

The America Play

by Suzan-Lori Parks
Directed by Heather May

SHOW DATES

April 1-4 at 7:30 PM CDT

Matinee: April 5 at 2:30 PM CDT

CAST

(In Order of Appearance)

Carnival Barker - *Jim Taylor*

Alternative Lincolns - *Mike Leigh and Heather Rule*

The Foundling Father - *A. K. Murtadba**

Man/Mr. Trenchard - *Eli Jolley*

Woman/Miss Keene/Augusta - *Susan Gabrielle Ware*

Lucy - *Lauren Hunt*

Brazil - *Martin Morrow*

UNDERSTUDIES

The Foundling Father - *Martin Morrow*

Man - *Jim Taylor*

Woman - *Heather Rule*

Lucy - *Susan Gabrielle Ware*

Brazil - *Mike Leigh*

** The Actor appears through the courtesy of Actors' Equity Association, the Union of Professional Actors and Stage Managers in the United States.*

PLACE

A great hole. In the middle of nowhere.

The hole is an exact replica of The Great Hole of History.

SCENES

Act I: Lincoln Act

15-minute Intermission

Act II: The Hall of Wonders

Scene A: Big Bang

Scene B: Echo

Scene C: Archeology

Scene D: Echo

Scene E: Spadework

Scene F: Echo

Scene G: The Great Beyond

ARTISTIC STAFF

Director: Heather May

Assistant to the Director: Kara Riley

Second Assistant to the Director: Dawn Reese

Scenic Designer: Pip Gordon

Lighting Designer: Paul Anton

Costume Designer: Tracy Oleinick

Sound Designer: Kelly Walker

Technical Director: Adriane Bennett

Dramaturg: Chase Bringardner

Assistant Dramaturg: Kara Riley

Production Manager: Robin Jaffe

Assistant Light Designer: Marc Dolan

Assistant Technical Director: Vic Bayens**

PRODUCTION STAFF

Stage Manager: Fred T Paul

Assistant Stage Managers: Kristine Fitzgerald,
Seth Slick, & Laura Walter

Master Electrician: Marc Dolan

Light Board Operator: Marc Dolan

Followspot Operators: Katie Duffin &
Jeff Loddo

Sound Board Operator: Marge Malone

Properties Masters: Becky Reed &
Bree Windham

Properties Crew Chief: Byron Williams

Set Crew Chief: Byron Williams

Set Crew: Houston Mahoney & Deonna West

Wardrobe Master: Alyce Noland

Costume Run Crew: Mallory Bernard,
Darci-Leigh Dickey, & Carley Hubbard

Make-up Crew: Allysson Schlegel
& Kristen Woods

Carney Crew Chief: Emily Stephens

Carney Crew: Ryan Balch & Kelley Holcomb

THEATRE STUDENT STAFF

Production Stage Manager: Becky Reed

Lights & Sound Supervisor: Stew Ives

Production Faculty Assistant: Katie Shade**

Scenic Studio Assistants: Drew Skyler Holden**,
Mike Leigh, Chris Mills, & Bree Windham

Costume Studio Assistants: Katie George
& Alyce Noland

SCENIC STUDIO

Scenic Studio: Steven Davis, Ted Dempsey,
Marc Dolan, Alicia Doll, Katie Duffin, Shannon
Dunlap, Chris Eckhardt, Jacob Harris,
Parker Jarvis, Eli Jolley, Payne Hopton-Jones,
Emily Kramer, Jeff Loddo**, Houston Mahoney,
Jason Martin, Megan Mayfield, Emily Rourke,
Heather Rule, Allysson Schlegel, Luke Sheehan,
Emily Stephens, Ben Young

COSTUME STUDIO

Costume Shop Manager: Kaitlin Fara Smith
Costume Studio: Danielle Adams, Elizabeth
Ard**, Cornelius Benson, Mallory Bernard, Brenna
Biasetti, Darci-Leigh Dickey, Kristine Fitzgerald,
Katie George, Kristin Hopkins, Carley Hubbard,
Lauren Hunt, Bridget Knapick, Mary Landwehr,
Kara Riley, Becky Sheehan, Seth Slick, Laura
Smith, Rachel Stewart, Jim Taylor, Kylee Wofford,
Kristen Woods

ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Department Chair: Dan LaRocque

Marketing Director: Linda Wallner Bell

Office Administrator: Zandra Davis

Office Student Staff:

Monica Bland & Fred T Paul

Ticket Office Manager: Marjorie Teeter

House Manager: Jenise Velez

Ticket Office Crew:

Antonio Fortson & Tiffany Rozier

**Denotes member of Alpha Psi Omega, National Honorary Theatre Society

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

"In the beginning, all the world was America."
- John Locke

For a play concerned with the ways we record, tell, and uncover history on both the large and small scale, personal and national, real and re-created, Parks' introductory epigraph is most fitting. Locke's quote is known only by those who read the play, not by those who see it, as it only appears above the introductory stage directions, unspoken and unseen. Yet its presence is felt throughout the play - in voids waiting to be filled, claims waiting to be staked, opportunities waiting to be grabbed, and identities waiting to be defined and redefined.

To try to summarize Parks' play is an act of folly. She told Shelby Jiggetts in an interview for *Calloo* that "I provide the map... of a piece of land. And what I try to do is say there are 10 roads, 20, 50 roads - take one." I'm not sure it's possible to take just one road through Parks' work, since each road seems to come to endless diversions that often loop back on themselves, joining up at odd junctures before heading off in other directions, but that's the joy of the ride - reveling in the unknown and sharing the journey, stopping off to frolic at random destinations and creating our own narrative of the experience.

Both truth as it is experienced in the precise moment of existence and the live theatrical performance are fleeting in their embodied presences. They are facts only in the moment, and then they become shadows of themselves, re-livable only through the process of narrative, a process that always already selects elements for recognition and memory and omits others entirely. Perhaps this is why Parks intertwines the two in *The America Play*, and why the staging of mis-remembered fragments of the 19th Century comedy *Our American Cousin* feels so natural in a play about digging, about searching for the past, about longing for our ancestors, and about telling our stories as theatrically as possible, personalizing them for each audience and each era. As Parks states, "I think because theater... can make history... History is not 'was,' history is 'is.' It's present, so if you believe that history is in the present, you can also believe that the present is in the past." At the same time, because the theatre is experienced in the present moment, everything staged becomes a part of our culture's historical narrative, allowing for the voices and embodiments of segments of society rarely recorded in official historical documentation: minorities, women, the poor, and everyday people who, like The Foundling Father, "all the while [try] somehow to equal the Great Man in stature, word and deed... somehow to follow in the Great Mans [sic] footsteps." In the Great Hole of History, they do. And sometimes, they even lead.