By REBECCA GILMAN
Directed by ROBERT FALLS

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Some things you should know...

BY WILLA J. TAYLOR

Even as you read this, there are more than 400,000 children in foster care or group homes in the United States. There are about 15,000 children in foster care of Illinois’ Department of Children and Family Services.

More than 250,000 children enter the system every year and only half of them will be reunited with their parents.

Children of all races and ethnicities are in the foster care system but more than 50% of them are African American or Hispanic.

The average length of time in out-of-home care system (foster care, group homes and institutions) is 23 months.

There are more than 100,000 children in foster care waiting to be adopted; more than 60,000 children will have their biological parental rights permanently terminated. But statistics show that almost a quarter of them will age out of the system without ever having a permanent home.

Although the common perception that most children in foster care are young children, the average age of a child in foster care is nine years old. Many age out at 18.

Research shows that teens who age out of the system are more likely to experience homelessness, poor health, unemployment, incarceration, and other poor outcomes as adults.

Being taken away and moved from placement to placement can make children in foster care feel like they can never count on anyone again and that instability can contribute to emotional problems.

When child welfare officials determine that children have suffered abuse or neglect and cannot safely remain with their families, they are obligated to remove them and provide safe and appropriate temporary homes in which those children can live and grow. They must find permanent homes for children, through either safe reunification with their birth families or adoption if reunification is not possible, and they must provide adequate services to ensure children’s health and well-being and to help them recover from the trauma they have experienced in their abusive or neglectful homes.

Most child welfare systems are underfunded, understaffed, and beset by serious system-wide problems.

Statistics from Children’s Rights, a national advocacy group.

(L to R): Mary Beth Fisher (Caroline) in rehearsal for Luna Gale at Goodman Theatre. Photo by Liz Lauren.
PLAYWRIGHT REBECCA GILMAN EXPLODED ONTO THE NATIONAL SCENE IN 1999 WITH SPINNING INTO BUTTER, a controversial examination of racism and political correctness set in a small liberal arts college. The play premiered at the Goodman and went on to be produced around the world. It established Gilman as a writer of courage, able to tackle thorny social issues with complex humanity. Her previous play, The Glory of Living, described by Chicago Tribune critic Chris Jones as a “dark, unflinching and explicit exploration of child abuse, sexual deviance and serial murder,” landed her the Goodman commission that became Spinning Into Butter. Inspired by a crime that took place in Gilman’s home state of Alabama, the The Glory of Living’s protagonist is a 15-year-old girl whose isolation, poverty and systematic abuse by her husband, an ex-con twice her age, has taught her not to value her own life. The result, Gilman says, is “she could not be expected to value anyone else’s.” Gilman’s willingness to tackle challenging, often controversial material and her interest in placing marginalized people at the center of the drama are both at play in Luna Gale. This powerful play examines, through the lens of a burnt-out veteran social worker, an attempt to find the best solution for a vulnerable child. In a recent conversation with the Goodman’s Director of New Play Development Tanya Palmer, Gilman talks about her inspiration for the piece, what she discovered through the process of writing it and her ongoing relationship with Goodman Theatre.

Tanya Palmer: What was your initial inspiration for the play?

Rebecca Gilman: I saw this Frontline episode about social workers several years ago that was really compelling. The first part was about a social worker in Maine who adopted this little girl and was later convicted of killing her. That was horrible. The second part followed some other social workers she had worked with as they took care of three or four cases. The thing that struck me about these social workers was that they were really off-putting; they seemed like huge know-it-alls and they had tons of power over their clients. One of the clients was a woman whose daughter claimed she had been sexually molested by the woman’s boyfriend. The boyfriend had moved out of the house—and the mother was required to go to all this therapy, and she kept saying, “I don’t think it happened.” I felt like the social workers were really bullying her, but at the end of the show it turned out they were right. The boyfriend had been abusing the daughter. They were right about everything they had assumed about her family. So I thought, “Wow, they just can see it, and they know.” After the show there was a really great panel discussion and the conversation ended with these two people arguing over how human services works in this country. One man was arguing that we have to streamline cases, that we let them drag on for too long, and another woman countered by saying, “This is the only policy this country has for poor people. Poor people always end up here because we don’t do anything else for them.” I was really struck by that, and I knew I wanted to write about a social worker but I couldn’t find a plot. And then I sprained my ankle hiking in Oregon. I was sitting in an emergency room in Eugene, Oregon, and there were three meth addicts there, in this tiny little waiting room. One
“There are so many people in this country who are overlooked by the media and I think part of their feeling of despair is that they know they’re overlooked on some level.”

–Rebecca Gilman

woman had a whole purse full of candy and she was scarfing down cheesecake. She had these two teenage kids with her, the guy was passed out and the young woman was totally hyped up, talking on the phone with all these different people, clearly telling them where to go to buy drugs. And then the woman’s phone rang, and it was somebody calling about her kid. She started asking if there was formula in the refrigerator, talking about what they should feed her, what time they should put her to bed. Her whole demeanor completely changed when she started talking about her child. I thought, “Maybe she’s a good mother.” That’s when the story started to come together for me.

TP: The play centers on Caroline, a social worker in her 50s. Like a lot of your female protagonists in earlier plays like Spinning Into Butter and Boy Gets Girl, Caroline is intelligent, mysterious—she doesn’t wear her emotions on her sleeve—and she’s also morally ambiguous. Did you set out to write such a complicated, ambivalent character?

RG: Nobody’s consistent. I always look at myself and the crap I do and think, “Oh, I was good in that situation” or, “I was a real jerk in that other situation.” And in writing Caroline, I thought about the question of how much you should share about your own experience; is that helpful or is it a burden? She wants to help people but she can only do so much, and at some point her identity gets lost in her job. I realized halfway through I hadn’t written a confidant character for Caroline, someone she can really talk to. I realized that person just didn’t exist in her world, so when she does share it’s often inappropriate.

TP: The play is set in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. What prompted you to choose that specific location?

RG: I lived in Iowa for a long time. When I was there, my sister was there too, getting her degree in family counseling. While she was in school she shadowed a social worker—they drove around and did in-home visits—so when I was thinking about a place for this story I imagined it happening there. But I also wanted to write about a place that doesn’t get written about very often. There are so many people in this country who are overlooked by the media and I think part of their feeling of despair is that they know they’re overlooked on some level. I also think part of what’s happening in the play is that they’re suffering from smaller government. People get caught up in talking about the problems of “big government” but then no one ever sees the repercussions of that discussion on a human level—which is that people get lost. Especially when it comes to kids; they just completely get screwed because there are no social services left for anybody. The other reason I chose to set the play in Iowa is that unfortunately they have a huge problem with meth use. When I was doing my research I discovered that there are social workers in Iowa who are full-time “meth” social workers—all they work on are meth-related cases.

TP: The play critiques a number of social institutions and their failure to take care of people—not just social services, but also churches, schools and families. From your perspective, what needs to change in order for these institutions to actually be of service to people?

RG: For one thing they need proper funding. Then I think everyone benefits—not just the people being served by social services but everyone across the economic strata. It’s stressful for everyone in the country for there to be this much economic disparity. It’s as stressful for the top one percent as it is for the poorest people of this country. Everyone would be healthier and there’s public health data to prove that. I also think the move towards sending public dollars to religious institutions to take over some social services was a mistake because now we’re seeing that when those religious institutions deliver social services, they do so with conditions. And those conditions make people powerless if they don’t agree with them, adding to an already existing sense of powerlessness. I don’t think people can
understand how impossible it is, especially without a decent education, for people to get to a place where they can have power over their lives. The play was originally called The Disregarded, which comes from a Seamus Heaney poem called “Mint.” In it he describes this wild mint growing in his backyard. The mint is overlooked like a weed. The last stanza of the poem is:

Let the smells of mint go heady and defenceless
Like inmates liberated in that yard.
Like the disregarded ones we
turned against
Because we’d failed them by our disregard.

Those last two lines jumped out at me. I think that in this country, when we fail people because we haven’t taken care of them, we turn our anger on them. And it’s because on some level implicitly we know that things are just not fair and nobody is given a fair chance, and then the finger gets pointed in the wrong direction.

**TP:** You’ve collaborated with the Goodman and Artistic Director Robert Falls on a number of plays, but this is your first production since you were named an Artistic Associate at the theater. Has being a part of the Artistic Collective changed your relationship to the Goodman at all?

**RG:** I guess there’s more of a stake in it. Since I became an artistic associate, Bob solicits my opinion on other things, like season planning, not in a huge way, but occasionally he’ll ask me to read a play and share my opinions. It has been really interesting for me to see what the character of the Goodman is from a larger perspective and how the season comes together. I don’t think it affects what I would or wouldn’t write for the Goodman; it just makes me feel more of a part of the whole, in a nice way. In terms of my collaboration with Bob, we’re at a point now where we don’t walk on eggshells around each other about anything, which is great. Our feelings don’t get hurt; we can just say what we think. And I’ve never felt any pressure from Bob or anybody at the Goodman to make decisions I didn’t want to make.

**TP:** A lot of terrible things happen to the people in *Luna Gale,* but there’s also a strong sense of hope at the end of the play. Would you agree?

**RG:** Yes, I do think there’s hope at the end of the play. The question for me was, “Does Caroline have faith anymore? And if she has faith, where does it come from and where does she put it?” Her faith, in the end, is in people. Even though she knows it may go very badly, she decides to take a leap of faith.

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“From the student programs to our audiences, from the people building costumes, to marketing, to running the box office, everything is based on the initial selection of plays for the season.” ~ Robert Falls

Any theater, large or small, takes the time to plan out what plays will appear on their stage the following year. Currently, in Chicago, theaters all over are slowly releasing their season line-up for 2014/2015. Season planning is no small feat. Often, it is the largest portion of an artistic director’s job to seek out shows, playwrights, and directors that will interest their patrons and complete their season. In most theaters, the artistic director is sole decision maker for the season. The Goodman’s process differs slightly. While Artistic Director, Robert Falls, does have the final say in what shows are selected each season, he plans it, usually a year in advance, by contacting members of the Goodman’s Artistic Collective (see sidebar) and investigating projects they are interested in working on at the Goodman.

Falls often begins with his interests for the upcoming year. This season, it was Luna Gale by Rebecca Gilman. Also part of the Artistic Collective, Gilman works under a rolling commission for the Goodman. This means she receives a certain amount of money when she finishes a play for the Goodman and the theater looks for additional funds as an advance for her next play. However, Luna Gale was not commissioned by the Goodman, but by the Steppenwolf Theatre Company. This meant that Steppenwolf paid Rebecca for the play and had the right of first refusal, the choice of whether they wanted to produce the play before Rebecca could shop it out to other theater companies. Usually a commissioning company has six months to a year after a play is finished to decide whether or not they want to produce a playwright’s work. For multiple reasons, Steppenwolf chose not to use Luna Gale in their season. Falls, after reading an earlier draft, had offered to produce the work if Steppenwolf turned it down. This will be the seventh Rebecca Gilman play the Goodman has produced and the fourth directed by Robert Falls.

After finding the show he wants to work on, Falls begins canvassing the other artistic associates for their interests. He usually asks the associates what they might like to do at the theater over the next three years. This season, Chuck Smith was interested in bringing Pullman Porter Blues to Chicago and reimagining it for the Goodman’s stage. In the same way, Mary Zimmerman wanted to bring her production of The White Snake, previously produced at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and the McCarter Theatre Center, to Goodman’s stage.

The artistic department, both the Artistic Collective and staff, are always on the look out for exciting new plays and artists to bring to Chicago. This is how Venus in Fur, directed by Joanie Schultz, found its way into the 2013/2014 season. Venus in Fur ran on Broadway, where many of Goodman’s artistic staff, including Robert Falls, saw and enjoyed it. They felt it would be great for a Chicago audience, and it opened a door to work with a local up and coming director, Joanie Schultz. Schultz had assisted Falls in the past, but Venus in Fur will be her directorial debut at the Goodman.

Venus in Fur also suffices practical concerns of season planning. As a two person show, it balances the budget, allowing the theater to produce bigger shows with larger casts like this summer’s Brigadoon, directed by Rachel Rockwell. The Goodman has wanted to work with Rockwell for awhile, and both parties had been continuously looking for projects that they could partner on together. She developed a relationship with the estate of Lerner and Loewe, the original creators of Brigadoon, and brought her interest of working on the show to the Goodman.

Practicality influences how the shows are slotted chronologically over the season. Often, directors are only available at certain times of the year. Unlike Robert Falls who usually directs one play at the Goodman, and may direct one or two additional plays at other companies across the country, freelance directors can direct over six productions a year. Therefore, timing is limited for guest directors at Goodman. In addition, the production needs are taken into account. Falls needs to balance shows that will take a lot to build (i.e., set, props, costumes, etc.) with sparser works so as not to overwhelm the production staff.

Finally, the Goodman has two stages, the Albert and the Owen. It is up to Falls to determine which shows will be presented on what stage. Even though Venus in Fur only consists of two actors, it has already played on Broadway stages with houses relatively similar in size to the Goodman’s Albert Stage. It has the theatrical tension

BY LIZ RICE
to captivate a large audience despite its small cast, so it can “fill” the Albert. In contrast, a show with a more intimate feel is better suited for the smaller Owen stage, even if it may have more characters than Venus in Fur.

Overall, Falls maintains Goodman Theatre’s mission of Quality, Diversity, and Community in every season he plans. Only the highest quality of shows are produced on the Goodman’s stages. He tries to represent a wide variety of theater, from the classics to new work, from large cast musicals to one person plays, that reflect the diverse communities of Chicago. With the help of the Artistic Collective, he has succeeded in this over the last 28 years.

Goodman Theatre’s Artistic Collective

Brian Dennehy    Actor
Robert Falls    Director
Rebecca Gilman   Playwright
Henry Godinez    Director
Steve Scott    Director/Producer
Chuck Smith    Director
Regina Taylor   Director/Playwright
Henry Wishcamper    Director
Mary Zimmerman    Director/Adapter

Artistic Director, Robert Falls and Artistic Associate and playwright, Rebecca Gilman, having a laugh during rehearsal for Luna Gale at Goodman Theatre. Photo by Liz Lauren.
Luna Gale Legal Glossary

BY TERESA RENDE

*Luna Gale* centers on the story of a baby placed in kinship care while her young parents, recovering meth addicts, seek treatment. Luna’s future, either with her parents, her maternal grandmother, or a foster family, is as complex as the system in which she is placed. There are many intricacies of what happens when a child is taken from its parents, and *Luna Gale* explores only one potential outcome. It does, nonetheless, expose us to a host of specific verbiage related to the world of child welfare. We’ve gone through *Luna Gale*, scene by scene, and pulled some of these terms out for you. This glossary should help you understand not only what happens in *Luna Gale*, but some of the other articles in the guide which discuss child welfare and child protective services.

**ACT ONE, SCENE ONE**

**SOCIAL WORKER (aka case worker)**

In Act One, Scene One, we are introduced to Karlie, Peter, and Caroline. It is mentioned that Caroline is a social worker. A social worker is anyone employed to provide social services, especially to the disadvantaged. In this context, a social worker or case worker refers to the agent overseeing the case plan of any child admitted to child protective services. The case worker is tasked with monitoring the well being of the child itself as well as the foster family and the birth parents of the child. In the example of Luna Gale, the social worker Caroline would be tasked with ensuring Luna’s safety, meeting with Luna’s foster family (in this case, Karlie’s mother, Cindy), and ensuring Karlie and Peter stick to their rehabilitation plan.

**ACT ONE, SCENE TWO**

**FOSTER CARE, KINSHIP CARE, STANDARD SUPPORT PAYMENTS, CASE PLAN**

Since the passage of the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act in 1980, Federal law requires the development of a written case plan for any child receiving foster care maintenance payments (or standard support payments, as they are referred to in this scene). Maintenance payments are those provided to the foster parent for the child’s “physical” needs, including the cost of board and room, personal needs, school needs, transportation, clothing, and allowance.

A case plan describes the specifics of a child’s care while in placement, including, at a minimum, the following:
- A description of the type of home or institution in which the child is to be placed.
- A plan for ensuring that the child receives safe and proper care and that appropriate services are provided to the parents, child, and foster parents:
  - To improve the conditions in the parents’ home
  - To facilitate the child’s return to his or her own safe home or the alternative permanent placement of the child
  - To address the child’s needs while in foster care
- Efforts to maintain the child’s educational stability while in foster care, including continuing the child’s enrollment in his or her current school whenever possible.
- To the extent available, the child’s health and education records
- Where appropriate, for a child age 16 years or older, a description of programs and services that will help the child prepare for independent living.
- If the permanency goal for the child is adoption, documentation of the steps being taken to find an adoptive family

Luna Gale is placed in kinship care, as opposed to foster care. This means a member of her family, in this case her grandmother, takes the responsibility of caring for Luna until her parents have completed their rehabilitation plan and are deemed fit for parenting again. This is different from foster care, in which the caseworker seeks to place a child with a family who does not necessarily have any blood ties to said child. This occurs when no family member is available, interested or deemed fit to care for the child that been taken from their parents’ custody.

**ACT ONE, SCENE FOUR**

**EMANCIPATION, PAL STIPEND, AFTERCARE**

Lourdes, a former foster child, has turned 18 and is now legally emancipated. This means Lourdes is freed from control her parents or guardians, and her parents or guardians are freed from any and all responsibility toward Lourdes. Lourdes is emancipated in this case because she has turned 18 and a judge has approved her petition and ability to be self sufficient. While most Americans are considered legal adults at 18 anyway, it is an important signpost for Lourdes because she has been a ward of the state, cared for by foster guardians, since she was seven years old. In other cases, minors (those still under age 18) apply for emancipation from their parents or guardians before they turn 18 due to
disagreement, negligence or abuse. The exact laws and protocols for becoming an emancipated minor vary from state to state. In most states, minors must file a petition with the family court in the applicable jurisdiction, formally requesting emancipation and citing reasons it is in their best interest to be emancipated. Because “best interest,” is hard to define, it is often challenging for a minor obtain emancipation. In some states, free legal aid is available to minors seeking emancipation, through children law centers.

In this scene, Caroline also refers to a “PAL stipend,” This is a part of Iowa state’s aftercare program for those aging out of the foster care and child welfare systems. Aftercare includes not only the preparation for adult living, or (PAL) stipend, but helps former foster care youth to continue preparing for the challenges and opportunities presented by adulthood while receiving services and supports.

ACT ONE, SCENE FIVE
FULL CUSTODY, TERMINATION OF PARENTAL RIGHTS, TEMPORARY GUARDIANSHIP, REUNIFICATION, CONCURRENT PERMANENCY PLAN
When Caroline meets with Cindy and Pastor Jay she learns of Cindy’s hopes to adopt Luna. Full custody, in this case, would mean that Cindy becomes Luna’s sole legal guardian. To obtain full custody, a court would have to terminate Karlie and Peter’s parental rights, at which point Cindy could legally adopt Luna (with the court’s approval). While the specifics vary state to state, it is generally quite challenging to terminate parental rights without very strong proof that both parents are unfit, and at no point will either become fit, to raise their child. The goal in most states is reunification; that eventually, the parents will complete their case plan and be fit to raise their child again (there are other articles in this guide investigating the reunification bias). Caroline explains, rightfully, that most judges would not move to terminate Karlie and Peter’s parental rights so early in their case plan, and suggests temporary guardianship, which would grant Cindy all of the powers of a natural guardian, including the authority to consent to medical treatment and to enroll Luna in school. Cindy knows, thanks to her lawyer friend, that temporary guardianship would not terminate Karlie and Peter’s parental rights, though, and eventually the state could still rule for reunification of Luna and her birth parents. As Cindy feels strongly that she must adopt Luna to prevent Karlie and Peter from ever having custody again, she asks Caroline if they can develop a concurrent permanency case plan. This would mean that, while Karlie and Peter are satisfying their case plan for rehabilitation, another case plan would be drawn up for Cindy, a case plan that outlines what Cindy will do to adopt Luna and obtain sole custody.

ACT ONE, SCENE SIX
CONTINUANCE, STATE APPOINTED OVERSIGHT
In this scene, Caroline is discussing the progress of some of her cases with her boss, Cliff. Caroline is requesting a “three month continuance,” for one of her cases, which is the postponement of a hearing, trial, or other scheduled court proceeding at the request of either or both parties in the dispute, or by the judge. As Caroline is an agent of the state, it means she is requesting, on the state’s behalf, that the judge revisit the case and make his decision regarding the placement of a child in three months. Cliff, knowing that Cindy has requested a concurrent permanency plan, suggests Caroline build both, as he believes it is in the agency’s best interest to place Luna, permanently, sooner rather than later. Cliff also mentions that they are under state appointed oversight, which means that Cliff was brought in to oversee caseworkers like Caroline, as their office had a previous caseworker (Mimi) who lost track of children in the welfare system, and ensure these errors don’t repeat themselves.

ACT ONE, SCENE SEVEN
DHS
DHS is an acronym for Department of Human Services. DHS is the government agency that oversees child welfare cases.

ACT TWO, SCENE FOUR
NON-OFFENDER, ARBITRATION
In this scene Caroline, Cliff, and Pastor Jay meet to discuss the ramifications of Karlie’s alleged sexual abuse when she was a minor living with Cindy, and what that means for Cindy’s ability to terminate Karlie and Peter’s parental rights. Cindy is the “non-offender” they are referring to, as she is caring for Luna, but is not the offending parent, the parent(s) against which the state is making their case. Karlie and Peter are the offenders, the parental units that mistreated their child and are completing a case plan to eventually regain custody. As the scene escalates it becomes clear that both Caroline and Cliff have major biases effecting their belief of the
best plan regarding Luna. After a series of threats from both parties, Caroline explains that the prayer in which her participation was requested is grounds for workplace discrimination, and she will not take arbitration. Arbitration is the process by which a legal dispute is decided outside the courts; Caroline explains she would take no deal, and believes she has to grounds to go into a court battle, and win, against Cliff.

**ACT TWO, SCENE SIX**

**DOCKET**
A docket is the official schedule of proceedings in a court of law.

**ACT TWO, SCENE SEVEN**

**CHANGE OF JURISDICTION, PRIMARY GUARDIAN**
As Peter prepares move Luna in with himself and his father in Wisconsin, he must complete a change of jurisdiction form. Jurisdiction is the official power to make legal decisions and judgments, it is granted to courts at the state and federal level. As Peter is moving to Wisconsin, the Iowa state courts will no longer be making official legal decisions regarding Luna. Instead, the courts in Wisconsin will be in that position, and Peter must inform the Iowa courts of this change, so human services can assign him a caseworker there and continue to monitor his case and Luna’s safety. It is also mentioned that Peter’s father is actually the primary guardian of Luna. This means that, while Peter still has parental rights and is allowed to be with and help care for Luna, the court is allowing this only because Peter’s father is the primary guardian and is legally responsible for caring and providing for Luna. This is a transitional step while Peter continues to prove his own rehabilitation and eventually gain full custody, and guardianship, of his daughter.
BY LIZ RICE

Chemistry
With the popularity and series finale of the TV show, “Breaking Bad,” methamphetamine is in the spotlight of popular culture. Actor Bryan Cranston plays Walter White, high school chemistry teacher by day, kingpin drug lord by night. While Hollywood’s setups often seem far-fetched, White’s history as a chemist actually makes him the perfect candidate to cook and sell meth.

Methamphetamine, known also as ice, glass and crystal, is a man-made chemical compound. One molecule consists of 10 carbon atoms, 15 hydrogen atoms and one nitrogen atom. Most of the meth found in the U.S. is created, or cooked, in American and foreign, primarily Mexican, “superlabs.” A few smaller labs, known as box labs, exist as well due to the ease of obtaining the ingredients for meth.

Multiple ways to cook meth exist. The traditional cooking method begins by extracting the compound ephedrine or pseudoephedrine from commonly found cough and cold pills. Red phosphorus and acid are added to the ephedrine/pseudoephedrine and heated to create methamphetamine; however, this mixture is still too acidic. The phosphorus must be filtered out and a base added to neutralize the acid in the compound. Freon is added to separate the liquid methamphetamine from the other chemical byproducts of the reactions. Hydrogen chloride is forced through the liquid to crystallize the compound. Once dry, the methamphetamine is ready for use. Often, it is cut with other additives before being packaged and sold. It takes about six pounds of toxic chemicals to make one pound of crystal meth.

Although obtaining the ingredients to make crystal meth is fairly easy, the process in which to create it is fairly dangerous and produces toxic waste that remains in the environment long after the lab has shut down. Many small labs often are set up in abandoned and run-down buildings, usually with bad ventilation. Cooking meth creates the following chemical byproducts:

- Phosphine gas
- Methylamine gas
- Acetone or chloroform
- Sodium gases
- Iodine vapors
- Anhydrous ammonia
- Hydrogen chloride

These gases can seep into the building’s walls, furniture, flooring, etc., and be released slowly after time. Some chemicals, such as red phosphorus and acetone, are highly flammable and explosive. Poor ventilation and uninformed handling of the chemicals can lead to lab explosions. However, for all the dangers cooking meth poses, none seems half as bad the effects it has on the body.

Biology
In Luna Gale, the parents of the title character, Karlie and Peter, are both meth addicts. When social services deem them unfit to take care of Luna, they must go through drug rehabilitation to reunite with their daughter. Even though it is possible to return to a certain homeostasis if one has not used for a long period of time, using methamphetamines can change the physical and chemical composition of a body.

Methamphetamine is a schedule II central nervous system stimulant. It is a white, odorless, bitter-tasting crystalline powder that can be dissolved in alcohol or water. Legally, doctors prescribe it for sufferers of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or as a short-term, weight-loss supplement. Prescriptions are one time only and cannot be refilled. Prescriptions doses are much less than the amount abusers use. Meth is introduced into the body in four different ways, each causing a different type of “high”:

- Intravenously — Meth is introduced directly into the blood stream, which produces an intense rush, or “flash.” This lasts a few minutes.
- Smoked — Meth is quickly introduced into the blood stream, which also produces a “flash” that only lasts a few minutes. Both smoking and intravenous consumption of meth heightens the addiction potential and health consequences of meth.
- Oral ingestion — The effects of meth are felt after 15 to 20 minutes. It does not produce a flash but rather a pleasant high.
- Intranasally (snorted) — The effects of meth are felt after three to five minutes. It also does not produce a
Meth most directly affects the brain by blocking dopamine uptake by neurons and causing the brain to release more dopamine at the same time. Dopamine is the chemical closely related to feelings of pleasure, reward, motivation and some motor function. It produces an intense sense of euphoria.

The brain consists of millions of nerve cells, or neurons. Neurons are generally comprised of three parts:
- The cell body — This contains the nucleus which directs cell activity.
- Dendrites — Short fibers that receive information from other neurons.
- Axon — One long fiber that relays information to other neurons’ dendrites.

Methamphetamine molecules are similarly shaped to dopamine molecules. Dopamine receptors mistake methamphetamine molecules and take them in. They cause the neurons to release more dopamine while preventing them to re-uptake the dopamine already in the system, damaging the neurons. Eventually, this can cause users to be unable to feel joy without the drug. Studies show that neurons still can be damaged three years after users have quit. This effect is reversible, however, though a painful process. Meth also can affect the areas of the brain linked to memory, in addition to impairing verbal learning and reducing motor skills.

Brain structure can change just as much as functionality. Meth causes an increase in blood pressure in the body, which strains andweakens the blood vessels. Damaged vessels can lead to stroke, bleeding in the brain and, most severely, death. The brain also contains non-neural cells called microglia. These cells defend the brain against infection and remove damaged neurons. The amount of microglia cells is greatly increased in the brain of meth users. This effect is also reversible. Scans show almost normal microglia levels in patients who had not used meth for two years after quitting.

Many of these damaging effects occur with large doses and/or long-term use of meth. In addition to the effects mentioned, long-term methamphetamine use also causes:
- Extreme weight loss — Meth is an appetite suppressant. Users often go on “runs” spending many days using the drug without eating or sleeping.
- Anxiety
- Insomnia — As a stimulant, the drug interrupts the normal sleep pattern.
- Confusion
- Mood disturbances and violent behavior — Meth affects the emotional centers of the brain.
- Paranoia and visual/auditory hallucinations or delusions — For example, insects crawling under one’s skin. Psychotic effects can last months, even years, after a person has quit using meth. Often stress can cause psychotic reoccurrences.
- Tooth decay — Also known as “meth mouth”

Short-term effects of methamphetamine include:
- Increased wakefulness, physical activity and respiration.
- Rapid or irregular heart beat.
- Decreased appetite.
- Hyperthermia — This increase in body temperature often occurs in meth overdoses.

Meth use has been linked to the contraction of HIV, hepatitis B and hepatitis C. These diseases are easily contracted through contaminated needles used to administer meth. In an altered mental state, poor judgment can occur, risking oneself to potentially unsafe sex.

Withdrawal from meth is as taxing on the body as its use. Due to the increased levels of dopamine with use, people going through withdrawal ultimately will suffer depression as the body tries to regain normal dopamine levels. Fatigue is another symptom, as one’s body will no longer have constant access to the stimulant. Sufferers also will see an increased appetite, even weight gain. Overall, addicts will have a constant urge to use again. While many of the effects of methamphetamine are reversible, the body still will remain somewhat damaged, even after one use. There are currently no chemical treatments for meth addiction; however, behavioral therapy has proven successful.
In 2005, business executive Thomas Seibel founded the Meth Project to combat the skyrocketing percentage of meth users, especially amongst teens, in his part-time home state of Montana. Since then, the foundation has grown to include Colorado, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho and Montana, although their harsh “Not Even Once” ad campaign can be seen nationwide. The first decade of the new millennium saw a rise in meth users across the nation, to the point of the addiction being named an epidemic. Congress passed the Combat Methamphetamine Act of 2005, which required stores and pharmacies to keep a log of items purchased with ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, the main component in meth, and to limit the number of products containing ephedrine or pseudoephedrine a person can buy a day. With such measures, methamphetamine use has decreased, though it still is prominent. According to the 2012 National Survey of Drug Use and Health:

- 12 million American had tried meth at least once.
- 1.2 million had used meth in the last year.
- 440,000 had used meth in the past month (of when the survey was given), which was less than in 2006 when 731,000 claimed to have used meth in the past month.

Over the past decade, meth has prominently affected not only urban but many rural areas of the U.S., especially in the West and Midwest. Many methods to making meth exist. The “Nazi” method uses anhydrous ammonia as a reactant mixed with pseudoephedrine to produce meth. Anhydrous ammonia is a commonly used farming fertilizer and thus readily available in rural areas. The ease of access to ingredients adds to the prominence of meth in rural cultures.

Cooking can be a social affair. Rather than selling the drug for money, often cooks barter and trade with users to obtain the ingredients needed to cook meth. In a 2004 ethnographic study by Dr. Ralph A. Weisheit for the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, he quotes a Clark County judge of his observations on meth users. Weisheit comments that he often sees groups of people arrested for association with methamphetamine. While with other drugs, culprits are arrested for possession, often meth users are arrested in the midst of cooking or using as a group. The judge also observes that other drugs do not impede users’ lives as much in the same way that meth does.

“Typically in a high percentage of our drug cases if somebody was arrested for possession of drugs they were people who were working and were otherwise leading, at least in an outward sense, a pretty normal lifestyle … but with methamphetamine you see a much greater number of people who simply are not working and haven’t worked. It’s very characteristic to see people who have not been working for several years, or they have a lousy employment history.”

In many rural towns, arrests associated with meth have led to overcrowding in jails, depletion of funds for inmate care and overworked officers. Thus, the increased availability of meth has impacted not only the user but how the town functions.

A diagram of the chemical structure of a methamphetamine molecule. By Liz Rice.
Why is DCFS Biased Toward Reunification?

BY KELLY REED

As much as the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is a flawed — some might say broken — system, its goal is ultimately honorable: ensuring that children grow up in safe, stable homes and enabling families to provide that environment. If DCFS decides that a child’s living situation threatens his or her well-being and removes the child from his or her home, the default goal is reunification — returning that child to the family after its members make necessary changes to their home and/or lifestyles. For many children this can mean they live in foster care for years at a time, uncertain whether they will return to their biological parents, become permanent members of their foster family or be adopted by another family entirely.

DCFS’s bias toward reunifying children with their biological parents is based on the Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act (AACWA) of 1980. In turn, much of the AACWA centers on the belief that a child is best able to bond with a caregiver who is related by blood (the more closely related, the better). In an even broader sense, these policies stem from the idea that the family unit is the most basic building block of our society, that healthy families create a healthy society and that all people are capable of change if given the resources.

If the DCFS removes a child from his or her home because of a domestic issue, its staff requires that the child’s parents undergo a set number of hours of treatment and show proof of completion. The type of treatment varies depending on the reason for removal, but the most common types are as follows: parent training, family communication building, teaching behavior management, marital counseling, life skills training, self-management of moods/behavior, school interventions, safety planning, relapse prevention, or concrete and advocacy services. Ideally, this treatment period takes from 60 to 90 days.

As much as the ultimate goal of DCFS is honorable, cases where the system falls short are hard to ignore. One example of this is the fact that children can get “caught” in the system: living in foster care for years, in limbo and uncertain of their future. Equally troubling are the stories of young people reunited with their biological families after years of living with a nurturing foster family who intended to adopt them. The time it takes to process each case is grinding. Caseworkers are overworked, and because of the low pay grade, they are often young and inexperienced.

Something clearly needs to change in order for the system to function the way it should, but the question of where to begin is painfully difficult. Even small changes can take many years. This article does not intend to offer solutions; it only offers the suggestion that, if our systems fail to serve the families they set out to protect, perhaps reevaluation is necessary.

(L to R): Playwright Rebecca Gilman and Mary Beth Fisher (Caroline) in rehearsal for Luna Gale at Goodman Theatre. Photo by Liz Lauren.
Religion: More Separation Than Connection?
BY KELLY REED

Religion is an answer to humankind’s search for meaning. The most basic definition might look something like this: “Religion is an organized collection of beliefs relating to the meaning of life and providing order to existence.” Wherever these beliefs come from, they seek to answer the biggest questions facing humans: Why are we here? How are we meant to live? Christians founded the U.S. and most Americans still practice Christianity today. However, our religious landscape is changing in some big ways: 16 percent of the population chooses not to affiliate itself with any religion, and we have a larger variety of religions than ever before. A few decades ago, encountering the religious “other” might have only happened if you lived in a large city; now these encounters happen across the country and will only grow more frequent.

Judging by the coverage of religious-based violence on any given news channel, one might conclude that all encounters with the religious other are inherently conflictual. Negative stereotypes of all faiths, especially Islam, abound because of the extreme actions of a select few. At the same time, Christianity steadily earns an ugly reputation because of the hate-spewing antics of a small minority. Perhaps this sense of rising tension, combined with the sensationalism of TV news media, is a reason for the growing number of people who chooses not to identify with any religion. Whatever the reason, this percent of unaffiliated and non-believing people is one of the most ill-regarded minority groups in America. If one assumes that religion is the foundation for morality, that logic would dictate that someone who does not believe in God is amoral.

The overarching belief about atheists in this country is that they are not concerned with the common good or connecting with any higher power. During an interview with media maven and talk show host Oprah Winfrey, endurance swimmer and atheist Diana Nyad expressed being in awe of life on Earth and a feeling of interconnectedness with all of humanity. In a now infamous response, Oprah went on to tell Nyad that this sense of awe meant she was not an atheist — revealing her assumption that atheists are not capable of feeling a deep, meaningful connection to something greater than themselves. This misconception is quite common, along with the assumption that atheists are not moral people. These false ideas are the basis for the animosity many atheists experience, often in situations where the same behavior toward other minority groups would be admonished.

The fear of differing beliefs is a root cause of religious-based violence. Conflicts become intensified by the belief that one religion holds the Ultimate Truth, falsifying all others. The most intense conflicts are often over resources that are perceived to be limited (such as land or money), or when the “other” is labeled a threat to safety (a label assigned to Muslims after 9/11). Unfortunately, human history is rife with religious conflict, from the Crusades all the way to present day. Indeed, we seem destined to constantly fight over “Truth.” This leads to a big question: If religious conflict is so imbedded in our human history, how will Americans deal with the fact that our country is only getting more religiously diverse, or the fact that more people are choosing not to be religious?

The issues surrounding religious violence and persecution are hard to untangle. Religion is deeply personal, and each person must decide based on his or her own experiences what is true. This country’s ancestors founded America on the principles of freedom of religion and the separation of church and state precisely so people could live free from religious persecution. As cliché as it sounds, it is true: The variety of religions in America is what makes our country truly unique in the world. We possess, just by living here, a special opportunity to practice respect for the differing beliefs that might cross our paths: Christianity, atheism, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism or unaffiliated. In short, religion only separates us if we let it.
Nearly six in 10 Americans claim that religion plays an important role in their lives. With religious beliefs ranging anywhere from branches of denominational Christianity to Dharmic faiths such as Buddhism and Hinduism, about 80 percent of Americans turn to their faith for spiritual guidance and emotional support.

For many, religious rituals such as attending church, prayer and meditation play a pivotal role in their everyday lives. Others largely consult their religion in the decision-making process for some of life’s greatest milestones, including marriage and children. For any devout believer, regardless of faith, it can be somewhat difficult to restrain one’s passion toward a belief in the existence of only “one true faith” and then sharing that ideology with the rest of the world ... even when unsolicited.

Religious fanaticism is a subjective term often characterized as the people who perform it, also known as fanatics. With no academic definition, a “religious fanatic” is someone whose extreme devotion to his or her faith is represented through a type of performance often seen very publicly, without room for debate or objection to their beliefs. Fueled by the intangible need from their “high power” to sway others toward their faith, fanatics openly share extremist points of view, often through public demonstrations involving signs, chants and a public shaming of nearby “sinners.”

Given the mystery of existence, human beings have a spiritual longing for purpose and meaning, and they only can fulfill those spiritual needs through some kind of relationship with an ultimate transcendent other, or a “god-like” figure. Religion has the power to meet this need for transcendence and spiritual existence, and fanatics identify with a purpose and a sense of belonging.
through a constructed religion.

Fanatics express themselves in a manner that is consistent with their belief system. For example, members of the Westboro Baptist Church, an unaffiliated Baptist church with an extremist Evangelical-based practice, travel across the country protesting military funerals by spreading their anti-war and anti-gay agenda through hostile picket-signs that often read, “Thank God for 9/11,” “Thank God for IEDs,” “God hates Fags” and more. Their picketing, chants and hateful rhetoric toward a country that supports soldiers and provides a space for homosexuals are rooted in their persistent, unapologetic and unwavering belief that it is God’s will that their words be heard. This is what it means to “perform religion.”

In a nation where 76 percent of Americans identify with some form of Christianity, religious fanaticism is not only seen through Evangelical or fundamentalist faiths. Ever since Osama Bin Laden’s fatwa in 1998, a legal judgment framed by the Islamic faith declaring war against the “Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places,” religious fanaticism has reared its head toward “radical jihad,” a form of Islam that justifies violence and destruction through God’s calling.

Even though most Muslims reject violence, extremists insist that their central claim — God’s desire for Islam’s triumph — requires no interpretation; according to the radicals, true Muslims will pursue it by any means necessary, including dissimulation, civil coercion and the killing of innocents. Although fanatic jihadists have committed terrorist attacks around the world throughout the years, the best known is the attack on Sept. 11, 2001, in New York City.

According to nonextremist devout Muslims, this disregard for others and rampant use of violence, including terrorist attacks, is significantly different than the alternative interpretation of jihad, a more peaceful, inner spiritual struggle against those who do not believe in in the Abrahamic God (Allah).

Although extreme religious fanatics often are depicted as violent, hateful and generally negative, that isn’t necessarily always the case. Based on characteristics and general practices, some devout Mormons also can be considered religious fanatics through their explicit interpretations of their Bible fueling decisions relating to marriage and children. Additionally, through devout Roman Catholics’ belief in weekly reconciliation, dress attire at church and the commitment to either God or marriage once adulthood has been reach, they also can be considered religious fanatics.

In short: The complexities surrounding religious fanaticism often are blurred with a core component of devotion to a religious affiliation and a higher transcendent being: faith. Characteristics between devotion and fanaticism seem somewhat distinct, but it is still not entirely clear how this is so.

For a fundamentalist, extremist or religious fanatic, their religious practice in sharing God’s word is their devotion and faith. And as people who likely have a belief system of our own ... who are we to judge?
New Richmond, Wisconsin

BY MARIA NELSON

Cedar Rapids, Iowa, has a much larger population than does New Richmond, Wis., where I grew up. But the story of Luna Gale feels like it was set just down the block from my childhood home. Although it’s a fictional piece, Rebecca Gilman creates a very real world, familiar for anyone from the Midwest who, like me, knows that Perkins — where Karlie works part time — is probably the best place to eat brunch in town, despite the coffee being bad and the pie being two days old. Each of the 65 million Americans living in the Midwest has a different story, but by representing their home in a realistic way, Gilman gives those unfamiliar with rural Midwest a glimpse into its unique culture.

Unlike in a novel, where the author has the ability to describe a scene in detailed prose, a playwright creates a world through dialogue and characters’ perspective and knowledge. Karlie’s and Peter’s long digressions in conversations with Caroline create a perfect space for Gilman to add detail. The mention of a gifted and talented program, a Kwik Trip gas station (where my family stops on our frequent road trips to visit relatives three hours north) and a highway ending abruptly in a dead end all bring back memories of a specific lifestyle of the rural Midwest. At one point, Lourdes describes her amazement with the food court at Macy’s, Seven on State, Chicago, much like I remember from visiting as a tourist when I was 12, staring in wonder at the idea of shopping at all my favorite stores individually on Michigan Avenue and State Street, and not in a sprawling shopping mall.

But it’s more than the details like these that make Luna Gale realistic, a sort of documentary of a Midwestern lifestyle and culture. The themes also feel so familiar. Every year, from eighth through 12th grade, all students at New Richmond High School filed into the auditorium for an hour-long presentation about the life-altering physical and emotional effects of methamphetamine. Although the presentations frightened me away from ever encountering meth (as I believe now they were meant to), and I never personally experienced some of the other issues brought up in Luna Gale — having a child at a young age, questions of custody, social workers being a huge presence in a young person’s life — these situations still feel very familiar to me, and I had good friends for whom they were very much a reality.

I remember news going around town once that three home meth labs had been shut down by police within the span of one month, all on the same block, within walking distance of a good friend’s place. In high school, I often drove my friend Becca home after Youth Group at First Baptist Church on Wednesdays, but I would ask for directions each trip because she changed foster homes several times.

Rebecca Gilman’s world of Luna Gale is a reality in which I don’t feel like a stranger when I slip inside, even though I now live in Chicago. Although the Midwest might seem like an unremarkable place in many respects, more than 20 percent of the population of the U.S. lives in the 12 states. Yet the media rarely represents the story of the average Iowan. Luna Gale attempts to show that the struggles and triumphs of an average family living in an ordinary place nonetheless can make a heartbreaking, eye-opening story.

The Marcus Sears Bell Farm in New Richmond, Wisconsin. Photo by Alexius Horatius, courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.
Deconstructing Bias: How Prejudice Starts
BY KELLY REED

“Bias” is a buzzword both in Luna Gale and the social work profession. Social workers’ education gives significant attention to identifying and assessing their personal bias, in the same way a scientific study is analyzed for objectivity. Bias gets in the way of social workers’ ability to provide the quality of treatment each client deserves. In the same way, people interested in counteracting social injustice must assess their bias before being able to do so effectively.

Bias is a tendency; it is a way for our brain to take a shortcut in the decision process. Some biases are helpful, like our preference for avoiding food that smells rotten or choosing not to bathe in scalding hot water. However, some biases are dangerous because we are so unaware of them, they are based on false information, or we apply them incorrectly.

Bias is an important concept for social workers to understand because it affects their ability to provide the best services to their clients. Without putting aside their personal biases, social workers might take their treatment in a direction that does not suit their clients’ needs or goals. Just like social workers must assess their biases to care for their clients appropriately, so must people examine their biases in order to overcome their own unconscious prejudice.

When humans were still hunter-gatherers, biases helped us make quick decisions in potentially life-threatening situations. Today, our biases continue to help us make decisions that are quick, but not necessarily fair or well-informed. One common bias that helps us process information is called the confirmation bias. It is our preference for taking in information that supports what we already believe. As a result of the confirmation bias, most of us choose to surround ourselves with people similar to us or watch news outlets that confirm our political beliefs. When unchecked, this bias keeps us from challenging our existing beliefs and closes us off from different worldviews.

Across the board, our biases are most dangerous when we do not have the self-awareness to counteract them. This is especially true with unconscious biases based on race, sex, age or ability. If we lack the self-awareness to analyze whether our preferences are based on fear or false information, then they will continue to control us. The results of years of unchecked bias based on race and sex are all around us: a society with racism and sexism built into its very foundations.

Clearly, if our nation’s collective biases are a sum of each of our individual biases, then we all must evaluate our own very carefully. It is our responsibility to examine how we might be acting on unconscious biases in ways that disconnect us from others. While this is just one step of many on the path toward social justice, it is a crucial one. Check out the resources below for more information on counteracting everyday injustice and testing your unconscious biases.

Project Implicit: Created by Harvard psychologists, Project Implicit is a free series of tests designed to detect hidden bias. To take the test, visit the link below and provide some basic registration information. 
https://implicit.harvard.edu

“Test Yourself for Hidden Bias” by Teaching Tolerance: Article about the basics and assessment of bias. Website provides free activities dedicated to reducing prejudice, improving intergroup relations and supporting equitable school experiences for all children. 
http://www.tolerance.org/activity/test-yourself-hidden-bias

“White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” by Peggy McIntosh: Widely available online, this article is considered a classic because it explores how privilege keeps us from noticing our biases and examining our privilege in the first place.
In the dark of the night, more than six years ago, two homeless brothers, ages two and three, were dropped at our house with nothing but the clothes on their back and a single shared pink balloon between them. Thus began our formal journey as a foster family with Juan and Jeremiah. A couple of years prior, when the youngest of our two kids, Louie and Gloria, was about to start kindergarten, we found an opening in our lives. We seriously considered what to do with our newly expanded freedom: Would I take on more clients, consulting with non-profits? Would Jay open a second retail store? As corny as it sounds, instead we focused on *tikkun olam*, a traditionally Jewish concept of repairing the world. Now, we were a family that already did what many of us do: we recycled, financially supported causes we believed in, and volunteered our time when possible. But, we were looking for something with more impact.

We were less interested in growing our family and more interested in assisting kids in need. For Jay, fostering could have a lasting impression on a child’s life. For me, it quietly fulfilled the unrealized dream of adopting a third kid. And so, with wild naiveté, we began a voyage so indelible, it’s often difficult to describe.

Becoming a foster parent is an arduous experience, beginning with a nearly year-long licensing process. First, one needs to choose a private agency to foster through – or make a decision to go directly through DCFS, a state government agency. We went through Association House, a Latino settlement house and a private Chicago agency. In addition to home visits, personal interviews and reams of paperwork, there is a mandated 40-hour training, which is extensive outside of one’s own work and family life, particularly if there are already children in the home. In our case, we lived in Evanston and the closest training was nearly an hour away in the city’s far west side. This reality spotlighted how few families in our immediate area were considering becoming a foster family – specifically middle-income, white families – and how much more prevalent it was in communities of color, where family fostering is popular. Also, it came at a great time expense to “organize a village of support” to care for our two children for five consecutive Saturdays – from 8 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. These ten hours lent enough time for an hour travel both ways, plus the 8 hour weekly session, itself. Luckily, our village was gracious and we found five families, each willing to help with complete Saturday coverage.

The things we learned in fostering class ranged from the most mundane to the most intriguing, from the most simple-minded to the gravest of topics. Sessions included not only practical parenting tips, like welcoming a new child into your home and helping them feel safe and included, but how to address psychological challenges of rage stemming from child abuse and early child sexual assault. There were also sessions that provided a very loose road map on how to navigate the foster system. In the end, the academic training of “how-to” do this or that, proved to be, well, just that, very academic. Sadly, in our case, it provided very little significant information about or preparation for becoming a foster family.

After a year of the licensing process, we finally got the call. Our two boys are half black and half Hispanic. When they arrived, they had no language and extreme delays. The older of the two had clearly experienced and exhibited extreme trauma. In all our days, we never could have imagined the impact of our decision. It would be like understanding the wild vicissitudes and emotional upheaval of a long term partnership or marriage. It’s like comprehending the amalgam of emotions free-falling from a moving jet – never could the ride be so unexpected, unpredictable and at once shockingly on-our-knees hard and staggeringly rewarding.

Growing a family is complicated no matter how it’s done – through biology, adoption or fostering. Our aim in communicating our decision to our kids, who were five and seven at the time, was simple and clear: we wanted them to know that our love for them was indelible and their security with our family was solid and forever. We articulated our interest in helping kids that didn’t have a home and needed significant support; and we let them know that no matter what, they were our top priority no matter how things unfolded. From the moment Juan and Jeremiah joined our family, like many other growing families, ours was complicated and shifting dynamic of love, loyalty, rage, resentment and ultimately acceptance.

In the first months of fostering we were absorbed with folding two basically homeless brothers into our family. Each had experienced considerable abuse and neglect and exhibited extreme trauma in one form or another. Holding this trauma, absorbing this level of heart-ache, integrating two broken souls into our midst, provided for
what was a deep and troubling and profoundly chaotic year of adjustment. January 14th is the sixth anniversary of us becoming a foster family. It feels like yesterday, but we can hardly remember life without Juan and Jeremiah. There are too many memories, both positive and negative, as it relates to being a foster family, but one thing feels clear for sure – fostering is likely the single defining thing that we’ve done as a family. It will indeed be our living legacy.

The journey of fostering is complex: navigating the inner workings of our family and the outer arena of the system. In neither sphere did we have any experience, reference points, or history. It’s no exaggeration to say in more than 2100 days as a foster family we have received barely an iota of supporting the form of counseling, services for the boys, services for our family, respite care, money for camps, programs, nothing. Instead, we live a life of advocacy: encouraging our pediatrician, dentist, and orthodontist to provide pro-bono services, since they didn’t take public aide; advocating for support within our school, and making a case for our family in court, so the actual picture of their daily lives is provided, and they aren’t simply a DCSF case number.

Each piece of the foster system appears profoundly broken and challenging. Due to the revolving door of workers and high turnover of jobs, the snail’s pace of progress seems inevitable. In our case, we’ve already had two judges, six or eight case workers, several agency leaders, two guardian ad litem, several court appointed attorneys for the biological parents, countless translators and more. Most discouraging, in addition to the lack of staff consistency, is that the vast majority of adults involved in the case have never laid eyes on Juan or Jeremiah. They base their decisions on paper reports passed down through multiple convoluted routes. Most significantly, nearly all of the above “decision makers” regularly mix up and confuse important information about them, including birth dates, services needed, and more. These are the people who have the power to determine the fate of two young lives and change the trajectory of our family.

For years, Juan and Jeremiah still saw their parents on a weekly basis. We drove them to our Humbolt Park agency for nearly two years, and we had a deeply connected relationship with their folks as well. Yes, they called them momma and poppy. Yes, they bonded with their folks, who brought them McDonald’s and toys each visit, but more than three quarters of their lives have been spent with us. We are their steady, their family.

Legally, the goal for foster children is reunification with their biological families. If their folks, who are not together now, never have been legally and have more than a hand-full of other children in and out of the system, prove to be “fit, willing, and able”, the boys are theirs. If, like 80% of the fostering cases nationally, their folks stumble and fall, they legally lose all parental rights and we are left with the decision of a lifetime. Typically, most foster cases conclude with TPR – termination of parental rights – often in a 16-24 month period. Ours, it seems, has been a much more grey case – keeping us in the system far longer than average. After more than six years of being a foster family, we’re still entrenched in the system, with very slow movements toward adoption. Last June our kids’ folks’ parental rights were terminated, and we assumed everyone understood the gravity and finality of that situation. After years of connected visits and long shared “parenting”, with very heavy hearts, we all said goodbye.

With all TPR decisions, there’s an opportunity for an appeal, but given the duration of the boys in our care and the extensive length of time the parents had to get themselves in order, all involved in the case believed firmly a decision was made. Almost exactly 28 days from TPR decision, just when we thought we could finally move toward adoption, I received a text from an agency staff member I did not know, stating something like, “We hope that you’ve heard that one of the parents has appealed the TPR.” Typically, staff told me this adds another six months to the case before we move toward adoption. But, I know better. For every length of time we’ve been given for anything with this case and in this system, I’ve learned to double, often triple, the prediction. Knowing how broken the system is, and how over worked and under staffed it is, I give it at least another two years before we move toward adoption. Against my better judgment, I hope I’m proven wrong.

This experience has been ineffably challenging. We weren’t prepared to take in and take on the level of trauma that came with the boys. For more than a year, the wailing and crying and reeling in pain, with no language or skills or hope… it was devastating. And all we knew to do was to love them. To reach down deep, then
deeper, then just as we were about to break, deeper
again, to a well of love and patience.

We had no training or guidance or assistance. But
instinct taught us to hold true to our emotions, to
conduct family meetings, so everyone could express
their pure rage at how much time and energy the
boys commanded. How often, very often, we wanted
to get rid of them, to have another family take on this
towering task and leave us to our more normal neurotic
challenges and concerns.

But slowly, our efforts have taken hold. What was once
a desperate darkness of trauma, a puddle of spittle and
unceasing sadness and despair, has been transformed.
The boys have moved from a place of distance, and now
have the ability to both give and receive love. They’ve
gone from non-verbal to age-appropriate reading in
second and third grade. They’ve gone from needing to be
carried and coddled all day long, to riding two wheelers,
playing chess, folding origami, and taking hip hop for fun.

As the new year dawns, I marvel at the power of love:
at the resilience of our older two children, Louie and
Gloria, and their compassion to accept, mentor, care for
and profoundly love and protect their brothers. To our
community of support, without whom we never could
have done this, and mostly to Juan and Jeremiah, who
have taught us infinite lessons, but primarily the lesson
that love heals and how dramatically transforming that’s
been for our family and our community.

CECE LOBIN has spent her entire professional life working with women and
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programs, she is currently the Women’s
Empowerment Director for a local social
justice organization. Most significantly, with
her husband Jay, she’s (hopefully) raising
four outrageously loving, radical, feminist,
activists – Louie (13), Gloria (12), Juan (9),
and Jeremiah (8).
What are we talking about when we use the word family? It seems like an easy word to define, but in thinking about the many different experiences of family across the world, we know that it is actually quite difficult. One could use the word to describe people related by blood or marriage, people living in the same household or someone who shows them unconditional love. As defined by American law, the term family means “one or more adults and children, related by blood, marriage or adoption and residing in the same household” (Department of Child and Family Services). With such a range of meanings, what necessitates defining the limits of family in the first place?

Furthermore, why is it necessary for society to define family instead of the individual? Humans function best when they belong to a supportive community such as a family. Every person needs to be part of a larger system of relationships, each of those connections providing him or her with some sort of valuable resource including love, food, shelter or knowledge. However, many people gain these resources from people not related to them by blood. It seems only fair that people should be able to define for themselves who their family is.

According to conflict theory, a sociological theory created by philosopher Karl Marx, members of a group rarely all will agree on a single solution when making a decision. In this event, the members with the most power — whether from sheer numbers, wealth or affluence — will win out over those with less, and their opinion will be better represented. When America’s government created its first laws protecting children’s rights in 1930, its overarching goal was to make sure children grow up in supportive, loving families. To do this, government officials had to create a legal definition of family so everyone was on the same page. At that time, the family unit had a rigid structure based on Christian ideals: one mother, one father and their biological children. This, according to common belief at the time, was the most supportive structure for raising children. Since the people in power at the time adhered to this definition of family, they voted to make it legal.

Much has changed in our society since government officials created those laws. For one, our country’s population has grown enormously in size and diversity of belief. Over the years, many people from other countries have immigrated to America, bringing new religions and ways of life with them. On the whole, Americans are also less religious than ever. Divorce rates are higher, making single-parent homes more common. All of this makes it difficult to define what a family is, since the experience of family differs so much from person to person. While the laws currently defining family make it possible for our government to work for children’s rights, they also cause dysfunction for those who do not fit the rigid definition. As minority experiences of family gain more attention in the media and visibility in everyday life, social norms will evolve to include them. Eventually, if our government works the way it should, so will our laws.

**We asked some of our high school and senior participants how they define family in their daily lives. What is your definition of family?**

**My definition of family is any collective of people committed to each other for the long haul and bound by common concern for each other and by a willingness to be there during the good and bad times. Social scientists call this type of families “fictive” and they may or may not live in the same household or same city.**  
Simone Wright — GeNarrations participant

New York Times columnist Frank Bruni recently wrote an article entitled “The Families We Invent.” I thought it was right on with what families mean to me. “…. Families are more than people linked by DNA, marriage or such. It’s about common needs, common generosity. It’s an act of will as much as an accident of birth. …. Former schoolmates, fellow churchgoers, neighbors or other friends can mean every bit as much to you as any actual relatives do, and have forged a family of their own invention.”

**Peggy Damrau — GeNarrations participant**

Family is anyone with whom you share love. It is not always those you are related to by blood; family can come in the form of a wonderful friend, a significant other, or even a pet. As long as there is mutual love, support and loyalty, it is family. Families are like a sports team — they may have their fair share of wins and losses,
but in the end, they’re still together. The connections between one and their family are so deep that they can never completely stop loving each other; they are bound together within the heart and soul. No matter how many twists and turns life takes, your family will always be by your side and you will always be by theirs.

Lindsay Teske — Goodman Youth Arts Council member

I am the grandmother grieving and outliving my progenitors, singing joyous melodies in welcome of the birth of my granddaughters, the new ancestors. Once I was young and gazed lovingly into the faces of my familial clan. Now, all of the stories, traditions, supernatural visions and unrealized dreams of my family live inside my head. I sense the nearness of their spirits in my sleep and their guidance in my waking hours. Becoming a student of genealogy, I research my lineage of shackled African slaves, plebian Europeans and pacified Native Americans whose blood courses through my veins.

In the absence of their presence, family now consists of embracing friends who dance with me in the genuine rhythm of love.

Sandra McCollum — GeNarrations participant

Our loving guides and fellow travellers in the exploration of life.

Our parents, who encouraged our first halting, droopy-diaper steps, and who taught us that fall-down-and-go-boom is merely a prelude to get up and go forth. Our sisters, who opened the gates to the infinite pleasure of numbers by teaching us to play cards. And who sparked our curiosity: Why doesn’t the Queen trump the King?

Our brothers, who revealed the wizardry of hitting a baseball and the magic of Shakespeare.

Our friends, with whom we set our sails to adventures that awaited us on the next street. And the next.

Our teachers, who assured us that as long as we continued to explore, the universe would continue to expand.

And our children, who trust us to guide them in their first halting, droopy-diaper steps in this world. And whom we trust will shelter us as we prepare to explore the next.

Paul Pasulka — GeNarrations participant

Over the years my idea of family has expanded beyond the one I was born into to include people with whom I have shared important life experiences and my deepest convictions. But what first comes to my mind when I think of family now is this: Someone who in my time of trouble I will without hesitation ask for help and someone who I can sit down with, feeling perfectly that I belong there.

June Huitt — GeNarrations participant

Family is anyone you are close to, you can be yourself around, and who trusts and loves you unconditionally. Someone who you cannot see for years, but then the next time you see each other, you’ll pick up right where you left off. Someone who has your back and will support you and stand up for you. With family, there is never a dull moment or an awkward pause in a conversation. There will be fighting, but you will make up quickly and be stronger because of it. Family comes in different shapes and sizes, from all walks of life. But most of all, family is a group of people that is your home.

Claire Reardon — General Theatre Studies student

Family is who you trust, and the people who trust you. In times of need, they are the ones who will be there, and in turn, you have to be there for them. We may call those that we share blood or DNA with family, but blood isn’t the only thing that creates family ties. For some people, those who we share DNA with are our family, but some find families elsewhere. They find a family in a place where they feel happy and comfortable, and in those who will nurture and allow them to grow into the person they’re meant to become. I’ve found my family and I am continuously adding people to the group of friends and loved ones that I call family.

Aliyah Muhammad — Goodman Youth Arts Council member
We sat down with Chicago actress and comedian, Melissa DuPrey, to talk about taking on the role of Lourdes in *Luna Gale* and the challenges of juggling comedy and drama.

**What has been your biggest challenge transitioning from comedy back to drama?**
Well, we never really lose comedy or leave it out of what we know to be serious. We can still go by the formula, tragedy + time = comedy. What’s happening in the play is happening in the “here and now” of that world. So, in playing the moment, the weight is there. I think the hardest thing, for me as a comic, is to really live in the moment. I guess that would be true for any actor. Even in comedy, the intentions are serious, and whatever character you play wants something, or has something to say. I feel I take my comedy very seriously, and the more intent I am in expressing what I want, the message gets across clearly. It’s the material that’s funny.

I also have this reoccurring nightmare that my followers are going to come to the play expecting a comedy or me in a comedic role, and leave thinking I didn’t do my job right. I’m really hoping to expand my versatility as a performer. I have always been a dramatic actress. Comedy came recently in my career, and I welcome it. I also challenge my supporters to see this role as an opportunity given to me based on my experience.

**You have recently been self-producing a one-woman show. Do you prefer solo work to ensemble work?**
I wrote my first one-woman show, SExomedy, while I was a member of Teatro Luna, an all-Latina ensemble, so I was always involved in the collaboration of a collective. When I started to go off and produce the show in other venues, all of the pressure of the show’s success, and its failure, was solely on my shoulders. It comes with a tremendous amount of stress, but after the show, I also feel the same amount of pride and accomplishment (usually a couple days after). As my own playwright, director, producer and designer, I didn’t realize at the time that I was really missing an integral element of the story-making process: the discoveries that can be made by the ensemble.

At the time of being cast in *Luna Gale*, it had been over 3 years since I had worked on ANY single-author work, and over a year since working with an ensemble. I knew this would be an exciting challenge. It’s about the bigger picture. And it’s also not my work. I could really appreciate the complexity and dimensions having multiple eyes and ears on the story. When we started with the table work, we all came in with preconceptions of our characters; some basic foundations based off of our own preliminary research, and gave voice to the text. With the playwright in the room every day, new discoveries were made, discussions opened, and concepts challenged. I think I had forgotten the value of different perspectives and opinions. While I had been busy telling my own personal narratives, I lost track of the world of privilege and the world of struggle. By creating a space where these worlds could be talked about freely allowed me to, once again, begin the collaboration process of building a play, a process I find to be more valuable because it’s rich in human experience.

**How has your process in preparing for the role of Lourdes differed from other roles you have played as a Latina character?**
The roles that I had taken on in Teatro Luna were in autobiographic and ethnographic pieces that were then devised into theatrical performances. I was used to creating work based off of real experiences, and often times dialogue was pulled from the actual interview transcripts. It didn’t matter the role because the character was real. But, we sometimes found ourselves casting by “types” (even though our goal and founding principle was to expose stereotypes and color lines so artist wouldn’t get pigeonholed in certain roles). For example, I couldn’t very well play a fair-skinned Brazilian who talks about wanting to be more tan to avoid intercultural racism.

Lourdes represents a very small demographic in Cedar Rapids, so her story is unique in that there aren’t a lot of people she can identify with in her community and everyday life. Plus the fact that she is in the foster care system since she was 7 years old made me question how her culture would factor into the building of her character. Her ethnicity is really not as apparent in this role as other roles I’ve played, so it was almost foreign to me to play a Latina character where a cultural presence is almost unacknowledged. Even the mention of empanadas is actually relevant to a character of the Philippines. It was challenging to not let her cultural identity outweigh her wants as a character. I focused more on her relationship with Caroline and her intentions...
as a newly emancipated adult who wanted to reconnect with a sister she hasn’t seen in over 7 years. Ultimately, they are all human stories, and that’s what you have to focus on.

The Goodman’s mission statement has a commitment to diversity in theatre. How do you feel this translates through your work in *Luna Gale*?

I never heard the words “diversity,” “diaspora,” or “devised work” used so freely until I moved back to Chicago. The neapolitan south didn’t give a woman of color too many opportunities to fulfill roles commonly given to ingénue types. After 7 years of studying theatre at a collegiate level, I knew I would have to go where the stories were; particularly stories where I felt would make an impact. I had to go were the work is.

Even though Chicago gave way to bountiful opportunities to get cast, and be versatile in performance, I wasn’t completely satisfied in roles being offered, even though diversity in theatre is a huge push right now. I still felt safer in creating stories that were socially conscious of the struggles of people of color, particularly Latinos, in our current everyday society. Solving the issue of diversity, to me, does not mean that the quick fix is to have an all black Hamlet or casting a Latina in a role clearly written to be a white person of privilege. It’s about telling the stories of the minority, and shedding light on a world we don’t always see.

With *Luna Gale* I was excited to build her backstory based off of experience and research of the area, community, and youth that had been in the foster care system. I was able to create her world. And not of all of that made it in. Ultimately, you are still working on a character written very specifically, and you have to be in line with the world that is already there for you. Diversity is so complicated, I feel, because it deals with “the other.” It’s basically everything we haven’t already seen. I appreciate the effort being made, and in working with Robert Falls, I find he has been a huge advocate for diversity in theatre, particularly Latino Theatre, so I am very excited of the movement that’s already upon us.

What role has your personal identity as a woman of color played in working on *Luna Gale*? Were you ever nervous about feeling like you might be exploiting or sensationalizing stories about people of color, or people in foster care?

As a scholar, I have always been inclined to produce more research than I knew what to do with. At one point this proved more difficult than I knew what to do with.
But then I let the facts flow. When we had guest speaker, a social worker, come in and give us personal recounts of working with the youth in foster care, I was so eager to take on that information and apply it to my character. I mean, why wouldn’t you? The facts are all there. I began building backstory to the truth, the way I learned how to tell a story through someone else’s eyes. But it always came down to what does the author want? What is the story the author is telling? This is not my work. It is not autobiographic, yet it is based on factual events or is realistic in nature. I had not worked on something like that in quite sometime. I found myself in familiar territory for a second. Building story based on fact. But coming back to the table, I had to find a balance of how much factual information built Lourdes and how much of her character was based off of circumstance that we built. Her experiences fueled her intentions, and how do those intentions lend itself to the story? Bending what I know to be true and what I have taken from personal experience would fall short to what the author had intended. And that happens more often than not. It can be very difficult being the only person of color in the room, and want to say your experience may be more relevant to this character than what’s being built. An actor can go home and create this elaborate backstory to heighten or recount the emotionality of the character for whatever purpose, but ultimately it is the responsibility of the director to hone in on the intentions of the playwright. And hopefully we were able to find the right balance for Lourdes together.

What advice would you give young actors of color who aspire to be in a main stage production?
While I was studying in the south, it was normal practice to assume that because you were in theatre, all you studied was Shakespeare. And for four years, that’s all I did. But always thinking that in the professional world, Titania would never have brown skin and textured hair. We LEARNED Shakespeare. We learned how to research, analyze, interpret, and breathe life into the words. Despite being cast in several roles, and some as the lead, there was always a voice in the back of my mind saying “No matter how good you are, you will never be able to say these lines on a professional stage here.” In college, I was cast in a Brecht play that would be my first devised work. The program hired a director from New York that was cultured and all things edgy. It was a push in our theatre department to bring it into the new age of theatre. She believed in diverse casting, and skewing color lines. I played a prostitute. And did a damn good job. But I couldn’t help but think, “Is this all that’s out there for women of color? Prostitutes? The nurse? The help?”

After I left Texas and returned to my stomping grounds, it didn’t take me long to find a tribe telling stories I could relate to. They were even telling MY stories. My first audition into Teatro Luna was unsuccessful. With only a slew of Shakespeare monologues in my arsenal, and no work outside of my college in over 2 years, my headshot and resume was placed in the “maybe” pile until someone had dropped out of a project Teatro Luna was doing with another company. It was an incubator series on border relations in the United States. Border issues? Wait...this play had social relevance? And devised? It was starting to feel like home again. Whenever I felt I wasn’t getting my fair shot, I didn’t blame it on others. I said the role for me isn’t built yet. I must create it. That’s where I feel people of color, and youth, have the most power to change the theatrical canon. We must begin to create or own work, and tell our own stories. Or else, how do you MAKE history? Also, be on time (which means, be early)!

What will you take away from Lourdes? What have you learned from her? How will she live in you after the play?
Lourdes will be special because she represents so much of the hope we have in the future, and how frail life is when we don’t focus on our dreams. She was a victim of circumstance that we say victorious over her circumstance in the beginning, but quickly unraveled. In building her and playing her, I found a lot of myself in that I didn’t come from a place of privilege. I come from a world where the odds of becoming a successful, educated, functioning citizen of society are very small. Lourdes is a miracle, no one expected her to even come out of the foster care mentally and emotionally healthy, let alone be apt and able to go to college. Her demise came from letting go, giving up everything she had worked so hard for and accomplished for a connection she longed for with her sister. At any given time, we can let go. Give up. But it’s how we choose to hang on and fight in the face of adversity that keeps me waking up everyday. She will always be a reminder of how much I don’t want to give up.
Hotlines
National Domestic Violence Hotline
Confidential, one-on-one support to each caller and chatter, offering crisis intervention, options for next steps and direct connection to sources for immediate safety. The hotline is an excellent source of help for concerned friends, family, co-workers and others seeking information and guidance on how to help someone they know.
1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

National Suicide Prevention Hotline
Whether you feel like you’re spiraling down or are in the tough position of helping a friend who is struggling, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is here for you. Let us help you through.
1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration 24/7 Treatment Referral Line
24-hour free and confidential treatment referral and information about mental and/or substance use disorders, prevention and recovery in English and Spanish.
1-800-662-HELP (4357)

Domestic Violence Resources
National Domestic Violence Hotline
Website of the National Domestic Violence Hotline listed in the section above for anyone experiencing domestic violence, seeking resources or information or questioning unhealthy aspects of their relationship.
www.thehotline.org

Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence
An organization working to eliminate violence against women and their children by promoting the eradication of domestic violence throughout Illinois; ensuring the safety of survivors, their access to services and their freedom of choice; holding abusers accountable for the violence they perpetrate; and encouraging the development of victim-sensitive laws, policies and procedures across all systems that impact survivors.
www.ilcadv.org

National Center on Domestic Violence
Developing and promoting accessible, culturally relevant and trauma-informed responses to domestic violence and other trauma so that survivors and their children can access the resources that are essential to their safety and well-being.
www.nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org

Asian and Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence
A national resource center on domestic violence, sexual violence, trafficking and other forms of gender-based violence in Asian and Pacific Islander communities. It serves a national network of advocates; community-based organizations; national and state programs; legal, health and mental health professionals; researchers; policy advocates; and activists from social justice organizations working to eliminate violence against women.
www.apiidv.org

Casa de Esperanza: National Latina Network
A Latina-led organization dedicated to providing effective solutions to domestic violence through enhancing social capital within communities: the trust, reciprocity, information and co-operation that are developed through social networks.
www.casadeesperanza.org/national-latino-network

Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community
An organization focused on the unique circumstances of African Americans as they face issues related to domestic violence, including intimate partner violence, child abuse, elder maltreatment and community violence. IDVAAC’s mission is to enhance society’s understanding of and ability to end violence in the African American community.
www.dvinstitute.org

Addiction Resources
National Institute on Drug Abuse
A federal scientific research institute whose scientific research addresses the most fundamental and essential questions about drug abuse, including tracking emerging drug use trends, understanding how drugs work in the brain and body, developing and testing new drug treatment and prevention approaches, and disseminating findings to the general public and special
populations.
http://www.drugabuse.gov

Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator
Behavioral health treatment services locator sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.
http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov

Faces of Recovery
Dedicated to organizing and mobilizing the more than 20 million Americans in recovery from addiction to alcohol and other drugs, our families, friends and allies into recovery community organizations and networks, to promote the right and resources to recover through advocacy, education and demonstrating the power and proof of long-term recovery.
http://www.facesandvoicesofrecovery.org

Al-Anon and Ala-Teen
Ala-Teen is a fellowship of members whose lives have been affected by someone else’s drinking. Ala-Teens come together to share experiences, strength and hope with each other, discuss difficulties, learn effective ways to cope with problems, encourage one another, help each other understand the principles of the Al-Anon program and learn how to use the 12 Steps and Ala-Teen’s 12 Traditions.
http://al-anon.alateen.org/

Alcoholics Anonymous
A fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop drinking.
http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org

Narcotics Anonymous
Narcotics Anonymous offers recovery to addicts around the world. The organization focuses on the disease of addiction rather than any particular drug. Its message is broad enough to attract addicts from any social class or nationality. When new members come to meetings, NA’s sole interest is their desire for freedom from active addiction and how NA can be of help.
http://www.na.org

(L to R): Colin Sphar (Peter) and Reyna de Courcy (Karlie) in rehearsal for Luna Gale at Goodman Theatre. Photo by Liz Lauren.
Theatre Etiquette with Robert Falls
BY GOODMAN EDUCATION

What should I wear?
Definitely dress nicely but comfortably; try business casual. No tank tops, ripped jeans, etc. Baseball caps or hats must be moved once you enter the theatre. The Goodman is air-conditioned so be sure to bring an extra sweater or dress warmly.

What should I bring?
Only what you really need. Electronic devices such as PSP, Nintendo DS, smart phones, and laser pointers are not permitted during the show. If it makes noise or is distracting, please refrain from having it out in the theatre. A purse, bag, or backpack is fine. School supplies are not necessary. Remember that you are here to sit back, watch and enjoy, so don’t bring anything you don’t need.

(Please remember):
No smoking, and no eating or drinking while inside the theatre.

What if I need to leave the theatre during the show?
Only if it is an emergency. Otherwise, it’s very disrespectful. Make sure to use restrooms before the show, or wait until intermission.

Have respect for other audience members.
This means no talking during the performance, no feet on seats, and no kicking.
(For your safety and others’!)

Artistic Director, Robert Falls. Photo by Brian Kuhlmann.
How should I respond to what’s going on on the stage?

Honestly but appropriately. If you find something funny, then laugh—but don’t laugh for five minutes straight or laugh so hard that you need to leave the theatre. Theatre is very different from watching a movie at home. Always remember that you are in a room full of people who are there to watch the performance. They can hear your responses just as well as you can hear theirs. Most important, the actors can hear and see you. They will appreciate any appropriate feed back but might be extremely offended if it is inappropriate. Whether you enjoy the play or not, you owe respect to the actors for having given it a try.

What to do during Intermission:

Most plays have a 15 minute intermission. This gives you time to stretch your legs, walk, use the restroom, get water and discuss the play with your friends.

We do ask that if you are sitting on the main floor that you remain downstairs and if you are sitting in the mezzanine that you remain upstairs. There are restrooms on both floors. When intermission is over, the lights in the lobby will flash several times; that is your cue to get back to your seat because the performance is about to begin!

What to do after the show:

There will be a post-show discussion immediately following the performance. Members of the cast will come out on stage and answer your questions. Feel free to ask anything that’s on your mind about the show, but please remember to be respectful.

What to do before the show:

When your class arrives, your teacher will let the Education staff know how many people are in your group. It is a good idea to arrive at least 15-20 minutes before the performance.

If you are late, often you will not be allowed to enter the show until after intermission. Once your group is called, an usher will lead you to your seats and hand you a program.

Please promptly sit where you have been assigned. Remember that the show needs to begin on time and everyone needs to be seated.

And remember the Golden Rule of Theatre-going:

Theatre artists are paid professionals. When you enter a theatre, you are entering their work space. Respect their work as you would have them respect yours.

Enjoy the Show!
Reading Your Ticket
BY GOODMAN EDUCATION

As a patron of the theatre, it is important to know how to read your ticket and find your seat. Generally, seats for all performances in the Goodman’s Albert Theatre are assigned seating, so be sure to know how to be able to find your seat. When you come with your school, you will be ushered to a section where you and your fellow students can sit and enjoy the play together.

Below is a seating chart– a map of all the seats in the Albert Theater – and an explanation of how to read your ticket. If you have any problems, ask an usher for help. They’re here for you!

Goodman’s Albert Theatre
After you have seen the show and discussed your responses in the classroom, it’s time to let us know what you thought! Your response letter plays an important role at Goodman Theatre. All of the letters we receive are forwarded to our artists, and you may get a response!

Pick one of the artists involved with Luna Gale whose work was particularly memorable to you—an actor, designer, the playwright or the director—and write that artist a letter describing your experience at the show and your feedback about his or her work. Be honest and ask any questions that are on your mind.

Send us your letter within one month of seeing the show, and we’ll forward it on to that artist!

Here is an example, a great student letter we received in response to Animal Crackers:

Dear Cast and Crew,

I would have to say that every single one of you have done a superb job in this play. All the effort you have put forth into this play has resulted in a memorable experience for all of us. I thought it was clever that the actors, actresses and the orchestra interacted with the audience. From viewing the original film of Animal Crackers, I think the cast played in the play and the original cast of Animal Crackers very similar! This play might have been the first encounter of the Marx brothers for many teenagers and children and I believe that the crew and cast of Animal Crackers proved that early comedy can also be entertaining and memorable!

The director’s vision of the play was a rather conscious one. Exposing the Marx brothers to the vast majority of people who never knew about them and bringing back nostalgic memories to the older audience was a great idea. This play was actually my first play and a first trip to Goodman Theatre. I myself, as a young adult, finally realized that plays are enjoyable and gratifying. The play had all the elements of emotion and slapstick comedy which made it a great one. The technical aspects as well as the props were amazingly set to follow each scene. My favorite scene had to be the scene where Harpo and Rivelli tried to clear up the misunderstanding of “The Flash.” I though the script was very flowing and comfortable. Was there any improv involved? I did not find any negative aspects of this play. I have found the play and the ambiance of Goodman Theatre very positive. I give Animal Crackers two thumbs up.

Sincerely,
A CPS student

Send your letters to:
Education and Community Engagement
Goodman Theatre
170 North Dearborn Street
Chicago, IL 60601

Or email us at: education@goodmantheatre.org

Goodman Theatre Education & Community Engagement is also online!

Check us out on Facebook:
http://www.facebook.com/goodmaned

Or Twitter:
http://twitter.com/GoodmanEd

We love hearing your thoughts, so don’t be afraid to drop us a line, comment, tag us in a note, @reply, or retweet us. Also check out our online educational resources for more information regarding the play you’ve seen, or anything else you’d like to know about how our programs (and theatre) work!

Keep checking in for updates online!