

A festive table set for a party. The table is covered with a red and white checkered tablecloth. In the center, a white skull is wearing a small, ornate crown. To the left of the skull is a large, roasted ham. To the right is a plate with a burger. Several red plastic cups are scattered on the table. The background is a wall of shimmering, colorful tinsel in shades of red, blue, and gold. A large, glowing red heart is visible in the upper left background.

# FAT HAM

THEATRE  
GOODMAN

STUDY GUIDE 2025



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# A WELCOME LETTER TO STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

By Jared Bellot, Walter Director of Education and Engagement

It brings me immense joy to welcome you to the world of *Fat Ham*, James Ijames's bold, Pulitzer Prize-winning reimagining of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. But don't get it twisted: *Fat Ham* is more than just a retelling of a classic story; it's a joyful, raw and deeply human exploration of family, identity and belonging. Through the eyes of Juicy, our young protagonist, *Fat Ham* transports us to a backyard where ghosts, BBQ ribs and family drama (or maybe trauma) become the backdrop for a story of resilience, self-discovery and the power of choice.

How do you  
make and  
maintain  
community  
in new and  
familiar  
spaces?

At its core, *Fat Ham* invites us to examine themes that resonate across time and communities: loyalty and revenge, cycles of violence, generational trauma and the many ways we process pain and loss. Juicy's journey unfolds in a space that challenges traditional ideas of masculinity, gender roles and familial expectations. With sharp humor and a touch of magic, the play holds a mirror up to our shared humanity, asking how we confront the demands of family and culture while carving out space for acceptance and authenticity.

Juicy's story is not just about survival but about finding joy and freedom in being unapologetically oneself—even when that requires challenging cycles of violence and defying preconceived understandings of what is possible. *Fat Ham* explores the legacies we are left with, the connections we forge and the spaces we create to live authentically. Just like Juicy, we all inherit something—traditions, expectations, sometimes even wounds. This production invites us to reflect: **What do we carry forward? What do we choose to let go? And how do we protect our own softness in a world that can be both beautiful and unkind?**

As you explore this guide, I encourage you to consider the essential question that our Education and Engagement team has curated for the 2024/2025 Season: **How do you make and maintain community in new and familiar spaces?** As you engage with the articles, dramaturgical context and activities in these pages, consider what community means to you. How do shared spaces—physical, emotional or cultural—shape the way we connect with one another? How do we honor our history while creating space for growth and authenticity?

Thank you for joining us in this exploration. Like a cookout, the theater is a space for connection, reflection, celebration and naturally, a healthy dose of drama. I hope this play and the questions it raises inspire meaningful conversations that will stay with you long after the final bow.



**Jared Bellot**

Walter Director of Education and Engagement

# MEET THE PLAYWRIGHT:



## JAMES IJAMES

**JAMES IJAMES** (pronounced **eye-mms**) is a Pulitzer Prize winning and Tony Award nominated playwright, a director and educator.

He has appeared regionally in productions at The Arden Theatre Company, The Philadelphia Theatre Company, InterAct Theatre Company, The Wilma Theatre, Baltimore Center Stage, Mauckingbird Theatre Company, and People's Light and Theatre.

James' plays have been produced by Flashpoint Theater Company, Orbiter 3, Theatre Horizon, Wilma Theatre, Theatre Exile, Azuka Theatre (Philadelphia, PA), The National Black Theatre, JACK, The Public Theater (NYC), Hudson Valley Shakespeare Theater, Steppenwolf Theatre, Definition Theatre, Timeline Theater (Chicago IL) Shotgun Players (Berkeley, CA) and have received development with Play-Penn New Play Conference, The Lark, Playwright's Horizon, Clubbed Thumb, Villanova Theater, Wilma Theater, Azuka Theatre and Victory Garden.

James is the 2011 F. Otto Haas Award for an Emerging Artist recipient, and two Barrymore Awards for Outstanding Direction of a Play for *The Brothers Size* with Simpatico Theatre Company and *Gem of the Ocean* with Arden Theatre. James is a 2015 Pew Fellow for Playwriting, the 2015 winner of the Terrence McNally New Play Award for *WHITE*, the 2015 Kesselring Honorable Mention Prize winner for .... *Miz Martha*, a 2017 recipient of the Whiting Award, a 2019 Kesselring Prize for *Kill Move Paradise*, a 2020 and 2022 Steinberg Prize, the 2022 Pulitzer Prize in Drama recipient and a 2023 Tony nominee for Best Play for *Fat Ham*.

James was a founding member of Orbiter 3, Philadelphia's first playwright producing collective and an ensemble member with Chicago's Definition Theatre Company. He received a B.A. in Drama from Morehouse College in Atlanta, GA and a M.F.A. in Acting from Temple University in Philadelphia, PA. James is an Associate Professor of Theatre at Villanova University. He resides in South Philadelphia. ♦

# A BACKYARD BARBECUE:

## FAT HAM PLAY SYNOPSIS

By Cori Lang, Literary and Dramaturgy Intern

**THE PLAY OPENS** in the backyard of a house in the South. Juicy is decorating the backyard with Tio, his cousin, preparing for a party celebrating the recent wedding between Juicy's mom, Tedra, and his dead dad's brother, Rev. Juicy's dad, Pap, has been dead for less than a week.

When Juicy steps inside of the house to grab more decorations, the ghost of Pap appears in the backyard but does not speak to Tio. Upon Juicy's return, Tio shares this information with Juicy and runs inside. After Tio leaves, Pap's ghost appears to Juicy. After some initial fear, Juicy realizes it's his dad. Through their conversation, we learn that in prison, Pap was shanked in the neck by someone who was sent by Rev. Pap awakens Juicy's hate of Rev before asking him to slaughter Rev to avenge his ghost. Juicy asks too many questions and Pap disappears, annoyed. Tio re-enters, and Juicy tells him about what Pap has told him to do.

Rev enters and flirts with Tedra in front of Juicy. Rev tells Juicy to change out of his all-black mourning clothes. Rev doesn't like what he changes into, and Tedra tells Rev to leave him be. Rev is angry about Juicy being "soft." After verbally degrading Juicy, Rev gets him to start fighting, then punches Juicy. Tedra pulls Juicy aside and tries to explain why she married Rev and that she is happy. Rev and Tedra disperse to continue preparing the barbecue. Larry enters; he has recently gotten home from serving in the Navy. Rev is proud of Larry. Tedra sits with Juicy and chats about Pap and whether Juicy is gay. Tedra then rejoins Rev and Larry at the table.

Rabby, Larry's mother, and Opal, Larry's sister, enter. After catching up, they all go inside, except Juicy and Opal. They catch up. Juicy says he might kill someone, and Opal shares she is a lesbian. Rabby and Tedra emerge from house followed by Larry and Rev. They rejoin the group and pray before eating.

Tedra tells Juicy to grab the karaoke machine. Tedra sings "100% Pure Love" by Crystal Waters, and Juicy sings "Creep" by Radiohead. Then, Juicy suggests everyone play charades. Juicy plans in an aside, like Hamlet, to get the players to enact a scene of his father's murder to make Rev admit to his crime. Rev is angered by the scene and goes into the house. Tedra follows, and they argue. Opal attempts to talk with Juicy, but he leaves the backyard, upset.

Rabby, Larry and Opal are left at the picnic table. Rabby tries to enforce gender roles on her children. Rabby gets Opal to go in the house with her to calm down Tedra and Rev. Juicy reenters and asks Larry what it's like to kill someone, which triggers some of Larry's PTSD. Larry begins to cry and says he wishes he could be soft again like Juicy. Larry kisses Juicy on the head before going inside. Tedra comes out of the house and tells Juicy to stop messing with Rev. Pap appears, but Tedra cannot see him and thinks Juicy is talking to no one. Juicy tells Tedra that Rev had Pap killed, but Rev calls her inside before Tedra can properly talk to Juicy.

Juicy breaks down and cries in the yard, when Tio enters, ready to party. Juicy informs Tio of the current state of the barbecue, and Tio offers him a beer. Tio, Juicy, Opal and Larry chat about their dreams and how they don't feel completely seen by those they care about. Rabby enters and tells Opal to help with the food. Larry offers, and Rabby wishes Opal were more like Larry. Juicy outs Larry. Larry and Juicy fight, which ends in Larry slamming Juicy's head into the table for outing him before he was ready. Opal hugs Larry, then Larry goes inside the house. Opal tells Rabby she likes girls, Rabby reveals she used to be a stripper and Tio shares a sexual experience he had through a virtual reality headset.

Rev and Tedra rejoin the group, and Rev starts berating Juicy for telling Tedra that Rev had Pap murdered. This argument continues until Rev tells Juicy to leave the house if he doesn't like Rev being there now. Rev then starts to choke on some food. Juicy is the only one who knows how to do the Heimlich, but Rev refuses to let Juicy, a gay man, touch him. Rev eventually dies from choking.

The remaining characters begin to notice the audience Juicy could see the whole time and deduce that the audience is expecting them all to die, like in *Hamlet*. After trying to kill each other, they decide it's not for them and carry on. Rev pops back out, very much alive. Larry makes a fabulous, dramatic entrance in drag. Celebration commences. ♦

# TO THINE OWN SELF BE TRUE:

## HAMLET PLAY SYNOPSIS

By The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust

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**Summary:** *The ghost of the King of Denmark tells his son Hamlet to avenge his murder by killing the new king, Hamlet's uncle. Hamlet feigns madness, contemplates life and death, and seeks revenge. His uncle, fearing for his life, also devises plots to kill Hamlet. The play ends with a duel, during which the King, Queen, Hamlet's opponent and Hamlet himself are all killed.*

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### ACT I

Late at night, guards on the battlements of Denmark's Elsinore castle are met by Horatio, Prince Hamlet's friend from school. The guards describe a ghost they have seen that resembles Hamlet's father, the recently-deceased king. At that moment, the Ghost reappears, and the guards and Horatio decide to tell Hamlet.

Claudius, Hamlet's uncle, married Hamlet's recently-widowed mother Gertrude, becoming the new King of Denmark. Hamlet continues to mourn his father's death and laments his mother's lack of loyalty. When Hamlet hears of the Ghost from Horatio, he wants to see it for himself.

Elsewhere, the royal attendant Polonius says farewell to his son Laertes, who is departing for France. Laertes warns his sister, Ophelia, away from Hamlet.

The Ghost appears to Hamlet, claiming indeed to be the ghost of his father. He tells Hamlet about how Claudius, the current King and Hamlet's uncle, murdered him, and Hamlet swears vengeance for his father. Hamlet decides to feign madness while he tests the truth of the Ghost's allegations (always a good idea in such situations).

### ACT II

According to his plan, Hamlet begins to act strangely. He rejects Ophelia, while Claudius and Polonius, the royal attendant, spy on him. They had hoped to find the reason for Hamlet's sudden change in behavior but could not. Claudius summons Guildenstern and Rosencrantz, old friends of Hamlet, to find out what's got into him. Their arrival coincides with a group of travelling actors that Hamlet happens to know well. Hamlet writes a play which includes scenes that mimic the murder of Hamlet's father. During rehearsal, Hamlet and the actors plot to present Hamlet's play before the King and Queen.

### ACT III

At the performance, Hamlet watches Claudius closely to see how he reacts. The play provokes Claudius, and he interrupts the action by storming out. He immediately resolves to send Hamlet away. Hamlet is summoned by his distressed mother, Gertrude, and on the way, he happens upon Claudius kneeling and attempting to pray. Hamlet reasons that to kill the King now would only send his soul to heaven rather than hell. Hamlet decides to spare his life for the time being.

Polonius hides in Gertrude's room to protect her from her unpredictable son. When Hamlet arrives to scold his mother, he hears Polonius moving behind the arras (a kind of tapestry). He stabs the tapestry and, in so doing, kills Polonius. The ghost of Hamlet's father reappears and warns his son not to delay revenge or upset his mother.

### ACT IV

Hamlet is sent to England, supposedly as an ambassador, just as King Fortinbras of Norway crosses Denmark with an army to attack Poland. During his journey, Hamlet discovers Claudius has a plan to have him killed once he arrives. He returns to Denmark alone, sending his companions Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to their deaths in his place.

Rejected by Hamlet, Ophelia is now desolate at the loss of her father. She goes mad and drowns.

### ACT V

On the way back to Denmark, Hamlet meets Horatio in the graveyard (along with a gravedigger), where they talk of the chances of life and death. Ophelia's funeral procession arrives at the very same graveyard (what luck!). Hamlet confronts Laertes, Ophelia's brother, who has taken his father's place at the court.

A duel is arranged between Hamlet and Laertes. During the match, Claudius conspires with Laertes to kill Hamlet. They plan that Hamlet will die either on a poisoned rapier or with poisoned wine. The plans go awry when Gertrude unwittingly drinks from the poisoned cup and dies. Then both Laertes and Hamlet are wounded by the poisoned blade, and Laertes dies.

Hamlet, in his death throes, kills Claudius. Hamlet dies, leaving only his friend Horatio to explain the truth to the new king, Fortinbras, as he returns in victory from the Polish wars. ♦

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# A KIND OF HAMLET:

## FAT HAM CHARACTER BREAKDOWN

By Anna Rogelio Joaquin

In crafting the characters of *Fat Ham*, playwright James Ijames took inspiration from the characters of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. See Ijames's character descriptions and Goodman Theatre's cast side-by-side with *Hamlet*'s characters below.



Played by  
Trumane Alston



Played by  
Anji White



Played by  
Ronald L. Conner



Played by  
Ireon Roach



Played by  
Sheldon D. Brown



Played by  
E. Faye Butler



Played by  
Ronald L. Conner



Played by  
Victor Musoni

FAT HAM	HAMLET
<b>JUICY</b> is thicc. 20-21, Black. He's beautiful. He is lonely. He is smart. A kind of Hamlet.	<b>HAMLET</b> is the Prince of Denmark. He is intelligent, introspective and conflicted. He struggles with grief over his father's death, anger at his mother's quick remarriage to his uncle and a desire for revenge.
<b>TEDRA</b> is Juicy's mother. 45-50, Black. She is a good mother. A kind of Gertrude.	<b>GERTRUDE</b> is the Queen of Denmark and Hamlet's mother. Gertrude quickly marries Claudius after her husband's death, which deeply upsets Hamlet.
<b>REV</b> is Tedra's husband. 45-50, Black. Her dead ex-husband's brother. Pig farmer and pit master. Electric. A kind of Claudius. Same actor as PAP.	<b>CLAUDIUS</b> is Hamlet's uncle. He is ambitious, manipulative and morally corrupt. After murdering his brother, King Hamlet, he takes the throne and marries his brother's widow, Gertrude.
<b>OPAL</b> is one of Juicy's only friends. 19-20. Black. She loves Juicy and worries about him. A kind of Ophelia.	<b>OPHELIA</b> is Hamlet's love interest. She is obedient to her father, Polonius, and brother, Laertes, and she is caught between her family's demands and her loyalty to Hamlet. After Hamlet kills her father, Ophelia descends into madness. Her death is often interpreted as a suicide.
<b>LARRY</b> is a boy that is attracted to Juicy. 21-23. Black. A marine. Trying to heal from PTSD. Has a secret. Awkward. A kind of Laertes.	<b>LAERTES</b> is Ophelia's brother and Polonius's son. Laertes is impulsive and passionate, especially when it comes to avenging his father's death. His pursuit of revenge against Hamlet mirrors that of Hamlet.
<b>RABBY</b> is Larry and Opal's mother. 40-45. Black. Tedra's friend. Semi-churchy but honestly she just wanna drink and praise the Lord. A kind of Polonius.	<b>POLONIUS</b> is the Lord Chamberlain of Denmark and father to Ophelia and Laertes. Polonius is an advisor to Claudius and is often portrayed as meddlesome and somewhat foolish. His attempt to spy on Hamlet ultimately leads to his death.
<b>PAP</b> is the Ghost of Juicy's father. Appears 45ish. Black. Was in prison for killing someone cause their breath stank, til he got shanked on the way to dinner. A kind of Hamlet's Father. Same actor as REV.	<b>HAMLET'S FATHER</b> is the late King of Denmark who appears in the form of a ghost. He reveals to Hamlet that Claudius murdered him, setting Hamlet on his path of revenge.
<b>TIO</b> is clever. 20-40. Black or Afro-Latinx. Juicy's cousin. Oldest friend.	<b>HORATIO</b> is Hamlet's loyal friend and confidant. He is rational, steady and honest. He is one of the few characters who survives the play's tragic events.



# THE WORLD OF THE PLAY:

## FAT HAM PLAY IN CONTEXT

By Jared Bellot,  
Walter Director of Education & Engagement

When exploring *Fat Ham*, it's important to understand the context that shapes this modern version of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. While *Fat Ham* is inspired by the classic tragedy, it brings the story's themes of grief, identity and revenge into a new setting that reflects the experiences of Black communities, especially in the American South. The play looks at Blackness, Queerness, how trauma can be passed down from one generation to the next and how people try to break free from family expectations—all within the frame of a backyard barbecue.

**Read on to learn more about the context of *Fat Ham* and how it brings Shakespeare's classic story into a fresh, exciting space for today's audiences.**

### William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*

A story about revenge, grief and deep questions about life and death, William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* has been performed for audiences for over 400 years, making it one of the most well-known plays in existence. Today, it's said to be performed somewhere in the world every minute of every day. Many of the play's iconic phrases, like "to thine own self be true" and "method in the madness," have become part of our everyday language.

Many trace *Hamlet's* roots back to the Scandinavian fable of Amleth, a 9th-century Norse prince who pretends to be mad to protect himself and seek revenge on his uncle, who killed his father. The name "Amleth" is very similar to "Hamlet," and the themes of betrayal, revenge and madness are key to both stories. This tale, passed down for centuries, was eventually translated into French during the 1500s, which is likely where Shakespeare first encountered it.

It is possible that Shakespeare's personal life also influenced the story of *Hamlet*. In 1596, just a few years before he wrote the play, Shakespeare's 11-year-old son, Hamnet, died. The similarity between the names "Hamnet" and "Hamlet" has led some to wonder if Shakespeare's grief for his son helped him write about Hamlet's mourning for his father.

What makes *Hamlet* so remarkable is how Shakespeare transformed a simple revenge tale into a complex, emotional masterpiece. The character of Hamlet isn't just a hero seeking justice—he's a conflicted, moody, deeply flawed person wrestling with questions about life, death and morality. His famous soliloquy (a moment in a play where a character speaks their thoughts aloud) "to be or not to be..." gives us a glimpse into his mind as he ponders whether life is even worth living. This kind of psychological depth was groundbreaking for its time and is one reason *Hamlet* continues to resonate with audiences to this day.

The play also explores the theme of madness in unique ways. Hamlet pretends to be losing his mind in order to uncover the truth about his father's murder, but his behavior raises questions about whether he's truly losing his grip on reality. Shakespeare blurs the line between sanity and insanity, creating a sense of ambiguity that has fascinated audiences and scholars alike for centuries.

Since its premiere, *Hamlet* has inspired countless adaptations across cultures and mediums. Modern reimagings, like James Ijames' *Fat Ham* and Disney's *The Lion King* (that's right, Simba's journey was modeled after Shakespeare!) showcase the play's timeless appeal. Directors have reinterpreted the tale in films like Kenneth Branagh's full-length *Hamlet* and Michael Almereyda's version taking place in a New York City corporate office setting. Similarly, Akira Kurosawa's *The Bad Sleep Well*, a 1960 Japanese neo-noir crime mystery, and Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, a play following the lives of two side character's during the plot of *Hamlet*, offer unique cultural and philosophical twists on the classic tale. All of these adaptations demonstrate how *Hamlet's* universal themes of grief, revenge, identity and the search for meaning continue to resonate across time, place and artistic form.





Trumane Alston rehearsing as Juicy

## The Cultural Significance of Cookouts and Barbecues

Cookouts are more than just culinary traditions in Black culture—they are vital spaces for connection, relaxation and community that reflect the lived history of Black people in the United States. These gatherings embody what author bell hooks refers to as a “homeplace”—a safe space where people feel supported and can share stories with one another. Amidst life’s challenges, cookouts offer solace through delicious food, good music and shared company, serving as an essential ritual for bonding and collective healing.

Cookouts originated on plantations as a way for enslaved people to gather, share food and affirm their humanity under oppressive conditions. This tradition evolved during the Great Migration when Southern Black folks moved to urban areas, where communal cooking in shared spaces or public parks became common due to limited kitchen facilities. Over time, however, as homeownership increased, backyards emerged as central spaces for hosting cookouts, solidifying their role in Black cultural life.

West African food traditions, deeply shaped by the practices of enslaved Africans in the United States, serve as the foundation for many iconic dishes at Black cookouts today. “Juba,” the scraps leftover from meals prepared for plantation households, were combined with other available ingredients to create sustaining, nourishing meals. Corn, a staple food for enslaved people (popular due to its versatility and ability to grow on less-fertile land) could be prepared in various forms, including hoecakes, cornbread and spoonbread, providing sustenance despite limited resources. Similarly, pork (inexpensive for plantation owners) became another cornerstone of the diet for enslaved Africans. Often relegated to consuming the undesirable parts of the pig—such as ham hocks, hog jowls and intestines—enslaved cooks transformed these scraps into dishes like chitlins, which remain popular today.



Director Tyrone Phillips at first rehearsal

Barbecue, the technique of slow cooking meat over low heat for several hours, similarly has roots that can be traced back to Black folks who were denied access to indoor kitchens and forced to prepare meals outside, the Native American community’s practices of pit cooking, and the relationship between those two groups. By the 18th century, individuals who had mastered this labor-intensive skill were recognized as celebrated pitmasters, blending culinary traditions from West Africa, Europe and Native American cultures to create distinctive barbecue techniques and meals. After emancipation, these pitmasters became highly sought-after across the country, and their influence spread as barbecue became an essential part of American cuisine.

In the 20th century, innovations in meat processing led to butchers trimming off gristle from pork ribs to create what became known as St. Louis-style ribs, leaving behind rib tips that were considered undesirable. Chicago pitmasters, particularly on the South Side, seized this opportunity. They purchased rib tips in bulk from local slaughterhouses and perfected charcoal grilling techniques to enhance the flavor and tenderness of the meat. By the 1950s and 1960s, rib tips became a hallmark of South Side barbecue, with establishments like Lem’s and Argia B’s becoming beloved spots in Chicago’s culinary scene.

Beyond their origins in necessity and ingenuity, these foods carry deep cultural meaning. Meals like cornbread, smoked meats and barbecue ribs represent more than sustenance; they symbolize strength, survival and community. For generations, food has been a medium through which Black families and communities pass down traditions, share stories and celebrate their heritage. The communal nature of a cookout itself is a testament to this history, as it brings people together to honor resilience and joy through shared meals. By transforming ingredients of oppression into symbols of culture and pride, Black communities have not only survived but also enriched the broader landscape of American cuisine.

## Understanding Generational Trauma

Generational trauma refers to the psychological damage passed down from one generation to the next. It happens when individuals or communities experience trauma—such as racism, violence or oppression—and its effects are felt not only by those who directly went through it, but also by their children, grandchildren and beyond. Even if future generations don't experience the original trauma firsthand, they can still feel its effects, such as anxiety, depression or difficulty trusting others. This occurs because younger generations often learn how to cope with fear and instability from their caregivers.

Research has shown that trauma can be passed down biologically and culturally. Biologically, trauma can lead to epigenetic changes, where the stress and experiences of one generation affect the DNA of future generations. This means that children might inherit emotional responses or vulnerabilities to stress, even if they didn't experience the traumatic events themselves. Culturally, trauma is passed down through behaviors and coping strategies taught by caregivers, such as being hyper-vigilant, hiding emotions or avoiding conflict. These learned behaviors can continue through generations, affecting how individuals interact with others and perceive the world.

Generational trauma can be triggered by various events, including abuse (physical, emotional or sexual), oppression, war, genocide, racism and natural disasters. When individuals experience these traumas, it doesn't just affect them in the moment but also influences how they parent and make decisions in the future. For example, a person who grew up in an abusive household may struggle to form healthy relationships as an adult, passing on unhealthy patterns of behavior to their children. Similarly, a person who has faced racism might raise their children to be overly cautious in certain situations due to their own experiences.

Recognizing generational trauma can be challenging, but it often shows up through mental health struggles like anxiety, depression, low self-esteem or self-destructive behavior. It may also appear in unhealthy family dynamics, such as difficulty trusting others or forming close relationships. In families with generational trauma, there may be repeating patterns of conflict or unhealthy attachment styles. These patterns can prevent individuals from breaking free from the trauma, keeping them stuck in cycles of emotional pain.

Healing from generational trauma is possible, but it takes time and intentional effort. The first step is recognizing the trauma and understanding its effects. Acknowledging the trauma without judgment is key, as guilt or shame can make healing more difficult. Seeking professional support, such as therapy, is often necessary to work through these issues. While it's a challenging process, breaking the cycle of generational trauma can lead to healthier relationships and better mental health for future generations. Understanding and addressing this trauma is crucial for healing, both individually and within families or communities.





## Queer Black Identity, Liberation, and Joy

The experiences of Queer Black folks in the United States represent a unique experience shaped by the compounded challenges of racism and homophobia in this country. While Black people have faced systemic oppression through slavery, racism and white supremacy, Queer people have been marginalized for their sexual orientation and gender identity. For Queer Black individuals, these forms of discrimination overlap. The fight for equality has been central to both the Black liberation and LGBTQ+ rights movements, with both groups fighting against racism, homophobia and discrimination.

Throughout history, Queer Black people have fought to create spaces where they can express their identities. During the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s, artists like Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston explored themes of sexuality and gender in their work, even though it wasn't always openly discussed at the time, setting the stage for future generations to more openly express their full identities. In the 1960s, during the Stonewall Riots, figures such as Marsha P. Johnson found themselves at the forefront of the LGBTQ+ rights movement. Alongside other activists of color, like Sylvia Rivera, Johnson was instrumental in founding S.T.A.R., an organization that provided support for homeless LGBTQ+ youth, especially those who were Black or Latine. Their activism helped secure a place for Queer people of color in the civil rights movement.

Today, Black LGBTQ+ figures remain at the forefront at the struggle for justice. Popular artists like Janelle Monáe openly challenge conventional ideas of gender and sexuality in their music and performances, embracing Black Queer identity in ways that, not long ago, were not as widely accepted. Brittney Griner, a professional basketball player for the Phoenix Mercury, has spoken out for better representation and acceptance of LGBTQ+ athletes and uses her influence to support LGBTQ+ youth. In government, folks like Illinois State Senator Mike Simmons, a Chicago native and the first openly gay State Senator in Illinois, represent a growing wave of Black LGBTQ+ elected officials—a group that has increased by 317% in the last five years. Says Senator Simmons: "My blackness and my gayness are beautiful ingredients to who I am. I stand proud of my identity."

Liberation, in this context, means more than just fighting against racism and homophobia—it's about being able to fully embrace who someone is without fear of rejection or shame, it's about finding joy in your identity. Despite facing discrimination and oppression, Queer Black people have always used joy as a powerful form of resistance. Throughout history, joy has been a way for Black communities to survive and push back against hardships. In Black churches, people have found strength in worship and spirituality. Similarly, in ball culture, Queer Black individuals found ways to celebrate, even amidst experiencing oppression. Ball culture, which emerged in the 1980s Harlem's drag scene, exemplifies the way Queer Black individuals have created spaces to find belonging, express their identities and support one another. In the ballroom scene, participants form "houses"—chosen families that provide care, mentorship and solidarity. These communities offer safety and acceptance, allowing individuals to navigate the challenges they face in society.

The history and culture of Queer Black folks show us that liberation is not just about fighting for equal rights, but also about celebrating the unique ways individuals express themselves. Joy becomes not just a survival tactic or form of resistance, but rather, a way to boldly affirm one's right to live and love freely. ♦



Set design for *Fat Ham* by Arnel Sanciano



# THE SHAKESPEARE TREATMENT:

## A CONVERSATION WITH DIRECTOR TYRONE PHILLIPS

By Jared Bellot,  
Walter Director of Education and Engagement

Walter Director of Education and Engagement **Jared Bellot**, who served as Dramaturg for the Goodman's production of *Fat Ham*, sat down with Director **Tyrone Phillips** to discuss his feelings about William Shakespeare, the relationship between comedy and tragedy and his vision for this play.



Dramaturg  
Jared Bellot



Director  
Tyrone Phillips

**Jared Bellot:** James Ijames describes *Fat Ham* as “his conversation with Shakespeare, a chance to talk to the guy.” How has your relationship with Shakespeare and his works evolved throughout your artistic journey?

**Tyrone Phillips:** When I was younger, I felt like Shakespeare was the furthest thing away from me. Whenever it was time to approach his work, I couldn't help but wonder: **did this man have me in mind when he was writing this play?**

The more time I spent with Shakespearean texts, though, the more I found myself falling in love with the rhythm of Shakespeare's language—the poetry, stories, characters and archetypes they represented. For undergrad, I enrolled at the University of Illinois-Urbana Champaign, a BFA program where students receive classical training, and it was there that I was able to face my fears about Shakespeare. I studied abroad in England and even got to recite Shakespeare's words on the stage of The Globe Theatre. From that moment on, there was a different type of ownership with the work.

Today, I find my way in through all those elements that make up a Shakespearean piece that I fell in love with. I try to give any story that I tell now the Shakespeare Treatment.

**Jared:** Which is so similar to what playwright James Ijames has done with *Fat Ham*—using one of Shakespeare's most well-known plays as a framework to explore these larger ideas.

**Tyrone:** I think *Hamlet* gives us as the audience a perfect jumping off point. Ultimately, *Fat Ham* is a story about dealing with grief, about what it looks like for our community to experience death and loss—not just of people, but of ideas as well. Having this play that says it's okay to have these emotions and feel these feelings I think is incredibly important.

Something else that I love about these stories is that they give us a lens through which to look at violence and vengeance. In *Fat Ham*, we get to watch as Juicy makes a choice to either follow in the footsteps of the past and do what has always been done, or make the choice to be a different person and choose a different path. I'm excited that this play, in a very Shakespearean way, is giving us a chance to explore these really big, human issues.

**Jared:** One of the things I think is so beautiful about *Fat Ham* is how it honors the complexities of death while also embracing humor and joy.

**Tyrone:** I was once told that we laugh and cry on the same vibrations. That is something I take with me to every play that I'm a part of. I love comedy and drama, and I think those two things go hand in hand. I think some of our saddest movements are some of our funniest moments—which is often true in my own life.

**Jared:** What role does humor play in *Fat Ham*?

**Tyrone:** Humor is a release of energy. I think a lot about the audience and how they might laugh at some things I don't think are funny, but in the act of holding up a mirror with this story, there might be something that tickles them. Giving permission for people to express whatever comfort or discomfort they are feeling is why I think theater is incredible. Getting to laugh together as an audience is wonderful.

**Jared:** So it's OK to laugh during the show?

**Tyrone:** Please—laugh, cry, clap! It's live theater and that performance will be special and different because it's the only time that specific energy will ever happen.

The thing that is great about the magic of theater is that we as the audience all get to be flies on the wall—in this case, flies at the barbecue, on the porch—and see the journey this young man is going through.

# "HOW DO WE PROTECT OUR SOFTNESS ON THIS JOURNEY?"

**Jared:** Speaking of magic, this play features several moments of illusion. Why do you think these theatrical devices are important in telling this story, and how do they contribute to the overall meaning of the play?

**Tyrone:** The question the designers and I had to answer was: what does it mean for an ancestor to come back and speak to you? I've seen so many cool and interesting ways the actor playing the ghost of Hamlet's father appears. We wanted to preserve the magic that happens in that moment and be sure to make it theatrical. For us that meant keeping ourselves confined to what the reality of the world on stage but giving ourselves license to play!

Pap, the ghost of Juicy's father, will appear in a couple different ways a couple different times throughout the show. I got to collaborate with our Illusion Consultant Benjamin Barnes to think about how to bring Juicy's journey in this play to life, which was really special. It was a great example of how certain plays have certain areas of specialty that require specific knowledge and experience.

**Jared:** You've spoken about how Juicy's journey is an exploration of what it means to protect your softness in a world that is not welcoming of that. Why is this an important theme to you?

**Tyrone:** Juicy is recognizing that he feels different for lots of different reasons. His journey is about figuring out how to allow space for that difference. He's not the violent or vengeful type, so it's hard for him to take the knife and do what he is being told to do by his father.

When we look at systemic impacts on individuals' lives—like the education system and choices young people must make that impact the rest of their lives—it makes me wonder: How do we protect our softness on this journey? In a world that is cold and hard, how do you keep yourself safe, and preserve what makes you, you?

**Jared:** Do you think that this ties into the idea of family, legacy and the things we inherit from those who came before?

**Tyrone:** Definitely, because we always have a choice, no matter what. When you inherit something, you have a choice of what you do with it moving forward. And to make smart decisions about the future, you need to know something about the past. Juicy is facing a critical choice about who he is and who he will forever be.

**Jared:** And whether he will accept what he's inherited or break those cycles of trauma.

**Tyrone:** Yes! I'm super interested in investigating how you break generational trauma, curses and cycles.

**Jared:** That question is something that James Ijames often explores in his plays. What about his writing excites you?

**Tyrone:** James is always looking at different aspects of life and is very purposeful about who he is putting center stage. I've always been drawn to the magical realism in his writing because he can literally transport you from this world in the most poetic, beautiful way one moment and then land you smack dab back in realism the next. There are so many beautiful ways he keys the audience into what is going on, and his language and writing is absolutely incredible. I love how he tells stories with purpose and specificity—and don't forget the comedy! James is really funny but still toes that line between the things that hurt in life and the things that are comical. He takes all of that and drops it in the space of a family cookout.

**Jared:** Did your family have cookouts?

**Tyrone:** Yes, but Jamaican ones, which are completely different!

**Jared:** So what was served on the picnic table, and what are you bringing?

**Tyrone:** I'm talking about ox tail, jerk chicken, rice and peas. There's sometimes American food—the occasional hotdog or hamburger—but it's very much a cultural thing. For me, I always bring Jamaican beef patties. They're easy to share, everyone gets their own, there's no mess. Even as a kid, that's what I made sure to bring to the cookout.

**Jared:** What do you hope students take away from this production?

**Tyrone:** I hope you see yourselves in Juicy. I hope you see that even when he is faced with making difficult decisions, at the end of the day he must be true to himself. I hope you feel freedom, the power to make choices and that you will leave wanting to be true and honest to yourself. I hope Juicy liberates you to say: there are many paths in the world that I can take, but for me, I'm going to choose the path that brings me true joy and happiness. ♦

# HOT LINKS!

## A CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

By Tyra Bullock, Associate Director of Education

In this activity, students will take on the role of characters in *Fat Ham* and answer a series of questions asked by their peers. This game encourages students to use character analysis as a tool for investigating multiple perspectives and themes in the play while also demonstrating their understanding of the text.

**NOTE:** Students will need to be familiar with the play prior to this activity.

### BEFORE CLASS: SET UP

1. Print out the 'Character Signage' pieces found on pages 15 through 18.
2. Arrange (up to) eight chairs in the front or center of the classroom. Each chair should have the name of a character from the 'Character Signage' sheets placed in the seat.
3. Rewrite the 'Open-Ended Questions Guide' on p. 14 of the study guide on a sheet of chart paper. Make sure this is displayed somewhere in the classroom for students to view.
4. Hand each student three different colored sticky notes.

### STEP 1: READ "SYNOPSIS" AND "CHARACTER BREAKDOWN" (15 MINUTES)

1. As a class, read "A Backyard Barbecue: *Fat Ham* Synopsis" on p. 4 of the study guide.
2. Invite students to share aloud any thoughts from their reading (or the play) that sticks out to them.

### STEP 2: PREPARE QUESTIONS (10 MINUTES)

1. Explain to students that in this activity, they will draw on their knowledge of *Fat Ham* to create a list of open-ended questions to "ask the characters in the play," who will be represented by volunteers from the class.
2. Before starting, take a moment to review what makes a question open-ended by asking the students for their definitions. After hearing a few responses, share a common definition: **An open-ended question is a question that requires a free-form response. It cannot be answered using a simple "yes" or "no" response.**
3. Refer to the chart paper of open-ended questions displayed in the classroom. Use this tool and/or **the guide on the next page** to explain and provide examples of the varying levels of difficulty.

**TIME:** 55-65 MINUTES

**VOCABULARY:**

- Open Ended Question

**MATERIALS:**

- 3 different color sticky notes
- Chairs (1 per character)
- Character Signage (pp. 15-18, 1 copy each)
- "A Backyard Barbecue: *Fat Ham* Play Synopsis" (p. 4, 1 per student)
- Sheet of notebook paper (1 per student)
- Writing utensil
- Timer (Optional)

## ILLINOIS LEARNING STANDARDS

### ENGLISH

- **RL.9-10.3:** Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters and advance the plot or develop the theme.
- **RI.11-12.1:** Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.
- **RI.11-12.3:** Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas or events interact and develop over the course of the text.
- **SL.11-12.1.c:** Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.
- **RH.11-12.3:** Evaluate various explanations for actions or events and determine which explanation best accords with textual evidence, acknowledging where the text leaves matters uncertain.

### THEATER

- **Cr1.1.1.c:** Use script analysis to generate ideas about a character that is believable and authentic in a drama/theater work.
- **Pr4.1.1.b:** Shape character choices using given circumstances in a drama/theater work.
- **Re8.1.1.b:** Identify and compare cultural perspectives and contexts that may influence the interpretation of a drama/theater work.
- **Cn.10.1.1.a:** Choose and interpret a drama/theater work to reflect or question personal beliefs.



## OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS GUIDE

Level	Description	Examples
1	These are simple, factual answers that could easily be found in the text.	<i>What is your occupation?</i> <i>What is your relationship to Juicy?</i>
2	These questions could require some analysis and application of knowledge from the text.	<i>What inspired you to marry Juicy's father?</i> <i>Why did you attend the wedding if you didn't support it?</i>
3	These are complex questions that demand deep understanding, critical thinking and synthesis of information.	<i>If you could do it all over again, what would you do differently and why?</i> <i>How do you feel generational trauma has impacted your perception of the world?</i>

- Instruct students to write three questions, each at a different level of questioning, for three different characters from *Fat Ham*. Each question should be written on a separate sticky note, using a specific color for each level (e.g., Yellow = Level 1, Pink = Level 2, etc.). Be sure to explain which color corresponds to each level.
- Give students a few minutes to write their questions. Remind them to write one question per sticky note, ensuring they have a total of three questions, one for each level.

### STEP 3: ASSIGN THE CHARACTER ROLES (2 MINUTES)

- Ask for eight volunteers to answer questions representing different characters in *Fat Ham*. (If you'd like, you can be more intentional about the number of characters used in this activity to suit your class.)
- Once selected, invite each volunteer to sit in one of the chairs at the front of the classroom labeled with that character's name. To help students remember the roles of each volunteer, instruct them to hold the sign throughout the game.
- Explain that while answers to these questions will be improvised, **it is important that the characters' responses be based on contextual evidence** provided in the play.

### STEP 4: ESTABLISH THE RULES (3 MINUTES)

- Share with the students that there will be three rounds of questioning (hence, Levels 1-3!). In round one, students will ask Level 1 questions from the [insert color] sticky notes. In round two, only Level 2 questions from the [insert color] sticky notes, and in round three, only Level 3 questions from the [insert color] sticky notes.
- If a student would prefer not to answer, they can shout "Hot Link!" However, they may only use the "Hot Link!" advantage one time in the entire game. So, encourage them to use it wisely!
- Only one question may be asked to each character per round. As the Facilitator, you will determine the order in which questions are asked.

### STEP 5: PLAY (15-20 MINUTES)

- Facilitate three rounds of questioning. Encourage students to limit their answers to no more than 30 seconds. Feel free to use a timer during this step to help students stay on track.
  - If students ask questions that do not fit the level of difficulty, help redirect them by reframing the question!
  - Make sure to keep track of when a character uses the "Hot Link" advantage. Students will have a chance to reflect on this strategy in the next step of this activity.

### STEP 6: REFLECTION QUESTIONS (10-15 MINUTES)

**Reflect.** Use the following questions to spark discussion:

- What did you learn about the characters in this exercise? Did their responses change how you view them? Why or why not?
- At what points did the characters use their "Hot Link!" advantage? To the class: why do you think they chose not to answer the question? To the volunteers: why did your character choose not to answer?
- In what ways do you think the characters' personal or cultural experiences influence their responses? How would you have answered if you were one of the characters?
- Did you discover any similarities amongst the characters? What were some noticeable differences in their responses? Any that surprised you?
- If familiar with Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, how do the characters' accounts compare?
- After this activity, do you think it's possible for the characters to make and find community despite their differences? If yes, how so?

# JUICY

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# TEDRA

# REV

---

# OPAL



# LARRY

---

# RABBY

# PAP

---

# TIO

# BEHIND THE SIGHTS AND SOUNDS:

## MEET THE DESIGNERS

By Anna Rogelio Joaquin,  
School Programs Manager

When you see a show, you may notice several ways you are transported to the world of the play. Perhaps you have experienced lights that alter the mood, costumes that signal a different time period, sounds that shape transitions or a set that shifts into different locations. Behind the sights and sounds of *Fat Ham* are a team of designers helping bring the show to life. On the Goodman's team for this production are Lighting Designer **Jason Lynch**, Sound Designer **Willow James**, Costume Designer **Jos N. Banks**, Illusion Consultant **Benjamin Barnes**, and Scenic Designer **Arnel Sanciano**.

Read on to learn about their vision for *Fat Ham* and what they hope you notice! For a deeper dive into the sound design, check out "Sound as a Character: A Q&A with Sound Designer Willow James" on p. 20.



**Jason Lynch**  
Lighting Designer

Upon entering the theater, the setting for *Fat Ham* may appear straightforward, depicting a scene of a realistic backyard cookout. However, the design team was tasked with creating an atmosphere that holds space for a myriad of themes, akin to *Hamlet*, including the juxtaposition of **appearance versus reality, deception and manipulation**, as well as **religion, honor and revenge**.

Within the play, there are instances of heightened theatricality where students should consider the contrast between what a backyard cookout might feel and look like versus entering the character's brain space where we access their thoughts, emotions and internal mental state. **How does the mood change as the lighting transitions from realism to a moment of theatricality and magic? How does the energy of the lighting mirror the energy of the action on stage?**

Students should pay particular attention to the color and saturation of the light during the otherworldly moments of the play. **Specifically, when Pap is on stage, how does the darkness or paleness of the lighting compare to other moments of the play? Conversely, how does the lighting intersect with the moments of joy and excitement on stage?**



**Willow James**  
Sound Designer

I would describe my vision for the sound design as **nostalgic, funky, magical and gritty**.

I hope students notice the fun. As beautiful, magical and transformative as this show is, it's also fun. I always like to have a little fun with pre-show music and internal cues, even if only the cast and crew notice. So stay tuned!



**Jos N. Banks**  
Costume Designer

My overall concept for the Costume Design on *Fat Ham* is a unique take on bringing the traditional silhouettes of design we would typically see in the Shakespearean canon to a modern light—and with our particular production—a **90s twist**. I hope our students and audience members alike notice the varying identifying factors I've assembled in each character's costume plot such as **color, texture, print and shape**.

There are a plethora of **easter eggs for the BIPOC community** in the design as well. For one of the looks, I was quite inspired by the "unconventional challenges" on television shows such as *Project Runway* and *RuPaul's Drag Race*.

My hope is that this production becomes a celebration of **body positivity, queer expression/identity and freedom**. I hope my designs inspire a future generation of creatives and that audiences **see bits of themselves and their loved ones** reflected in the work. Enjoy!



**Benjamin Barnes**  
Illusion Consultant

I hope that they will recognize the power illusions have to make unreal moments and scenarios real—and not only for the characters onstage, but for the audience in the seats. **I want the illusions to look and feel "real."** If I can hide our methods/craft effectively, it will help the audience **lose themselves in the fantasy** of the play.



**Arnel Sanciano**  
Set Designer

I wanted the house to feel like **that one family home we've all gone to** for whatshisname's birthday/baptism/holiday party. It wants to be **familiar** enough so that when the audience comes in, they feel welcome—but also **judgmental** in the way that gossiping cousins are when they're forced to spend their weekend with their auntie.

To find this house, I searched on Zillow around North Carolina, where James Ijames is from. **I wasn't interested in houses that were new or recently flipped.** I wanted to look at houses with cracks in the foundation and chipped paint, homes that really felt like they hadn't been cared for in years. **I want this house to be a reflection of how Juicy views their family:** uncensored and unfiltered.



# SOUND AS A CHARACTER:

A Q&A WITH  
SOUND DESIGNER  
WILLOW JAMES



**Willow James**  
Sound Designer

By Anna Rogelio Joaquin,  
School Programs Manager

**Anna Rogelio Joaquin:** How would you describe what sound design is?

**Willow James:** I would describe sound design as how the use of music, sound effects and reinforcement support the world of the play. I've always thought of sound (and every other design category) as a character—not necessarily its own character, but one that is in conversation with the ones we meet.

**Anna:** What drew you to sound design? How did you first get into it?

**Willow:** By accident! I was a theater major in college with a focus on acting and directing, and I never had plans to pursue a career in design. At some point, I needed to fill a gap in my schedule, and my advisor encouraged me to sound design one of our mainstages. I then googled “what is sound design?” and agreed to do it. After the show closed, I secured an internship at Stepwolf to learn more about design and engineering, and that’s where the love began. I think what drew me to sound design was the discovery that I could create a language—my love for exploring various genres of music and my synesthesia—which informs how I process all the sounds around me.

**Anna:** Could you talk us through a typical design process, from getting the offer to getting the design on stage?

**Willow:** Normally, after all of the contractual terms are set, I start chatting with the director to get a sense of what their vision and/or concept is. From there, I’ll typically build a playlist that starts to hit on the vibe of the show and share it with the team. After a few production meetings to make sure all creative team mem-

bers are on the same page, I spend the rehearsal period sourcing and building content, recording, etc. Right before tech, I head to the theater for quiet time—a chunk of time where the sound team and I meet to test the speakers and mics and start building cues. The magic really happens during this tech process, where the entire cast and crew come together for about a week or so to put all of the elements together.

**Anna:** What acoustic needs does your sound design have to meet? What challenges are you navigating, and what solutions have you found?

**Willow:** The Owen Theatre can be a tricky space if you try to work against its layout, so I’m going to work with it and do my best to make sure that everyone has the same experience regardless of where they’re seated. There are also a few moments in the show where diegetic sound (sound that comes from the world of the play) is important, and with that, it can always be a challenge to map out where to actually hide speakers throughout the set.

**Anna:** What are your favorite moments of sound in the show?

**Willow:** My favorite moment is actually at the top of the show, when we meet Juicy and Tio. For me, the audience experience starts once you enter the theater, but especially in the first scene of the show because that usually sets up the vibe for the rest of the show. Just the first few lines of this show are so unexpected but hilarious and perfect, and I’m hoping to set the tone before folks even hear them.

# BLOCK OUT THE NOISE:

## BUILDING A SOUND-INSULATING BOX

By Anna Rogelio Joaquin, School Programs Manager

Part of the magic of seeing a play is hearing it as well. In “Sound as a Character: A Q&A with Sound Designer Willow James” on p. 20, Willow shares the following challenges of designing sound for the Goodman’s Owen Theatre:

“The Owen Theatre can be a tricky space if you try to work against its layout, so I’m going to work with it and do my best to make sure that everyone has the same experience regardless of where they’re seated. There are also a few moments in the show where diegetic sound (sound that comes from the world of the play) is important, and with that, it can always be a challenge to map out where to actually hide speakers throughout the set.”

So, how do you hear sounds on stage? How do you block out sounds you don’t want to hear? How can you feel sound? In this lesson, students will model the reflection, absorption and transmission of sound waves in a theater by designing and testing a sound-insulating box. As a result, students will gain a deeper understanding of acoustics and how sound travels in a theater.

### OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to...

- Describe the **cause-and-effect** relationship between sound and vibrations.
- Explain that sound waves can be **reflected, absorbed or transmitted** through different materials.
- Apply the engineering design process by **designing and building** a sound-insulating box.
- **Interpret graphs** of sound waves by using a sound sensor app.
- Determine **strengths and limitations** of different sound insulators by **comparing test data** from different demonstrations.

**TIME:** 90 MINUTES

### VOCABULARY:

- Acoustics
- Sound wave
- Amplitude
- Decibel
- Reflect
- Absorb
- Transmit

### MATERIALS:

- Handout (on pp. 27-29)
- Smartphone
- Sound sensor app such as **phyphox**, which can be downloaded for free on [Google Play](#) or the [App Store](#)
- Portable speaker or device with speakers
- Large bowl
- Plastic wrap
- Salt
- Whiteboard
- Dry erase marker
- Paper
- Writing utensils
- Small, open boxes that can hold a phone (*one per group; shoe box, Tupperware, etc.*)
- Tape
- Glue
- Insulating materials (*ex. cotton balls, scrap paper, foil, foam, bubble wrap, etc.*)



## ILLINOIS LEARNING STANDARDS

### SCIENCE

- **1-PS4-1:** Plan and conduct investigations to provide evidence that vibrating materials can make sound and that sound can make materials vibrate.
- **MS-PS4-2:** Develop and use a model to describe that waves are reflected, absorbed or transmitted through various materials.
- **MS-ETS1-2:** Evaluate competing design solutions using a systematic process to determine how well they meet the criteria and constraints of the problem.
- **HS-PS4-1:** Use mathematical representations to support a claim regarding relationships among the frequency, wavelength and speed of waves traveling in various media.

### ENGLISH

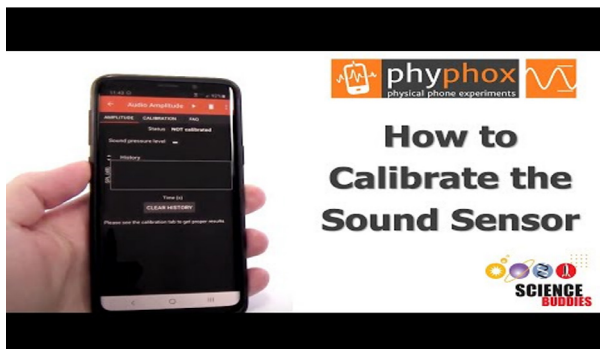
- **RST.11-12.7:** Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., quantitative data, video, multimedia) in order to address a question or solve a problem.
- **RST.11-12.8:** Evaluate the hypotheses, data, analysis and conclusions in a science or technical text, verifying the data when possible and corroborating or challenging conclusions with other sources of information.
- **WHST.9-12.2:** Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of scientific procedures/experiments or technical processes.

### THEATER

- **TH:Cr3.1.5.c:** Create innovative solutions to design and technical problems that arise in rehearsal for a drama/theater work.

## BEFORE CLASS: SET UP

1. **Download and calibrate** your sound sensor app of choice. For a tutorial on how to calibrate phyphox, view **the video below**.



<https://youtu.be/3cpZEVSC6Nw>

2. **Set up** a station where students will test their sound-insulating boxes.
  - Move a desk to the front of the room where students can place their boxes.
  - With masking tape or a dry erase marker, mark where the desk, boxes, and speaker(s) will stay for testing. Be sure to mark clearly to keep the testing environment consistent.
3. **Create** and pull up a shared document that is easily accessible to students.
  - This document will house screenshots of recorded sound data.
4. **Divide** sound insulating materials into portions for each group of 4-5 students.
  - **Option:** Give different groups different materials.

## STEP 1: QUIET GAME (8 MINUTES)

1. **Introduce the quiet game.**
  - For one full minute, everyone will try to stay as quiet as possible. As they do so, everyone should actively listen for what they can still hear.
  - Examples: hallway chatter, bells, sirens, cars, trains, phones going off, shuffling, giggling, etc.
2. **Set a timer for one minute.**
  - Heads up: After time is up, students should be prepared to share what they heard.
3. **Share out.**
  - Invite a student to write responses on the board.
  - Go around the room and have each student share something they heard.
4. **Reflect.**
  - Which sounds were the loudest? Softest?
  - Why were some sounds louder or quieter than others?
  - Which sounds came from outside the classroom?

**Transition:** We will be modeling ways to manipulate how sound travels in a theater.

## STEP 2: INTRODUCE SOUND WAVES (7 MINUTES)

1. **Invite** a volunteer to pass out handouts.
2. **Discuss.**
  - What sounds do you hear in a theater?
  - What sounds do you not want to hear in a theater?
  - In "Sound as a Character: A Q&A with Sound Designer Willow James," *Fat Ham* sound designer Willow James shares, "The Owen Theatre can be a tricky space if you try to work against its layout, so I'm going to work with it and do my best to make sure that everyone has the same experience regardless of where they're seated. There are also a few moments in the show where diegetic sound (sound that comes from the world of the play) is important, and with that, it can always be a challenge to map out where to actually hide speakers throughout the set."
  - **Key idea: Acoustics** refer to the science of sound, as well as the qualities of a room that make it easy or difficult for people inside to hear sounds clearly.
    - Note that this is the first vocab word on the handout.
    - Encourage students to continue following along with the handout to help them keep track of important ideas.
    - Give students a heads up that they'll be turning in the handout at the end of class.
3. **Ask:** Does anyone know why we hear what we hear?
  - **Key idea: Sound waves** travel to our ears and are converted into signals that our brain interprets as sound.

## STEP 3: DANCING SALT DEMO (5 MINUTES)

1. **Share** that while sound waves are invisible, we can visually demonstrate their presence.
  - Place the bowl, plastic wrap and salt on a desk everyone can see.
  - Ask for two volunteers: one student to cover a bowl with plastic wrap, and another to sprinkle a few pinches of salt on top.
  - Have everyone else in the class surround the bowl and hum.
    - Have students switch out who is in front of everyone so everyone can have an up-close look.
    - Play with humming at different volumes.
2. **Reflect.**
  - What happened to the salt when we hummed?
  - Consider people who are deaf or hard of hearing. How are they able to appreciate music?
  - Have everyone else in the class surround the bowl and hum.
    - **Optional reading/viewing:** [Replay: Deaf Concert-Goers Can Feel the Beat](#)

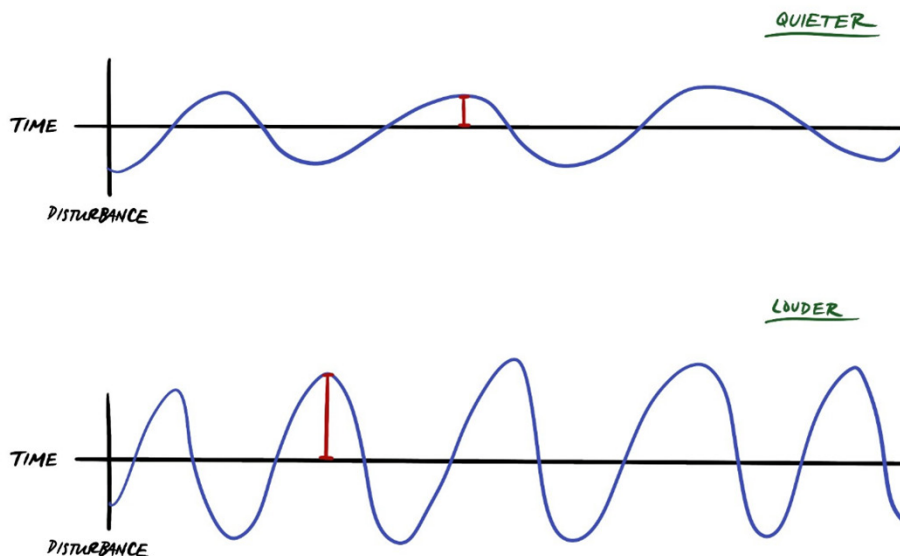
## STEP 4: A DEEPER DIVE INTO SOUND WAVES (7 MINUTES)

1. **Ask:** Does anyone know what unit is used to measure sound intensity?
  - Answer: **Decibel (dB)**
2. **Display** chart of common decibel levels.



Source: Hearing Health Foundation

- **Optional reading:** What are safe decibels?
3. **Draw** sound waves on the board.

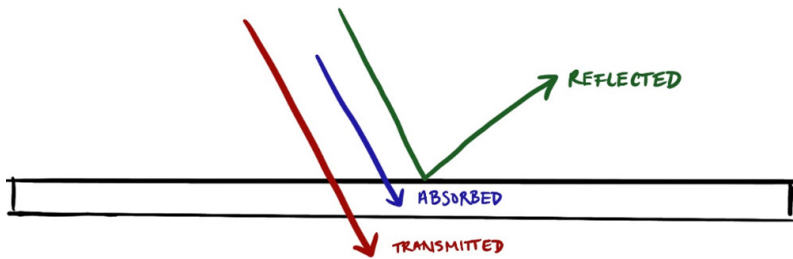


**amplitude:**  
measures the height  
of a wave

- **Ask:** Can someone mark the *amplitude* on this wave?
  - **Key idea:** **Amplitude** measures the height of a wave.
- **Ask:** What do quiet/loud sound waves look like?
  - Invite all students to draw with their pointer finger in the air.
- **Ask:** Does amplitude increase or decrease when decibels increase?
  - Invite all students to point up or down.
- **Check for understanding:** What is the relationship between sound, decibels, and amplitude?
  - **Ask:** The louder the sound, the higher the amplitude and decibel level.
- **Predict:** How might we manipulate the way sound waves travel?



4. Draw the image below on the board.



• **Key idea:** Sound waves can be **reflected**, **absorbed**, or **transmitted** through materials.

- **Reflected:** Bounced off; e.g., sound echoing
- **Absorbed:** Taken in; e.g., noise-cancelling headphones
- **Transmitted:** Passed through; e.g., sound coming through walls

5. Revisit the list of sounds everyone heard.

- **Ask:** When was sound reflected, absorbed, or transmitted?
- Label sounds with an R, A or T.

• **Key idea:** Sound waves can be partially reflected, absorbed and/or transmitted through materials.

- **Example:** When you wear headphones, you might still hear outside noise—the sound is just quieter than it'd be if you weren't wearing headphones. The sound waves are both absorbed and transmitted.

• **Key idea:** Materials that absorb sound waves are called insulators.

6. Connect.

- Project a photo of the Goodman's Owen Theatre. Where might sound waves be reflected, absorbed and/or transmitted?
- How might a sound designer compensate for uneven distribution of sound?
- When does sound inside or outside of a theater need to be insulated?

**Transition:** We will be designing a box that insulates sound in order to model sound insulation in a theater.

### STEP 5: INTRODUCE THE SENSOR APP (5 MINUTES)

1. **Share** that the class will be measuring sound using a sound sensor app.

- Show the examples to the right.
- These two graphs recorded noise levels **before and after** insulating a phone in a bag of cotton balls.

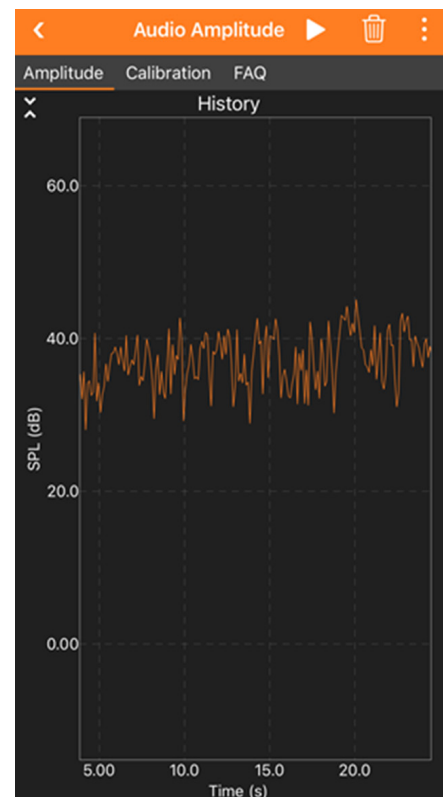
2. **Interpret.**

- What was the approximate average decibel value for each trial?
- How much did the decibel value decrease from the cotton balls?
- How did the cotton balls impact the amplitude?

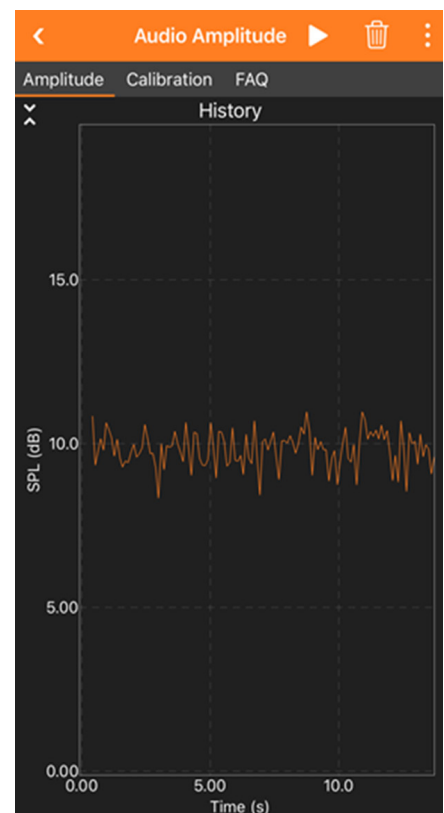
3. **Demonstrate** the testing station.

- Have the class vote on a song, the first 30 seconds of which will be used to test the boxes.
- Consider taking three song nominations before holding a class vote.
- Move one of the boxes to the testing station, start the audio amplitude function of the app, place your phone inside, play the first 30 seconds of the song through the speakers, then stop the app recording.
- Remind students to be as quiet as possible during testing to not interfere with the data.
- Tap the three dots and select "Share screenshot."
- Paste the image into a projected shared document and label it "Control."
- **Interpret:** Ask students to note key decibel levels on the graph.

Source: Ben Finio, Science Buddies



**Before**



**After**

## STEP 6: INTRODUCE THE DESIGN CHALLENGE) (5 MINUTES)

1. **Share** that the class will be designing boxes in small groups that insulate sound as much as possible, modeling the sound insulation present in theaters.
2. **Go over** the design rules.
  - The box must fit within the marked testing area.
  - Each group must only use the materials provided.
  - The phone must be able to be easily placed into and removed from the box.
3. **Show** students the materials they are able to use.

**Note:** If you need to spread this activity across two class periods, consider using Step 5 as the dividing point. Students may pick up with brainstorming and building on day 2.

## STEP 7: BRAINSTORM (5 MINUTES)

1. Divide the class into small groups of 4-5.
2. Ask each group to come up with a team name.
3. Give each student time to sketch their own ideas for the box on their handout.
4. After each student sketches some of their own ideas, everyone in the group should share and combine the best of everyone's ideas in their design.

## STEP 8: BUILD (15 MINUTES)

1. Let students know they'll have 15 minutes to build their box. Once time is up, each group will move their box to the front of the room and test their design.
2. Set a timer for 15 minutes.
3. Have one group representative get the materials for their group.
4. Let the building begin, encouraging students to work collaboratively.

### Optional roles:

Timekeeper  
Material managers  
Design directors

## STEP 9: TEST THE BOXES (10 MINUTES)

1. **Set expectations.**
  - Ask one volunteer per group to be the DJ who starts the first 30 seconds of the music when it's time, making sure not to adjust the volume.
  - Students should label and jot down observations for each group on their handout.
    - Describe/draw each design.
    - Predict how effective the box will be.
  - Remind students to stay as quiet as possible during testing to eliminate variables and keep the environment as fair as possible.
  - Emphasize that everyone will learn from the results of all boxes—no one's design is a failure.

## 2. Test!

- One group at a time, invite students to come up, share their team name and briefly describe their design.
- Start the app, place the phone in each box, cue the DJ and stop the recording.
  - Describe/draw each design.
  - Predict how effective the box will be.

## 3. Document the data.

- Once the recording has stopped, use the pan and zoom feature until only the trial is showing—not the phone being placed and removed.
- Export the image and paste it to the shared document.
  - While this process occurs, invite the class to wrap up their descriptions/drawings and invite the next group to come up.
- For each group, repeat and label each image in the shared document with the team names.
- Keep the shared document projected so students can view the results.

## STEP 10: REFLECT (15 MINUTES)

1. **Give** students a minute to open the shared doc and discuss and jot down observations with a partner.
  - Encourage them to compare the graphs and designs. What worked well? Why?
2. **Use** the following questions to spark a full class discussion.
  - Which designs worked particularly well?
    - How much sound did they insulate?
    - What do the designs have in common—shape, materials, etc.?
  - What surprised you?
  - Where were sound waves reflected, absorbed or transmitted?
  - What would you change if you could redesign your box?
  - Describe a moment of sound in *Fat Ham*. What other sounds were occurring at the same time?
  - What are some challenges and solutions theaters might encounter when it comes to creating good acoustics?

### Exit Ticket:

Remind students to turn in their handouts before leaving class.

## ACCOMODATIONS AND MODIFICATIONS

### FOR STUDENTS WITH ANXIETY

- Heads up before sharing.
- Levels of opting in; non-verbal, small groups, sharing out loud.
- Extended time built into scaffolded designing and building.

### FOR STUDENTS WITH ADHD

- Verbal instruction visually represented
- Multiple outlets for talking with peers
- Opportunities to get out of seat

### FOR STUDENTS WITH VISUAL PREFERENCES

- Opportunities to draw instead of write
- Content accompanied by images

### FOR STUDENTS WITH KINESTHETIC PREFERENECES

- Hands-on instruction, experimentation and assessment

### ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

- Word bank for handout
- Range of roles for building

### ADDITIONAL CHALLENGES

- Optional readings
- Sharpened precision of graph calculations

## FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

- Filling in terms, definitions and prompts on handout
- Pointing up or down to signify relationships between sound, amplitude and decibels
- Drawing sound waves in the air to embody soft or loud sound waves
- Designing and creating a sound-insulating box in small groups
- Synthesizing observations on handout

## EXTENSION IDEAS

- Spend the next class period redesigning and retesting boxes.
- Apply to a case study.
  - [\*The Acoustic Design of a Multipurpose Horseshow Hall and a Drama Hall at Druskininkai Culture Center\*](#)
  - [\*How to Create Great Auditorium Acoustics\*](#)
- Focus on the logarithmic nature of decibels and calculate intensity ratios between sound levels
  - [\*Khan Academy: Decibel Scale\*](#)
  - [\*The Physics Classroom: Intensity and the Decibel Scale\*](#)

# BLOCK OUT THE NOISE:

## BUILDING A SOUND INSULATING BOX

Student Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Period: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### 1. Define the following terms:

a. Acoustics -

b. Sound waves -

c. Decibel (dB) -

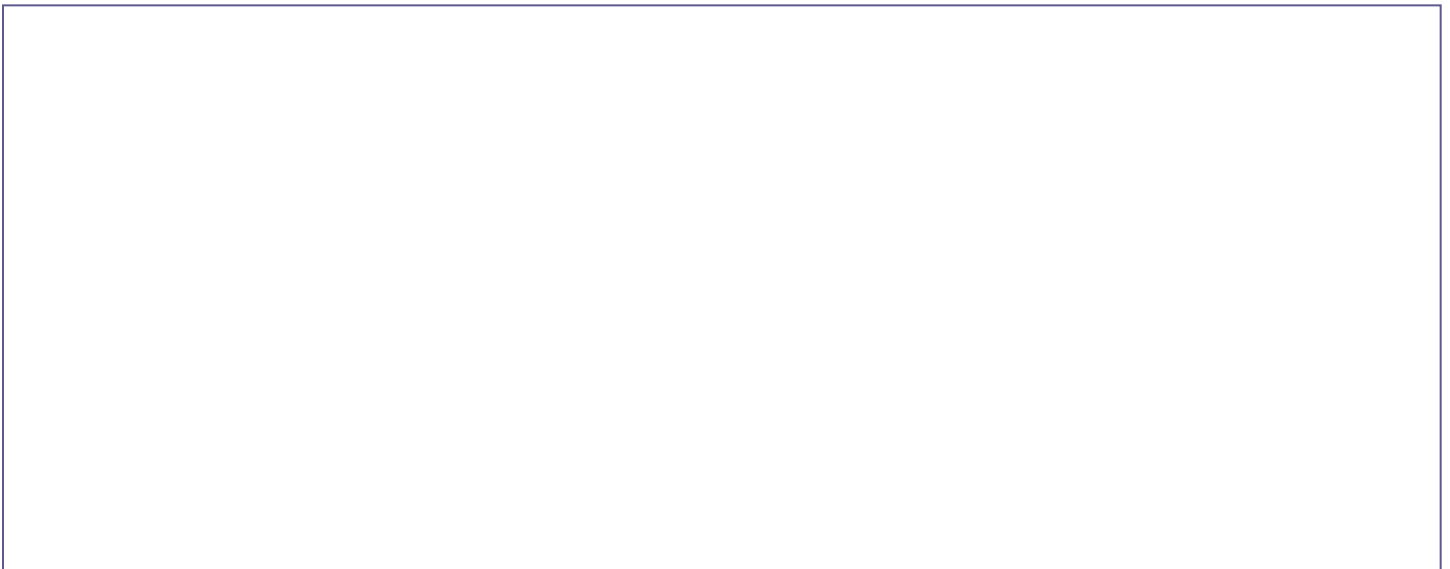
d. Amplitude -

### 2. Fill in the blanks.

a. The louder the sound, the \_\_\_\_\_ the amplitude and decibel level.

b. Sound waves can be \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ through materials.

i. Draw a visual representation of these terms.



c. Materials that absorb sound waves are called \_\_\_\_\_.



**3. Connect.**

- a. When and why does a theater need to insulate sound?

**4. Use the space below to brainstorm and sketch ideas for your sound-insulating box.**

5. Use the space below to label, describe, draw and observe your peers' designs. What materials did each group use? How did they use them? Which designs do you think will perform well? Why?

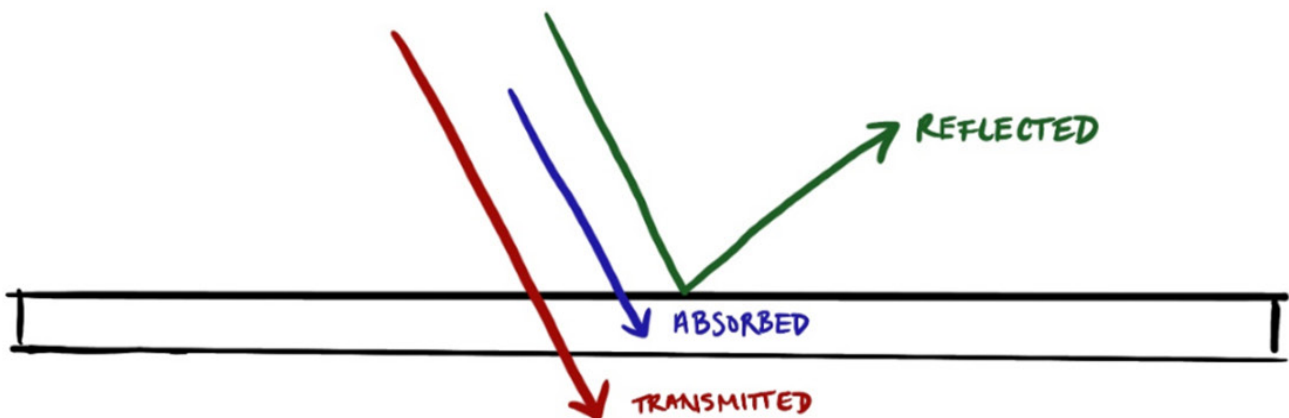
6. Answer at least three of the following questions in complete sentences. Circle which questions you address.
- Which designs worked particularly well?
  - How much sound did they insulate?
  - What do the designs have in common—shape, materials, etc.?
  - What surprised you?
  - Where were sound waves reflected, absorbed or transmitted?
  - What would you change if you could redesign your box?
  - What are some challenges and solutions theaters might encounter when it comes to acoustics?

1. Define the following terms:

- a. Acoustics - **the science of sound, as well as the qualities of a room that make it easy or difficult for people inside to hear sounds clearly**
- b. Sound waves - **waves that travel to our ears and are converted into signals that our brain interprets as sound**
- c. Decibel (dB) - **unit is used to measure sound intensity**
- d. Amplitude - **measure of the height of a wave**

2. Fill in the blanks.

- a. The louder the sound, the **higher** the amplitude and decibel level.
- b. Sound waves can be **reflected, absorbed** or **transmitted** through materials.
  - i. Draw a visual representation of these terms.



- c. Materials that absorb sound waves are called **insulators**.

# PLAY ON WORDS: A CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

By Tyra Bullock, Associate Director of Education

**TIME:** 70-80 MINUTES

## **VOCABULARY:**

- Alliteration
- Allusion
- Bubble Map
- Hyperbole
- Imagery
- Literary Device
- Metaphor
- Onomatopoeia
- Personification
- Repetition
- Rhyme
- Rhythm
- Simile

## **MATERIALS:**

- Poem (pp. 35-36) 1 sheet per student)
- Literary Devices Handout (p. 34, 1 sheet per student)
- Multicolored writing utensils
- Tape

## **BEFORE CLASS: SET UP**

1. Print out the 'Literary Devices Handout' for each student found on p. 34 of the study guide.
2. Print out the poem found on pp. 35-36 of the study guide for each student.
3. If students are unfamiliar with the term '**literary devices**,' please take a few minutes to review the handout with the class prior to this activity.

### **literary device:**

a technique that writers use to enhance their writing and convey meaning, emotion or ideas in a story

## **STEP 1: READ AND RE-READ (10 MINUTES)**

1. As a class, read the poem "Kinfolk" by Jyreika Guest on pp. 35-36 of the study guide. Feel free to model reading the poem or select a student volunteer.
2. Re-read the poem silently. If there's anything that resonates with the students, invite them to write their reactions in the margins of the poem.

The Goodman is thrilled to partner with our colleagues from The Poetry Foundation to present PLAY ON WORDS, a program **blending the worlds of theatre and literary arts**. With this collaboration, our two organizations commission local poets to respond to each play in our season, offering new insights and avenues of access to the works of art on our stages. In this activity, students will explore and analyze "**Kinfolk**" by poet Jyreika Guest, the poem commissioned for *Fat Ham*.

## ILLINOIS LEARNING STANDARDS

### ENGLISH

- **R.L.11-12.2:** Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.
- **R.L.11-12.4:** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings.
- **R.I.11-12.4:** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative, connotative and technical meanings; analyze how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term or terms over the course of a text.
- **R.I.11-12.6:** Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text in which the rhetoric is particularly effective, analyzing how style and content contribute to the power, persuasiveness or beauty of the text.
- **L.11-12.5:** Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships and nuances in word meanings.
- **SL.11-12.1:** Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

### THEATER

- **Re.7.1.IIa:** Recognize the validity of multiple interpretations of artistic choices in a drama/theater work
- **Re.8.1.IIa:** Analyze personal experience, textual evidence and appropriate criteria to reinforce artistic choices when participating in or observing a drama/theater work.
- **Re.9.1.IIIc:** Compare and debate the connection between a drama/theater work and contemporary issues that may impact audiences.
- **Cn.10.1.IIa:** Investigate how community ideas and personal beliefs impact a drama/theater work.



## STEP 2: FIRST RESPONSES (10 MINUTES)

Facilitate a class discussion on students' first impressions and immediate responses to the poem, both positive and negative. Remind students that there is no wrong answer and that the best way to analyze poetry is by diving into it.

Some prompts to spark discussion:

- **Describe.** What did you observe about the structure of the poem? How would you describe the lines in the poem (short, long, fast, slow, etc.)? Do you see any noticeable patterns? Encourage students to use "I NOTICE, I SEE, I OBSERVE" statements.
- **Analyze.** What questions do you have for the author? Is there anything you find confusing? Are there any words you're unfamiliar with? Do you have any curiosity about the poem's title? What about the person who's speaking or who they're speaking to? Encourage students to use "I WONDER, I QUESTION, I AM CURIOUS ABOUT" statements.
- **Interpret.** Considering students' prior responses, what do they think is happening in the poem? What do they believe the poet is trying to say? What do they assume is the purpose of the poem? Encourage students to use "I TRUST, I BELIEVE, I ASSUME" statements.

## STEP 3: THEMATIC CONNECTIONS

(5-10 MINUTES)

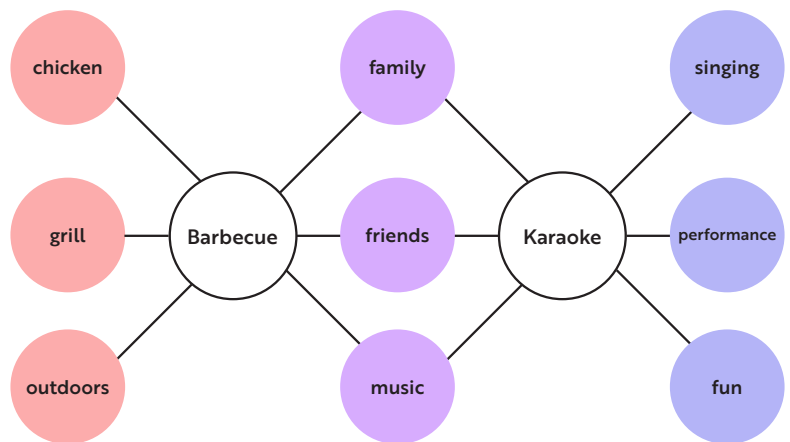
1. Now that we've had some time to digest our initial thoughts of the poem, let's take it a step further by investigating the themes, topics or central ideas evident in the piece.
2. As a class, create a list of themes/topics/ideas discovered in the reading.
3. Once the list is complete, divide the class into 4-5 small groups. Make sure to hand each group a sheet of chart paper and set of multicolored writing utensils. Each group must then choose TWO of the themes/topics/ideas on the list to explore for the next step of this activity.

## STEP 4: BUBBLE MAPPING (15 MINUTES)

1. Let students know that they will be analyzing their two elected themes by creating a bubble map. A **bubble map** is a visual tool used to represent a central concept or idea surrounded by related concepts.
2. Instruct each group to write and circle their two themes/topics/ideas in the center of the chart paper. Demonstrate by providing a quick example of a bubble map on a sheet of chart paper, whiteboard or other surface area visible to the whole class. For instance, if you were to use the nouns 'barbeque' and 'karaoke,' invite the students to share what these words make them think of (noun, verb, etc.). Write down the students' responses around the central words as shown to the center right. If students are feeling stuck, feel free to use the recommended terms.

### bubble map:

a visual tool used to represent a central concept or idea surrounded by related concepts  
(SEE GRAPHIC BELOW)



3. Encourage the students to make connections to the text. Like the example provided, students should draw a bubble around each response then draw a line to connect each thought (noun, verb, etc.) to the themes/topics/ideas in the center. If there are any commonalities between the two themes, invite them to connect their responses to both.

Some prompts to spark discussion:

- **What do these themes/topics/ideas make you think of?**
- **Are you able to make a personal connection to your life?**
- **How are these themes/topics/ideas present in your community? Are these themes/topics/ideas present in another piece of art you've seen (play, song, movie, tv show, book, etc.)?**

**TIP:** If you need to spread this activity across two class periods, consider using Step Four as the dividing point.

## STEP 5: INVESTIGATING LITERARY DEVICES

(10-15 MINUTES)

1. Share with the students that word choice establishes feeling, setting, personality and much more in any written work. So, what methods does the author use to convey their ideas in the poem? Let's investigate by identifying the literary devices present in the poem.
2. Ask students to pull out their 'Literary Devices Handout'. Remind students that a **literary device** is a technique that writers use to enhance their writing and convey meaning, emotion or ideas in a story.
3. Tell students that they must **identify as many literary devices as they can** to demonstrate how the poet conveys the two themes/topics/ideas written on their chart paper. Each device must be written on the outside of the bubbles and color coded with the corresponding literary device (i.e. alliteration = red, allusion = orange, etc.)

## STEP 6: GALLERY WALK (8-10 MINUTES)

1. Use tape to hang each group's bubble map on the wall.
2. Give students approximately 5 minutes to review the work of their peers
3. If you'd like, invite students to take notes of their observations on the back.

## STEP 7: REFLECT (10 MINUTES)

Use the following questions to spark discussion:

- After reviewing the analysis work done by your peers, what are some new thoughts you have about the poem?
- Was there any overlap in the two themes/topics/ideas explored in your small groups?
- When sharing your initial thoughts, were you aware of the literary devices used in this poem? Do you think the poet used these literary devices effectively? Why or why not?
- Does the poem's title seem to fit with the poem? Use examples to justify your response.
- Were you surprised by the observations made by your peers? Do you think their interpretations are valid? What do you think is the importance of sharing multiple interpretations of a work of art?
- How does this poem connect to the ideas present in the play *Fat Ham*? How might the poet's personal or cultural experiences impact their writing?

### Literary Devices Handout

is on the following page

# LITERARY DEVICES HANDOUT

A **literary device** is a technique that writers use to enhance their writing and convey meaning, emotion or ideas in a story. Below is a list of common devices used in poetry, some of which are applied in the PLAY ON WORDS poem. Each term is color coded to help students make the distinction between each device.

**Alliteration** - the occurrence of the same letter or sound at the beginning of adjacent or closely connected words (i.e. *Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers*).

**Allusion** - a brief, indirect reference to a person, place, thing or idea that's culturally, historically, politically or literary significant (i.e. alluding to a quote by a famous person or character from a piece of text).

**Hyperbole** - an exaggerated statement that is not to be taken literally (i.e. *I'm so hungry I could eat a horse*).

**Imagery** - an author's use of vivid and descriptive language to add depth to their work; appealing to the senses (i.e. *noises of the fire merged into a drum-roll that seemed to shake the mountain*).

**Metaphor** - a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable (i.e. *That quarterback is on fire!*).

**Onomatopoeia** - the formation of a word from a sound associated with what is named (i.e. "achoo," "tap," "boo").

**Personification** - a figure intended to represent an abstract quality; giving human characteristics to an animal, idea or object (i.e. *The sun smiled down on them*).

**Repetition** - repeats the same words or phrases a few times to make an idea clearer and more memorable. (i.e. **We** real cool. **We** left school. **We** lurk late. **We** strike straight.)

**Rhyme** - repetition of the same or similar sounds occurs in two or more words, usually at the end of lines in poems or songs (i.e. *The **cat sat** on a **blue mat***).

**Rhythm** - the way poets arrange stressed and unstressed syllables in lines of verse, thus creating a musical quality. (i.e. *Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary*)

**Simile** - a figure of speech involving the comparison of one thing with another thing of a different kind, used to make a description more emphatic or vivid. Typically includes the words "as" or "like" (i.e. *as big as a mountain or like a lightbulb*).

# KINFOLK

By Jyreika Guest

Even on their worst days with blade infected tongues  
the love for blood is inexplicable  
The loyalty

undeniable

Ya see, I was raised on

"what happens in house stays in house."

"You might not like yo kin but don't you ever let someone else put they hands on them."

And "yeah, they got issues but who doesn't?"

The Rolodex of black adages keep me grounded

Rooted

And please don't confuse it

Or convolute it

The psychology of it don't make sense but if it did then these people wouldn't be  
human

Y'all practice inclusion,

Right?

Show me a glass house unchipped

And I'll take you into a house of cards

Simply crack the closets

To point you to where the bodies lay

When the world ruled us out at Black

I wish someone DARE come for my blood

Come for my loud

Come for my peace

Come for my crooked and gapped teeth

Come for my misunderstood Tedra or Rabby

Try to steal their blink of joy

Judge their liquidated sway

Come for our K.Dot or Marvin Gaye

Yeah they got problems

But who first served it to them

A societal

misogynoir

We can't see you

But like yo soul food

Buffet?

Tell me

When does their soft girl era start?

Do they even get one?

Was it ever meant for Black Femme over 40?

Just another trend their "sick and tired" bones worked for

But were never insured the benefits

Clocking into the blue collar

Even though their wages were still paid Black

Picket signs marching to save EVERYONE's souls

First one to pour out her all to feed the family

But last to get the grace if she ain't

"easy like a Sunday morning"



Monday through Saturday  
 Head aching behind grit smiles  
 I Dare you to listen closely you can hear the porcelain crack  
 Her tears?  
 Don't bother  
 They hide beneath her sweat  
 How can she perform a calming exercise  
 When breathing brings her stress?  
 When all her world's a stage  
 But she's constantly playing the villain  
 Never the ingenue  
 Maybe if she were a different color hue  
 The ease would come for free  
 Highly unlikely without the proper pedigree  
 You're quick to speak on behalf of us  
 But only if we fit, respectfully  
 I challenge thee  
 Let's see how you brace your backs  
 Bend your ears for the vernacular  
 Spectacular  
 Attracting ya  
 Closer and closer  
 To the culture  
 Resist the urge to vulture  
 Our Braids and fades  
 Fetishizing our assets  
 Yet holding back our accolades

What?  
 You thought this poem was gonna be nice and not meant to squabble up?  
 This is for my people  
 And You just got invited to the cookout  
 So Is you caring or Karen  
 cuz you can GET OUT

Juicy said the jig is up  
 Your fourth wall has been broken  
 You can play performative acts  
 Talkbacks  
 Light gas on the facts  
 Over there wit'cha other friend &'em  
 Otherwise  
 Watch ya mouf about my kin and 'em  
 Come for my kin, correctly  
 With overdue acres  
 Security  
 Equity  
 Humanity  
 And that's just the bare minimum  
 When the actors leave the stage  
 Please  
 Don't say thank you  
 Pay yo tithes to the building fund  
 This church just blessed you.



**Jyreika Guest** is an actor, dancer, poet and intimacy director/coordinator based in Chicago, IL. Chicago credits include: *How Blood Go* and *What to Send Up When It Goes Down* (Congo Square); *Tragedy of King Christophe* (formerly House Theatre of Chicago); *Lindiwe U/S* (Steppenwolf); *Frankenstein* (Remy Bumppo); *columbinus* (The Yard Theatre Company); *In the Blood* (Red Tape Theatre); *Fly Honeys Show* (The Inconvenience Project); *The Wiz* (Kokandy Productions).

# CLASSROOM DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

By Anna Rogelio Joaquin, School Programs Manager

## BEFORE OR AFTER WATCHING

- *Fat Ham* is a reimagining of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Why do you think Shakespeare continues to be so widely adapted?
- In what ways do you feel like you follow in your family's footsteps? In what ways do you forge your own path?
- Is revenge ever justified? If so, when? If not, why?
- Imagine your ideal backyard barbecue. Who is invited—friends, family, neighbors? Who is cooking, and what food is being served? What music is playing? What conversations are happening? What are the vibes?
- Describe a place where you feel accepted for who you are. What about that place makes you feel like you belong?

## AFTER WATCHING

- What stood out to you—characters, moments, design, lines of dialogue, etc.? What about this show is sticking with you?
- Describe the setting of *Fat Ham*. How did the design elements communicate the setting?  
*More information on the design can be found in "Meet the Designers" on p. 19.*
- How do the characters in *Fat Ham* create and maintain their sense of community?
- *Hamlet's* full title is *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*. Do you think *Fat Ham* is a tragedy? Why or why not?
- How are cycles of violence and generational trauma present in *Fat Ham*? What does the play say about these ideas?
- What role did joy play in the characters' journeys? How did moments of celebration or humor impact self-discovery and liberation for Juicy? For Larry?
- In *Hamlet*, many characters die by the end of the play. How does *Fat Ham* differ? How does *Fat Ham's* ending impact the play's meaning?

# GLOSSARY

## 100% PURE LOVE (p. 65)

A 1994 song recorded by American singer and songwriter Crystal Waters from her second studio album, *Storyteller*. Themes explored in this tune include unconditional and unwavering love and devotion to a romantic partner.

## BLOOD OF THE LAMB (p. 109)

This phrase is mentioned several times in the Bible wherein Christ is likened to a lamb, hence the blood of the lamb symbolizing the blood of Christ. During a baptism, people are “**washed in the blood of the lamb,**” which represents their freedom from sin and commitment to Christ.

## BOUNTY (p. 61)

Generosity, a generous gift, or good things that are provided freely and in large amounts. It appears in the Bible several times, most often in the Book of Psalms.

## CALDWELL COMMUNITY COLLEGE (p. 11)

Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute (CCC&TI) is a public community college in Hudson, North Carolina. This is a 2-year institution, which means that students enrolled are eligible for an associate’s degree.

## CRAVAT (p. 30)

A neckband, the forerunner of the modern tailored necktie and bow tie, originating from a style worn by members of the 17th century military unit known as the Cravats. The modern British “cravat” is called an “ascot” in American English.

## CHITLINS (p. 13)

Chitlins, also known as **chitterlings**, are the intestines of a pig that have been cooked. Historically, wealthy slave owners would have first pick to the parts of a slaughtered pig. The undesirable parts such as the intestines, were given to their slaves. Today, chitlins are a staple in Southern American cuisine, primarily in Black households.

## CONSTERNATION (p. 105)

Amazement and dismay that makes one feel helpless or confused.

## “CREEP” (p. 66)

A 1993 song by English rock band **Radiohead** from their debut studio album, *Pablo Honey*. Themes explored in this tune include low self-esteem, evolving sense of masculinity, social ineptitude, insecurity and powerlessness.

By Tyra Bullock, Associate Director of Education

*The page numbers refer to the page on which the term first appears in the play.*

## DEBUTANTE (p. 58)

A young woman of upper-class or aristocratic background who is presented to society at a formal event, usually a ball. Debutantes are most common in Southern regions of the United States.

## DO THE RIGHT THING (p. 74)

A 1989 movie by Spike Lee on race relations in a Brooklyn neighborhood.

## GI JOE (p. 39)

A cartoon and movie military action figure.

## HALF-PUNK (p. 65)

Used as a derogatory term for being bisexual.

## HAMLET

A fictional character from playwright William Shakespeare’s *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*. In the play, Prince Hamlet is the son of the recently deceased King Hamlet, and nephew of King Claudius, his father’s brother and successor. **See character breakdown on p. 6 for more information.**

## HO-HUM (p. 106)

Expression used to convey boredom.

## HORATIO (p. 114)

A fictional character from playwright William Shakespeare’s *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*. In the play, Horatio is a close friend of Prince Hamlet’s and is the first character to see the deceased King Hamlet’s ghost. He warns Hamlet not to pursue the ghost out of fear that he will go mad. **See character breakdown on p. 6 for more information.**

## HOWARD (p. 11)

Howard University is a private research university comprised of 14 schools and colleges. Founded in 1867, it is located in Washington D.C. and is one of the most profound historically black college/universities (HBCU) in the United States. Notable alumni include Chadwick Boseman, Viola Davis, Kamala Harris, Taraji P. Henson, Nora Zeale Hurston, Thurgood Marshall, Toni Morrison and Marlon Wayans.

## HUMAN RESOURCES (p. 11)

Person(s) or department for a company that deals with the logistical needs of other employees in the company, manages the life cycle of an employee (hiring, insurance, payroll, documentation, promotions, reprimands, leaves, retirement, etc.).

**JACK BAUER** (p. 39)

Lead character in TV series "24," a suspenseful action series in which Bauer is a nearly unstoppable anti-terrorism agent.

**JACOB AND ESAU** (p. 19)

Biblical characters and fraternal twins from the Book of Genesis who are known for their conflict and reconciliation. Esau, the oldest son, is robbed of his inheritance when the younger of the brothers Jacob deceives their blind father Isaac into thinking he is his brother.

**LOSE MY RELIGION** (p. 41)

Southern expression for losing one's temper.

**MS. CLEO** (p. 7)

Phone/TV psychic in the 80s/90s on a pay-per-call-minute service called Psychic Readers Network. A documentary titled *Call Me Miss Cleo* was released in 2022.

**MOREHOUSE** (p. 11)

Morehouse College is a private university based in Atlanta, Georgia. Founded in 1867, it is the only historically black private liberal arts college for men and among the most profound historically black colleges/universities (HBCU) in the United States. Notable alumni include Martin Luther King Jr., Metro Boomin, Samuel L. Jackson, John David Washington, Spike Lee and Killer Mike.

**NOCTURNAL EMISSIONS** (p. 22)

Also known as a "wet dream," this phrase refers to an unplanned orgasm that happens while a person is sleeping.

**NUPTIALS** (p. 38)

Another term for weddings.

**OLD TESTAMENT** (p. 17)

First part of the bible; contains references to revenge and punishments for wrongs.

**ONLYFANS** (p. 2)

A social media platform and video on demand service that allows content creators to upload videos and charge subscribers for access. While it is most commonly used by sex workers for compensation, the service also provides exclusive content for paid subscribers such as cooking tutorials, exercise workouts and music instruction. The company is based in London, UK and was founded in 2016.

**OPULENT** (p. 83)

Rich and luxurious or lavish.

**PANSY** (p. 13)

An offensive slur used to refer to a gay man.

**PBS** (p. 87)

Public Broadcasting Station (PBS) is a North American public broadcaster and non-commercial, free-to-air television network. It is best known for its educational content.

**PLAYBOY** (p. 59)

A man who pursues a life of pleasure without responsibility or attachments, especially one who is of comfortable means.

**RAMBO** (p. 39)

American movie series franchise about a soldier surviving and beating insurmountable enemies in the jungle.

**RICK JAMES** (p. 73)

American singer/songwriter known for his musical contributions in the genres of funk, disco, rock and new wave. James's personal life was also widespread as he suffered from drug addiction and was convicted on two separate instances of kidnapping and assaulting two different women.

**SCONCE** (p. 105)

Candle holder on the wall.

**SEANCE** (p. 110)

A meeting at which people attempt to contact the dead, especially through the agency of a medium.

**SHANK** (p. 9)

A crude, sharp, stabbing weapon created from otherwise non-imposing objects like a sharpened toothbrush.

**SHOOK THE TABLE** (p. 108)

Expression for meddling with the norm.

**SISSY** (p. 98)

Disparaging and offensive term used to refer to an effeminate boy or man.

**SLAINTE** (p. 4)

Irish expression used when making a celebratory toast; translates to "**good health.**"

**SOFT** (p. 16)

Foolish or stupid; gentle, mild, warm-hearted or compassionate.

**“SQUARE BIZ”** (p. 25)

A 1981 song by American R&B singer, Teena Marie. The major theme in this tune focuses on a newfound love.

**STAR SEARCH** (p. 68)

An American talent competition television show that ran from 1983-1995 and later from 2003 to 2004. Many celebrities first got their start on this platform, including Aaliyah, Beyonce, Christina Aguilera, Britney Spears and Justin Timberlake.

**SUGA** (p. 7)

A reference to diabetes, a disease that affects one’s sugar level.

**SUPPLANTER** (p. 19)

A person or thing that takes the place of another, usually on purpose and often through force, scheming or strategy.

**THE ROYAL WE** (p. 32)

Refers to an individual speaking for more than themselves by replacing “I” with “we.” Typically associated with monarchy.

**TOXIC MASCULINITY** (p. 112)

Adherence to traditional male roles to the point of potential harm of others; involves cultural pressures for men to behave in a certain way; refers to the notion that some people’s idea of “manliness” perpetuates domination, homophobia and aggression.

**TRANSLUCENT BOY** (p. 48A)

A young white male.

**UNIVERSITY OF PHOENIX** (p. 10)

For-profit private college, with largely online programs, accredited by the Higher Learning Commission, but has been considered at times less respectable than traditional not-for-profit colleges and universities.

**WALMART** (p. 20)

The world’s highest grossing retail company and largest private employer with over 2 million employees. Based in the United States, Walmart has 10,586 stores and clubs in 24 countries. In lowly populated areas, especially in the South, Walmart is sometimes the only retail store within a close radius.

**YOUNGINS** (p. 72)

A term used by an older generation to describe a group of young people.

**ZUCKERBERG** (p. 79)

Reference to Mark Zuckerberg, one of the founders of Facebook and CEO of Meta.



# 2024/2025 SCHOOL MATINEE SERIES



## ***BUST: AN AFROCURRENTIST PLAY***

**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 30**

**TUESDAY, MAY 6 AT 10:30AM**

Retta and Reggie are enjoying their usual evening on the porch when a longtime neighbor is pulled over by the police just before turning into his driveway. Everything goes as expected—until the unexpected happens. Tensions escalate, and eventually erupt, transporting us to a startling conclusion in Ms. Howard’s powerful new work. Lileana Blain-Cruz, a “master of curating chaos” (*The New York Times*), directs.

To view upcoming Education and Engagement opportunities,  
visit [www.goodmantheatre.org/education](http://www.goodmantheatre.org/education)

# SPRING 2025 TEEN WORKSHOPS



This spring, the Goodman's Teen Workshop series invites high schoolers to explore the world of performing arts alongside some of Chicago's coolest theater artists—**for free!** Each workshop will focus on a different area of theater, giving you a chance to explore new skills and take your passion to the next level.

## **ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE: FINDING YOUR VOICE IN SHAKESPEARE** **SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 15 | 12:00-1:30PM**

Is that script feeling a bit...dated? Join Tyrone Phillips, director of *Fat Ham* and founding Artistic Director of Definition Theatre, for an immersive exploration of what it means to perform Shakespeare and classical texts in the modern day. Learn how to make the words your own and discover your unique voice within the story!

## **STAGE PRESENCE: CRAFTING POWERFUL PERFORMANCES** **WEEK OF SPRING BREAK (MARCH 24-28), EXACT DATE AND TIME TBA**

Looking to feel more confident on the stage? Step into the spotlight and explore the power of beats, objectives, verbs and how they shape your performance. Learn how to break down a monologue, find its emotional core and earn that standing ovation.

*This workshop will be part of a week-long spring break collaboration with other Chicago theater organizations.*

## **THE ART OF THE COSTUME: DESIGNING FOR THE STAGE** **SATURDAY, MAY 3 | 12:00-1:30PM**

Curious about what goes on behind the scenes of the show? Dive into the world of costume design and discover how to transform creative ideas into designs that tell a compelling story.

To view upcoming Education and Engagement opportunities, visit [www.goodmantheatre.org/education](http://www.goodmantheatre.org/education)

# 2025 SUMMER INTENSIVE PROGRAMS



Applications for the 2025 PlayBuild Youth Intensive and Musical Theater Intensive open **Friday, January 10!** See program descriptions below and scan the QR code for information on how to apply.

## PLAYBUILD YOUTH INTENSIVE

Discover the artist within you in this four-week intensive that pushes the bounds of creativity, storytelling and performance! Participants will generate new work using a wide range of artistic skills such as **acting, improvisation, writing, directing, movement** and beyond. Taught by renowned industry professionals with an emphasis on civic practice, participants will use these skills to develop an original performance and learn how to create theater in service of change.

The 2025 session of PlayBuild will run **Mondays through Fridays from 9:30am-5:00pm** at Goodman Theatre. The program begins on **Monday, June 23** and will culminate with a **final performance on Monday, July 21**.

## MUSICAL THEATRE INTENSIVE

Calling all triple threats! Taught by a team of professional musical theater artists, this intensive is designed to refine skills in **acting, singing and dancing** with an emphasis on **storytelling** and **civic practice**. At the end of this four-week program, students will perform in a showcase of work ranging from original scenes to contemporary musical theater.

The 2025 session of Musical Theater Intensive will run **Mondays through Fridays from 9:30am-5:00pm** at Goodman Theatre. The program begins on **Monday, July 14** and will culminate with a **final performance on Monday, August 11**.



Scan the QR code to learn more about summer opportunities at the Goodman! Questions or concerns? Please email [summerprograms@goodmantheatre.org](mailto:summerprograms@goodmantheatre.org).

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