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About The Musical Stage Company

Established in 2004, The Musical Stage Company is Canada’s largest and leading not-for-profit theatre company dedicated to the development of musical theatre. Our vision is to make Canada a leader in musical theatre by telling our most important stories with music.

We are inspired by music’s unique ability to viscerally affect people and are committed to cultivating experiences – onstage and off – that transform lives, build empathy and create community through musical theatre. We believe it’s better with music.

We incubate new Canadian musicals from development to production, investing in Canadian musical theatre writers and building national and international partnerships. Our musical productions – including award-winning contemporary musicals, world premieres and concerts – are seen live by 30,000 people over the 80+ nights that we are onstage annually in venues both traditional and surprising. To date, our work has been recognized with 96 Dora Award nominations, 21 Dora Awards (including back-to-back Outstanding Musical Production awards in 2018 and 2019) and 17 Toronto Theatre Critics’ Awards.

Our robust education programs develop the artists and audiences of tomorrow, offering musical theatre training that boosts self-confidence and self-expression for over 200 young people each year without cost to the participants. We curate innovative musical programs in partnership with diverse organizations, maximizing the resonance of our work across disciplines and communities.

About Obsidian Theatre Company

For 20 years, Obsidian has been leading culturally specific work in Canada. Our mission is to produce plays from a worldwide canon focusing primarily, but not exclusively, on works of highly acclaimed Black playwrights; provide artistic support and promote the development of work by Black theatre makers in Canada.

Obsidian Theatre Company was born out of a passionate sense of artistic responsibility – a responsibility to bring the Black voice, in its many artistic dialects, to Canada’s cultural forefront. Obsidian encourages Black artists to expand their vision of what they perceive, create and present to a national audience. Obsidian continues to play a prominent role in Canada’s theatrical mosaic by showcasing the work of both emerging and established Black artists.
About The Winter Garden Theatre

CAROLINE, OR CHANGE is the first show of The Musical Stage Company’s residency at the historic Winter Garden Theatre. Located at Yonge and Queen in the heart of downtown Toronto, the Winter Garden is unequivocally one of Toronto’s greatest theatre treasures.

December 15, 1913: Built by Marcus Loew and designed by architect Thomas Lamb, Loew’s Yonge Street Theatre opens as the flagship for Loew’s chain of Canadian vaudeville theatres.

February 16, 1914: The Loew’s roof garden theatre, the Winter Garden, opens.

May 1928: Due to the decline of vaudeville’s popularity and the advent of talking pictures, the Winter Garden is closed to the public; the lower auditorium (the Yonge Street Theatre) remains open and is wired for sound.

October 3, 1930: Loew’s drops vaudeville in favour of an all-movie program in the Yonge Street Theatre.

March 17, 1978: The Yonge Street Theatre is re-named the Elgin.

December 1, 1981: The Ontario Heritage Trust purchases the Elgin and Winter Garden Theatres to restore them for use as a performing arts complex. What is believed to be the world’s largest collection of vaudeville scenery is purchased along with the building — pieces from the collection are displayed in the cascading lobbies.

June 1982: The Winter Garden Theatre is declared a National Historic Site; designation of the Elgin follows shortly thereafter.


December 15, 1989: The grand reopening of the historic Elgin and Winter Garden Theatre takes place — exactly 76 years after the original opening of the Loew’s Yonge Street Theatre.

1995: A new marquee — reminiscent of the 1913 original — is installed with 1,240 light bulbs.

2013–14: The Elgin and Winter Garden Theatre Centre celebrates its 100th anniversary.

2020: The Musical Stage Company begins residency at the Winter Garden Theatre with CAROLINE, OR CHANGE!
The History of Caroline, or Change

CAROLINE, OR CHANGE is an original musical written by playwright Tony Kushner and composer Jeanine Tesori. The musical was first workshopped in May 1999 at New York’s off-Broadway Public Theatre. After 22 previews, the Broadway production opened on May 2, 2004 at the Eugene O’Neill Theatre, where it ran for 136 performances. Subsequently, the musical has been seen in theatres across North America, and has been produced twice in London’s West End. CAROLINE, OR CHANGE has been nominated for numerous awards, including the Tony, Drama Desk, Lucille Lortel, and won the Olivier Award for Best Musical.

In 2012, The Musical Stage Company and Obsidian Theatre produced the Canadian premiere of Caroline, or Change. The production was a smash hit, winning 4 Dora Awards (including Outstanding Production of a Musical) and 3 Toronto Theatre Critics’ Awards.

About the Creators

Tony Kushner (Book & Lyrics)
Tony Kushner’s plays include A BRIGHT ROOM CALLED DAY; ANGELS IN AMERICA, PARTS ONE AND TWO; SLAVS!; HOMEBODY/KABUL; and CAROLINE, OR CHANGE, a musical with composer Jeanine Tesori. He has written adaptations of Corneille’s THE ILLUSION, S.Y. Ansky’s THE DYBBUK, and Brecht’s THE GOOD PERSON OF SEZUAN and MOTHER COURAGE AND HER CHILDREN; as well as the English-language libretto for the opera BRUNDIBAR by Hans Krasa. He wrote the screenplay for the Mike Nichols’ film of ANGELS IN AMERICA and for Steven Spielberg’s film MUNICH. Recent books include BRUNDIBAR, with illustrations by Maurice Sendak; THE ART OF MAURICE SENDAK, 1980 TO THE PRESENT; and WRESTLING WITH ZION: PROGRESSIVE JEWISH-AMERICAN RESPONSES TO THE PALESTINIAN/ISRAELI CONFLICT, co-edited with Alisa Solomon.

Jeanine Tesori (Music)
Jeanine Tesori won the Tony Award for Best Original Score with Lisa Kron for the musical FUN HOME. She has also written Tony-nominated scores for TWELFTH NIGHT at Lincoln Center; THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE (lyrics, Dick Scanlan); CAROLINE, OR CHANGE (lyrics, Tony Kushner); and SHREK THE MUSICAL (lyrics, David Lindsay-Abaire). The production of CAROLINE, OR CHANGE at the National Theatre in London received the Olivier Award for Best New Musical. Her 1997 Off-Broadway musical VIOLET (lyrics, Brian Crawley) opened on Broadway in 2014 and garnered four Tony nominations, including Best Musical Revival. Opera: A BLIZZARD ON MARBLEHEAD NECK (libretto, Tony Kushner; Glimmerglass) and THE LION, THE UNICORN, AND ME (libretto, J. D. McClatchy, Kennedy Center). Music for plays: MOTHER COURAGE (dir. George C. Wolfe, with Meryl Streep and Kevin Kline), John Guare’s A FREE MAN OF COLOR (Lincoln Center Theater, dir. George C. Wolfe), and ROMEO AND JULIET (Delacorte Gala). Film scores: NIGHTS IN RODANTHE, EVERY DAY, and YOU’RE NOT YOU. Ms. Tesori is a member of the Dramatists Guild and was cited by the ASCAP as the first female composer to have two new musicals running concurrently on Broadway. She was the founding artistic director of Encores! Off-Center at New York City Center, and a lecturer in music at Yale University. Most of all, she is the proud parent of Siena Rafter.
The Characters

(in order of appearance)

**Caroline Thibodeaux**, works for the Gellmans, 39 years old: Jully Black  
**The Washing Machine**: Keisha T. Fraser  
**The Radio**: Alana Hibbert, Camille Eanga-Selenge, Samantha Walkes  
**Noah Gellman**, son of Stuart Gellman, 8 years old: Evan LeFeuvre  
**The Dryer**: Stewart Adam McKensy  
**Grandma Gellman**, Noah’s grandmother, Stuart’s mother: Linda Kash  
**Grandpa Gellman**, Noah’s grandfather, Stuart’s father: Oliver Dennis  
**Rose Stopnick Gellman**, recently married to Stuart, mid-to-late 30s: Deborah Hay  
**Stuart Gellman**, clarinetist, recently widowed and remarried, mid-to-late 30s: Damien Atkins  
**Dotty Moffett**, Caroline’s friend, early thirties: Alana Hibbert  
**The Moon**: Measha Brueggergosman  
**The Bus**: Stewart Adam McKensy  
**Emmie Thibodeaux**, Caroline’s only daughter, 16 to 17 years old: Vanessa Sears  
**Jackie Thibodeaux**, Caroline’s son, 10 years old: Moses Aidoo  
**Joe Thibodeaux**, Caroline’s son, eight years old: Micah Mensah-Jatoe  
**Mr. Stopnick**, Rose Stopnick Gellman’s father, mid-70s: Sam Rosenthal

Plot Synopsis

Caroline Thibodeaux is a 39-year-old African American maid for the Gellmans, a middle-class Jewish family living in Lake Charles, Louisiana. It is 1963, and Caroline, a divorced mother of four, has been working as a maid for 22 years. She spends her days working in humid basement of the Gellman home, where she passes her time with the radio, washer, and dryer. Caroline is resistant to the social change that the 1960s has ushered in, preferring to keep her head down.

The Gellmans’ 8-year-old son Noah, whose mother has recently died of cancer, shares a special bond with Caroline, preferring her company to that of his new stepmother, Rose. Rose, struggling to bond with Noah and unable to give Caroline the raise she asks for, enlists Caroline’s help in a plan to teach Noah a lesson about leaving change in his pants pocket. Rose tells Noah that when Caroline does the laundry, she should keep the money she finds in Noah’s pockets. Although Caroline does not want to take money from a child, she finds herself keeping Noah’s change out of necessity.

When Noah leaves a $20 bill in his pocket, the arrangement leads to an upsetting fight between Caroline and Noah, causing a rift between her family and the Gellmans. However, when sweeping change on the national level (the assassination of President JFK, the rise of the Civil Rights Movement, and the activism of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.) begins to affect Caroline’s life she is forced to contend with the realities and costs of personal and national transformation. Caroline returns to work for the Gellmans, turning away from her personal desires for more in her life. Meanwhile, her daughter Emmie takes a different approach, working as an activist to give the Carolines of the world a brighter future.
On a hot day in the Gellmans’ basement, Caroline launders clothes. Noah, the Gellmans’ son, joins her downstairs after school, where Caroline lets him light her cigarette. While smoking, she thinks about how she imagined her life would be different by now, not working for $30 a week and struggling to get by.

Rose tells Caroline that she can’t give her a raise, but offers her food to take home to her children. Caroline refuses. Upstairs, the Gellmans are struggling to adjust to a new family dynamic—Stuart is still mourning his wife’s death, while Noah hates his new stepmother. On the phone to her father, Rose confesses that she is unhappy as well.

Waiting for the bus after work, Caroline and her friend Dotty argue about the differences between them—but quickly turn to discussing the destruction of a Confederate statue at the courthouse. The bus is late, and arrives with devastating news: President John F. Kennedy has been shot and killed.

Rose tells Noah that whatever money he leaves in his pants pockets will be Caroline’s to keep. Meanwhile, the Gellmans and Dotty reminisce about JFK and Noah asks Caroline what kind of president she would be.

Rose tells Caroline that she is allowed to keep Noah’s change that she finds in his pants; Noah, knowing Caroline does not have much, purposely leaves change there for her to find.
Back in the basement, Caroline is ironing clothes when she irons over a quarter left in Stuart Gellman’s pocket. Rose tells her to keep any money Stuart leaves behind as well, and Caroline, fed up, insists that she will no longer keep any change from the Gellmans.

A week later, Caroline, Dotty, and Emmie help the Gellmans with their Chanukah party and discuss the beheading of the Confederate statue. While bringing out the food, Emmie overhears Rose’s father, Mr. Stopnick, criticizing Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and insists that white people have not earned the right to be critical.

Mr. Stopnick gives Noah a $20 bill to teach him the value of money. On the way home from the party, Emmie, Rose, and Stuart each dream of a different life. Noah leaves his twenty dollar bill in his pants pocket, and Caroline keeps it. When Noah insists she give it back, Caroline and Noah have a racially-charged fight.

After Caroline and Noah’s fight, Caroline returns the money and does not show up to work for the Gellmans for days. That Sunday, on her way to church, Caroline asks God to free her from greed and from wanting a different life.

Caroline returns to work for the Gellmans and tells Noah that they can be friends again. Things are different, as Noah finally begins to build a relationship with Rose. Though Caroline has chosen the path of least resistance, we see that Emmie’s path will be different: she helped topple the Confederate statue and is working to make change in her lifetime.
**Timeline: The Events of 1963**

**JANUARY 10, 1963**
George Wallace, Governor of Alabama, utters the words “segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever” in his inauguration speech, making his intent clear to fight the Supreme Court’s ruling on desegregating schools. It was widely regarded as a battle cry against the Civil Rights Movement.

**APRIL 12, 1963**
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and 59 others are arrested after peacefully protesting against the Birmingham, Alabama segregation laws. The arrests spark violence between the police and the protestors.

**MAY 11, 1963**
The Ku Klux Klan (KKK), in cooperation with Birmingham local police, carried out bombings against prominent civil rights leaders. In response, local African-Americans rioted against police in downtown Birmingham, breaking with Martin Luther King Jr.’s strategy of non-violence.

**JUNE 11, 1963**
President John F. Kennedy delivers his address to the nation on civil rights on the date that the University of Alabama was federally ordered to be integrated, expressing that civil rights are a moral issue. In this speech, he proposed legislation that would later become the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

**AUGUST 28, 1963**
Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. delivers his “I Have a Dream” speech to over 250,000 civil rights supporters gathered at the Lincoln Memorial during the March on Washington.

**SEPTEMBER 15, 1963**
Four young African-American girls are killed when a bomb planted by the KKK explodes during their Sunday church service at the 16th St. Baptist Church in Birmingham. Two more young African-American boys were killed by police on the same day, in the unrest following the bombing.

**NOVEMBER 22, 1963**
President John F. Kennedy is assassinated by Lee Harvey Oswald in Dallas, Texas.
Toppling Confederate Statues

One of the most important subplots of CAROLINE, OR CHANGE is the toppling and decapitation of a Confederate soldier statue that is displayed outside the Lake Charles courthouse. Later on, the body of the statue is found in a nearby bayou, but the police cannot find its missing head. In the epilogue of the musical, Emmie reveals that she was there with a group of likeminded folks to take the statue down. She says that the statue represents evil, and that the time for evil to be put on a pedestal is long past.

In an interview with The New York Times about writing the destruction of Confederate statues into the piece, Tony Kushner said “It was meant to be shocking — it would have been very daring in 1963,” He added: “I really hoped [something like what I wrote] would happen someday.”

The fictional destruction of a Confederate statue takes on further meaning when considered in context of recent real destructions of Confederate monuments: For the past several years, Southern US jurisdictions have been grappling with what to do with Confederate symbols displayed in public spaces, including Confederate flags, especially as individuals like Dylann Roof (a self-described white supremacist who killed 9 people at a predominantly African-American church in Charleston, South Carolina in 2015) invoke Confederate symbols.

Some claim that keeping Confederate symbols like flags and statues intact in Southern communities is a celebration of Southern history. Others believe that all Confederate symbols are representative of white supremacy, as the Confederacy fought in the American Civil War to maintain slavery. While local and state governments in the South deliberate the formal removal of these symbols, some activists have taken matters into their own hands. In 2015, activist Bree Newsome removed the Confederate flag from the South Carolina state house, prompting South Carolina representatives to later vote to permanently remove the flag.

In 2017, in response to the white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, anti-fascist protestors toppled a monument to Confederate soldiers in Durham, North Carolina (pictured above), similar to the events described in CAROLINE, OR CHANGE.
Cost of Living in the 1960s

In CAROLINE, OR CHANGE, Caroline says that she is only making $30 a week, meaning that if she were to work all 52 weeks in the year, she would only make $1,560. This is less than half of the average salary in the US at that time, which was just shy of $4,400 yearly (approx. $84 weekly).

Poverty thresholds are the marker by which we decide whether or not a family is living above or below the poverty line. They were developed in 1963, the same year that CAROLINE, OR CHANGE is set. Economist Mollie Orshansky determined that in order to afford the minimum amount of food that families living in poverty could survive on and still be healthy (as determined by the US Department of Agriculture), it would cost a family of four $1,033. Other census data from the early 1960s showed that the average family spent a third of their income on food. Orshansky took the $1,033 figure and multiplied it by three to create the poverty threshold: Anyone making less than $3,099 yearly would be living in poverty. With Caroline’s income of $1,560 yearly, her family is living well below the poverty line, and Caroline would have to spend two thirds of her annual income on food to give her family the minimum acceptable diet.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>In 1963 Dollars</th>
<th>In Today’s Dollars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caroline’s annual income</td>
<td>$1,560</td>
<td>$13,112.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caroline’s weekly income</td>
<td>$30</td>
<td>$252.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poverty line for a family of 4</td>
<td>$3,099</td>
<td>$25,750</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 1963...

The average annual income: $4,396.64
Average cost of a new house: $12,650.00
Average cost of a new car: $3,233.00
Cost of gas per gallon: 29 cents
Cost of a loaf of bread: 22 cents
Cost of a bedroom air conditioner: $149.95
Jewish Life in the American South in the 1960s

CAROLINE, OR CHANGE paints a stark difference between the attitudes and behaviours of Jews living in the American South and Jews living in northern states. When Rose Stopnick Gellman marries into the Gellman family, she leaves behind her more liberal Jewish New York City life to come to Lake Charles, Louisiana, a far less progressive environment.

It was difficult to be Jewish in the American South in the 1960s, and it was certainly a very different life than the ones Jews were leading in northern states. Jews constituted barely 1% of the total population of the American South, and there was an extreme pressure placed on them by white Protestants to assimilate and behave as ‘honorary white Protestants.’

As the Civil Rights Movement blossomed and schools were desegregated, Southern Jews felt increasing pressure from white Protestants to support the status quo in the South. Many did not want to not rock the boat in the communities in which they lived, which meant that they could not vocally support the Civil Rights Movement. This meant that many Southern Jews were ideologically breaking ranks with the larger community of Jewish Americans nationwide, as throughout the 1950s and 1960s, many Jewish organizations in Northern states denounced the principles of segregation and announced their support for/involvement with the Civil Rights Movement. In fact, during this time, most southern Jews and Jewish organizations publicly denounced their northern counterparts, or asked them to tone down their activism at the forefront of the Civil Rights Movement, lest their behaviour in the north reflect badly on Jews in the south.

Despite the pressures mentioned above, nearly half of the white civil rights attorneys in the South were Jewish, as were over half of the white Freedom Riders and almost two-thirds of the white volunteers involved in Mississippi’s Freedom Summer of 1964.
**Curriculum Links & Discussion Questions**

**Suggested Curriculum Links:**

Grade 6: Heritage and Identity: Communities in Canada, Past and Present

**A1.3**
Assess the impact that differences in legal status and in the distribution of rights and privileges had on various settler/newcomer groups and individuals.
- How did the expulsion of the Acadians from Canada affect Louisiana?
- What rights and privileges did a person of colour have in Canada in 1963? How did this differ from the rights and privileges a person of colour would have in the USA at the same time? How would these rights and privileges change in the United States following the passing of the Civil Rights Act?

**A2.5**
Evaluate evidence and draw conclusions about perspectives on the historical and/or contemporary experience of a few distinct communities.
- Were there conflicts between any ethnic or religious groups?
- In what ways were the experiences of poor people different from those of wealthier residents? Are similar differences still evident today?

**A3.8**
Identify key differences, including social, cultural, and/or economic differences, between a few historical and/or contemporary communities; including social and economic differences between upper-class and working-class people in industrializing cities; differences in the religious background of residents in different communities or at different times.
- What are the differences between the life of a child living in poverty in 1963 Louisiana and in present-day Canada?
- In what ways have different communities benefited from the economic development seen after World War II? Did all communities benefit equally? Why or why not?

**CAROLINE, OR CHANGE Discussion Questions:**

1. In CAROLINE, OR CHANGE, composer Jeanine Tesori, uses many different musical styles. Why do you think she did this? What is the significance of these different styles?

2. In CAROLINE, OR CHANGE, the playwright, Tony Kushner, brings inanimate objects to life, giving them the ability to speak, sing, and move throughout the play. Why do you think he did this? What does each object mean in the play? What do they mean to Caroline?

3. Change is a central theme in the play. The country is going through change, from a Presidential assassination to racial integration. How does this change affect the characters in the show? Why does Caroline resist change and Emmie embrace it?

4. Money is a central theme in play. How does each character value money? Discuss the ways money affects the relationships between characters in the show.

5. The title of the play has been the subject of discussion since its creation due to its ambiguous nature. Is it called Change? Is it Caroline? Is it both?
Glossary of Terms

CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT TERMINOLOGY

Unconstitutional - To go against basic principles or laws established in the constitution of a state or country.
Segregation – The act of enforced separation of different racial groups.
Discrimination - The act, ongoing practice or instance in which a given person/group is treated as a lesser because of their racial, economic or social background.
Demonstration – An active display of defiance or disagreement with established laws or practices.

YIDDISH TERMINOLOGY

Chanukah (Hannukah) - a Jewish festival lasting eight days characterized chiefly by the lighting of the menorah on each night of the festival.
Dreidel - four-sided top used to play a Jewish children’s game during Hannukah.
Menorah - a candelabrum having nine branches, for use during Hannukah.
Torah - the entire body of Jewish religious literature
Talmud - collection of Jewish law and tradition
Maccabees - Jewish family of patriots who freed Judaea from oppression
Antiochus - ruler of Seleucid Empire (175-164 BC)
Kislev 25 - start date of Hannukah
Bubelah - darling, sweetheart
Vontzeleh - term of endearment to a child
Pishkeleh - young squirt in Yiddish
Latkes - potato pancake
Chazzerim - Yiddish for pigs
Tsimmes - Jewish dish of carrots with spices
Shonde - shame/disgrace/scandal
Gelt - Yiddish for money
References and Resources

About The Winter Garden Theatre
Timeline, the Elgin & Winter Garden Theatre Centre, Ontario Heritage Trust
https://www.heritagetrust.on.ca/en/ewg/ewg-home/history/timeline

Timeline: The Events of 1963
The Guthrie Theatre, Caroline or Change study guide

Toppling Confederate Statues
The New York Times, “Topple a Confederate Statue? This Broadway musical already did.”
confederate-statue.html

Vox, “The battle over Confederate statues, explained” by German Lopez

Cost of Living in the 1960s

Marketplace, “How we measure the poverty line(s)” by Noel King
https://www.marketplace.org/2014/05/16/how-we-measure-poverty-lines/

Jewish Life in the American South in the 1960s
My Jewish Learning, “Jews in the Civil Rights Movement” by Howard Sachar

My Jewish Learning, “Blacks and Jews in America, 1960s-1980s” by Edward S. Shapiro