza neighborhoods – all working together with Woolly Mammoth to beautify and celebrate our community. They also have included two historical video projects, as well as two large-scale community plays created by and for the residents of two vital DC neighborhoods. *Invisible City: 14th Street – Where Washington Meets D.C.* (2000) dealt with the gentrification of the 14th Street corridor and its effects on long-term residents. *The Other River* (2006) dealt with the challenge of gun violence in Anacostia.

## **Internship Program**

We receive applications from around the nation for internships ranging from assisting our expert technical staff with the building of sets to assisting our Literary Department in the selection of plays. Currently we have interns working in our Literary Department, Marketing Department and as Assistants to the Artistic Director and Managing Director. Participants in both Playmaking and Community Playbuilding will be encouraged to be a part of our internship program, where they can further explore the world of theater artists.

## **Playground Playwrights Group**



PlayGround Playwrights Group is a diverse group of local playwrights, which provides a supportive environment for its members to refine their craft, develop new plays, and present free public readings. All readings take place in the Melton Rehearsal Hall at Woolly Mammoth and feature a Q&A afterwards for audience feedback. Readings are always free and open to the public. Membership is reviewed on an annual basis and Playwrights Playground is always interested in inviting local playwrights with inventive and engaging voices to join its membership.

## **The Lab**

Through this new program we donate our rehearsal and performance space to local groups who are exploring theatre in a way that connects into our mission. Woolly is supporting a number of groups this year including Young Playwrights' Theater, Extreme Exchange, and an ensemble of local actors exploring physical-based theatre.

## **Workshop Classes**



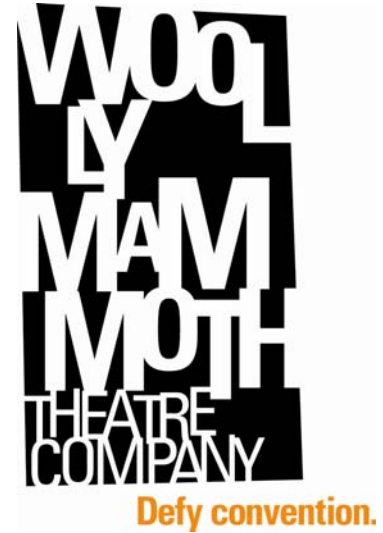
The Workshop will offer several classes each semester, serving as a home for professional actors, where they can explore and deepen their craft.. Our faculty will include leading theatre artists of both local and national renown. Classes will initially be offered in acting, directing, playwriting and voice. Visiting playwrights will teach master classes and, when able, will participate in festivals of plays emerging from our Playmaking program. We will offer one-time classes that focus on special interests of Woolly and our community.

## Contact Information

### Mailing Address:

Woolly Mammoth Theatre Company  
641 D Street NW  
Washington DC 20004

Administrative Office: 202-289-2443  
Box Office: 202-393-3939



### Contacts:

Howard Shalwitz, Artistic Director  
202-312-5266  
*assistant:* Julia Harman Cain  
202-289-2443 x280  
[Julia@woollymammoth.net](mailto:Julia@woollymammoth.net)

Jeff Herrmann, Managing Director  
202-312-5260  
[Jeff@woollymammoth.net](mailto:Jeff@woollymammoth.net)

Louise Andrews, Dir. of Education & Outreach  
202-312-5276  
[Louise@woollymammoth.net](mailto:Louise@woollymammoth.net)

Miriam Weisfeld, Dramaturg  
202-349-1281  
[Miriam@woollymammoth.net](mailto:Miriam@woollymammoth.net)

Elissa Goetschius, Literary Manager  
202-349-1281  
*assistant:* Clementine Thomas  
202-289-2443 x282  
[Clementine@woollymammoth.net](mailto:Clementine@woollymammoth.net)

Brian Smith, General Manager  
202-312-5267  
[Brian@woollymammoth.net](mailto:Brian@woollymammoth.net)

For a complete list of Artistic & Administrative staff, please visit:  
[www.woollymammoth.net/about/woolly\\_team.php](http://www.woollymammoth.net/about/woolly_team.php)

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