EDUCATION WORKSHOP

Raising the Volume
Episode XXXVI

The creative team of Finding Freedom: The Journey of Robert Smalls discusses the importance of sharing stories.

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Middle School and Up
Mastery of core subjects and twenty-first century themes is essential for all students in the twenty-first century. Core subjects include English, reading or language arts, world languages, arts, mathematics, economics, science, geography, history and government, and civics. In addition to these subjects, schools must move forward to include not only a focus on mastery of core subjects, but also an understanding of academic content at much higher levels by weaving twenty-first century interdisciplinary themes into core subjects.

**Global Awareness**
1. Use twenty-first century skills to understand and address global issues.
2. Learn from and work collaboratively with individuals representing diverse cultures, religions, and lifestyles in a spirit of mutual respect and open dialogue in personal, work, and community contexts.

**Civic Literacy**
1. Participate effectively in civic life through knowing how to stay informed and understanding governmental processes.
2. Exercise the rights and obligations of citizenship at local, state, national, and global levels.
3. Understand the local and global implications of civic decisions.

**Work Creatively with Others**
1. Develop, implement, and communicate new ideas to others effectively.
2. Be open and responsive to new and diverse perspectives; incorporate group input and feedback into the work.
3. Demonstrate originality and inventiveness in work; understand the real world limits to adopting new ideas.
4. View failure as an opportunity to learn; understand that creativity and innovation is a long-term, cyclical process of small successes and frequent mistakes.
5. Implement innovations.
6. Act on creative ideas to make a tangible and useful contribution to the field in which the innovation will occur.
Everyone has a story. It’s our place to take a moment to listen. Once you listen, your eyes open. You can put yourself in someone else’s shoes and try to comprehend their experiences. You may be inspired, you may come away with more knowledge, or you may find a bit of yourself in someone else.

“Raising the Volume” is a series of Black stories – about Black entrepreneurs, judges, authors, artists, and leaders in our community. Stories that need to be heard. Led by the Gaillard Center’s Artists-in-Residence, Charlton Singleton and Marcus Amaker, “Raising the Volume” gives a platform to Black community members and opens us all up to honest discussion.

As you introduce this series to your students, follow the bullet points below for discussion. Your students will find that they are challenged to think about uncomfortable things. Those conversations are what will help us change our world. In the words of Judge McFarland, “To break down racial barriers, start where you are.” Let’s start where we are and see what change we can bring to our community.

For each lesson, split your class into small groups for discussion or discuss as a whole. Choose the model that is the most comfortable for your students so they feel free to discuss opinions openly.

Teachers, if you are interested in scheduling a cross-school discussion on Raising the Volume, Episode XXXVI, please email Kailey Jones at kjones@gaillardcenter.org. Through cross-school Zoom calls, we can offer students from one school a different perspective on the video with students from a second school. We will schedule class-to-class meetings where whole groups can discuss various topics covered in Episode XXXVI.
Raising the Volume
The creative team of Finding Freedom: The Journey of Robert Smalls discusses the importance of sharing stories.
To begin, JaMeeka Holloway, director of *Finding Freedom: The Journey of Robert Smalls*, introduces several designers and design assistants who have worked tirelessly behind the scenes to create an impactful new playwork centered on the life and legacy of Charleston hero, Robert Smalls.

As experts in their fields, the creative team members discuss their individual experiences designing for *Finding Freedom: The Journey of Robert Smalls*, and how they personally connect with the piece. Music director, Charlton Singleton, elaborates:

“*What the piece is about and with Robert growing up in Beaufort – That’s kind of the heart of the Gullah community... Around the Beaufort area and sort of that border of South Carolina and Georgia, what people refer to as the Georgia Sea Islands, is kind of the epicenter of the Gullah community. And so, musically, we have a lot of historic songs and traditions that come from the Gullah community during that time and... it was easy to sort of take some of the material that is historically known and to put it into the show or at least give you [JaMeeka] some ideas to ponder and we were very blessed to have a cast that was so versatile that they could sing as well as act. Along with Tristan... with the movement, it really came together very well.*”

Reflect on Charlton’s statement to JaMeeka. Notice how Charlton highlights the collaboration and connection of his music direction with the work of the other designers, namely Tristan and JaMeeka, to the production’s positive end result.
LESSONS

Now, reference the photos below of *Finding Freedom: The Journey of Robert Smalls*. As you study the photos, make observations about how the different technical elements work together to create the overall performance visuals - specifically the movement, lighting, set, costumes, and media designs. What effect do you think that this collaboration of designers and creatives had on the production's final look? Do you think that the individual elements would be as effective independently? Why or why not?

Later in the interview, Joseph highlights the inspiration that they and the other members of the creative team drew from the paintings of Gullah artist, Jonathan Green. “I was really inspired by the work of Jonathan Green and a lot of the sort of vibrancy of color and brushstrokes... and that was sort of evident across everyone’s designs – in the costumes, in the lights, anywhere there was color.”

Compare and contrast Joseph’s media design (left) with two of Jonathan’s paintings (right). What differences do you notice? What similarities do you notice? Does the artwork make you feel differently than the media design?
LESSONS

With Joseph having brought attention to the entire design team's cohesion and careful theming, Kathy goes on to illuminate how she and Joseph worked in tandem to create a lot of the visual looks in *Finding Freedom: The Journey of Robert Smalls*. She even addresses the beauty in her ability to project lighting onto Joseph’s media projections for several of the show's key looks!

The interview then goes on to address the costumes of *Finding Freedom: The Journey of Robert Smalls*. Carla, assistant costume designer to Celeste Jennings, elaborates upon Celeste’s vision in her costume designs, from color choices to styles. “They were oppressed people, but they still had style,” said JaMeeka in agreement with Carla.

**Watch the video here on the clothing of enslaved people, specifically following the South Carolina Negro Act of 1735. As you watch, write down three points to discuss with your group.**

JaMeeka later goes on to highlight the connection between the Gullah Geechee people, Black folk in South Carolina, and *Finding Freedom: The Journey of Robert Smalls* with the song, “Wade in the Water.”

**Watch the video here on the secret codes and meanings hidden within the historic African American spiritual, “Wade in the Water.” When you are finished, watch the video here of Alvin Ailey Dance Theater performing to a more modern rendition of “Wade in the Water.” Now, having more context for the spiritual's deeper meanings, how do you feel the performance highlights the secret codes of the Underground Railroad and the pursuit of freedom for enslaved people? Discuss with your group.**

At the close of the interview, JaMeeka remarks, “I said this on the first day that we started rehearsal, that there is a conversation with this work that only this group of people was going to be able to have.” **Reflect on this statement. What do you think she means by this? How do you think *Finding Freedom: The Journey of Robert Smalls* may have been different if the creative team was different?**
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A native of Awendaw, SC, Charlton Singleton began his musical studies at the age of three on the piano. He then went on to study the organ, violin, cello, and trumpet throughout elementary, middle, and high school. In 1994, he received a Bachelor of Arts in Music Performance degree from South Carolina State University. Since that time, he has taught music at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, as well as being an adjunct faculty member at the College of Charleston. In 2008 he co-founded and became the Artistic Director and Conductor of the Charleston Jazz Orchestra, an 18-piece jazz ensemble of some of the finest professional musicians in the Southeast and the resident big band in Charleston, SC. Mr. Singleton is also the organist and choir director at St. Patrick Catholic Church in Charleston, SC. In November of 2016 he was named the inaugural Artist in Residence at the recently renovated Gaillard Center in downtown Charleston. He remained in this position until July 2019; at that point he was named Artist in Residence Emeritus. In this position he continues to lead the Summer Youth Jazz Orchestra Camp as well as the “Jazz Through the Ages” assembly, which attracts a capacity crowd of students at the Gaillard Center.

As a performer, Charlton leads his own ensembles that vary in size and style. He has performed in France, Great Britain, Scotland, Spain, Germany, Austria, Italy, Switzerland, Norway, Canada, and The Netherlands, as well as many great cities throughout the United States. He is a founding member of an ensemble called Ranky Tanky. The group is a quintet that interprets the sounds of Gullah from the Southeast Coast of the United States. In 2017 Ranky Tanky reached the top of the Billboard, iTunes, and Amazon Contemporary Jazz charts with their self-titled debut recording. In 2019 they accomplished the same feat with the release of their sophomore effort, “Good Time,” which won the 2019 Grammy Award for “Best Regional Roots Album.” In 2022 the band’s live recorded set at the prestigious New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival was nominated for and won the Grammy Award in the same category. In 2021 he was the recipient of the SC Governor’s Award, which honors arts organizations, patrons, artists, members of the business community, and government entities who maximize their roles as innovators, supporters, and advocates for the arts. It is the highest honor for the arts in the state of South Carolina. In addition to performing, he is in demand as a speaker, clinician, composer, and arranger. He has also shared the stage with and/or worked with some of the most talented entertainers in the world, including Lisa Fischer, Bobby McFerrin, Ruby Dee, Jimmy Heath, Slide Hampton, Houston Person, Darius Rucker, Fred Wesley, and Cyrus Chestnut to name a few. Outside of music and entertainment, he, and his wife, MaryJo, are the proud parents of Shalamar and D'Marcus and new grandparents to Sophia Rose. They are also parents to their FIVE pets...Jango, Mojo, Dakota, Pumpkin, and Ginger.
About Matthew Tapp

As a Visual Effects Artist and 3D Artist, Matthew brings a unique combination of creativity and technical expertise to every project. With more than four years of experience working in the freelance industry, Matthew has honed his skills in Live Action and Virtual Film Lighting, as well as 3D modeling and shading. His professional training includes film lighting, color theory, set design, video editing, cinematography, 3D modeling, 3D animation, compositing, and professional level model texturing/shading. This extensive training has prepared Matthew for a wide range of projects, from working on set as a SPFX technician on productions such as Suncoast by Searchlight Pictures, to serving as a sole VFX Artist for Jim Carrey’s NFT project Sunshower. Matthew is proficient in industry standard software such as Blender, Premier Pro CC, and After Effects, and has recently started working with Unreal Engines and Houdini. His ability to work with multiple tools and software allows him to adapt to any project and bring my creative vision to life. Born in Cheraw, South Carolina, Matthew grew up loving film, and whether it be endless journeys through space with Star Wars, or trekking over fantastical worlds in Lord of the Rings, he has always felt at home in movies.
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“Some said Carla, how you get so fly? I said from not being afraid to fall out the sky.” Fly Girl. Costume designer. Wardrobe stylist. Carla “Fly Carla” Thomas is a costume designer, wardrobe stylist and style contributor. She is a creative and motivated Local USA 829-IATSE union wardrobe professional who loves all things fashion. She can do it all! She’s the one designing and styling your favorite commercials, TV shows and movies! Hailing from Baltimore, cultivated at Howard University, and now thriving in Brooklyn, Carla is always on a plane or in a showroom. Find her talking fashion and inspiring as Fly Carla on Instagram.

ABOUT CARLA THOMAS
Joseph Amodei (they/them) is a new media artist, theater designer, activist, and educator. Their work seeks to make material differences with and for people at the intersection of art, technology, and community. Joseph grew up in North Carolina, where they received a BFA in Studio Art from UNC-Chapel Hill. Joseph completed their MFA in Video and Media Design at Carnegie Mellon. Currently, they are a Professor of Immersive Media at Chatham University, and will be joining Lehigh University’s Department of Theater in the fall of 2023. Recent work has explored gameplay + gerrymandering, immersive archive creation + queer care, the HIV/AIDS crisis + performance, and Human Centered Design + issues of health equity.

This summer, their media design for the dance floor, the hospital room, and the kitchen table, (New Orleans Contemporary Arts Center, Theater Communications Group’s National Conference, Kelly Strayhorn Theater, National Performance Network) – a show about archiving queer care across pandemics – has been selected to represent the USA in the emerging category at the Prague Quadrennial, what USITT calls, “the Olympics of performance design.”

Selected Media Design highlights: They Do Not Know Harlem (Playmakers Repertory), To Buy the Sun: The Challenge of Pauli Murray (Hidden Voices); Amm(i)gone (APAP, The Theater Offensive); Packing and Cracking: Gerrymandering through Gameplay (The PA Center for Women and Politics, UNC’s Process Series, SFX); This Emancipation Thing (RedCat); The Young Playwrights Festival (City Theater Company of Pittsburgh), My Mouth is a Queer Time Machine (Ars Nova); The Pattern at Pendarvis (HERE Arts Center); and The Clothesline Muse (National Black Theater Festival).
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Kathy A. Perkins is a Professor Emerita (1989–2011) in lighting design and Africa/African Diaspora theatre at the University of Illinois Ubrana-Champaign. She joined the department to reinstate the MFA lighting design program, which she headed for twenty years. She developed new courses in African/African Diaspora theatre in addition to non-Western theatre courses. In addition to productions at UIUC, Perkins has designed on Broadway and at such regional theatres as American Conservatory Theatre, Arena Stage, Berkeley Repertory, Seattle Repertory, St. Louis Black Repertory, The Alliance, Goodman, Steppenwolf, Congo Square, Manhattan Theatre Club, Alabama Shakespeare Festival, New Federal Theatre, Definition Theatre, Mark Taper, Indiana Repertory, Writers Theatre, Actors Theatre of Louisville, Two Rivers Theatre, and Playmakers Repertory Company. She is the recipient of such design awards as NAACP Image Award, National Black Theatre Festival Award, and was a nominee for the L.A. Ovation Award. Internationally, she has designed in Switzerland, Austria, and South Africa. Perkins edited Black Female Playwrights: An Anthology of Plays before 1950, Black South African Women: An Anthology of Plays, African Women Playwrights, Alice Childress: Selected Plays and Telling Our Stories of Home: International Performance Pieces by and about Women. She coedited Contemporary Plays by Women of Color (ATHE 1996 Outstanding Theatre Book Award) and Strange Fruit: Plays on Lynching by American Women. She is a senior editor for Routledge Companion to African American Theatre and Performance. In 1995, Perkins co-curated ONSTAGE: A Century of African American Stage Design at New York’s Lincoln Center. In 2016, she served as theatre consultant for the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) inaugural exhibition “Taking the Stage.” She is the recipient of numerous research awards, including the Ford Foundation, Fulbright, United States Information Agency (USIA), New York Times Company, National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), United States Institute for Theatre Technology (USITT), and various University of Illinois awards, including University Scholar. She is the recipient of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE) Career Achievement Award in Academic Theatre and the USITT Distinguished Achievement Award in both Education and Lighting. Perkins has traveled to more than forty countries as both designer and lecturer. She has served as board member/advisory for USITT, URTA, Definition Theatre, and The History Makers. In 2007 she was inducted into the College of Fellows of the American Theatre. She received her BFA in Drama from Howard University and her MFA in Lighting Design from the University of Michigan. In 2021 she was awarded an honorary Doctor of Fine Arts from the University of Michigan. Perkins is Professor Emerita at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (2011-2018). She continues to freelance as a designer.
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JaMeeka D. Holloway is an artist, freelance director, and producer based in Durham, North Carolina, recognized as the 2023-24 Pfaelzer Award Recipient by New York Stage and Film and as Artist In Residence at the Charleston Gaillard Center for ’23-’24. Her creative work garnered her the 2018 Indy Arts Award and in 2019, she received a special distinction from the African American Heritage Commission and Governor Roy Cooper for her significant impact on North Carolina’s thriving arts and culture landscape. Holloway’s dedication to her craft has also been supported by grants from the Manbites Dog Theater Fund and the Ella Fountain Pratt Emerging Artists program.

She’s a self-producing artist, currently the creative force behind BLK GIRLS LUV THE BARD, a virtual theater platform reimagining Shakespeare’s works through the perspectives of Black and POC women and femme-identifying artists for which she received grants from the NC Arts Council and the National BOLD Women’s Theatre Circle in 2021-22. An alumni of The Lark Play Development Center’s apprenticeship program, she has been Assistant Director at The Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and an associate director at Playmakers Repertory, and LaMAMA Experimental Theatre Club in New York. She was the 2021-22 ROE GREEN Director in Residence at Kent State University, her directing credits spanning various stages, including: Northern Stage, Shakespeare in Detroit, Classic Stage, Durham Performing Arts Center, Manbites Dog, The Department of Theatre at Dartmouth, Tantrum Theatre at OhioUniversity, Duke Performances and Duke University’s Department of Theatre Studies, the Professional Actors Program at UNC-Chapel Hill, the National Black Theatre Festival, and The National Women’s Theatre Fest. JaMeeka is a contributor in the 2018 Routledge Companion to African American Theatre and Performance. Her ability to pursue her passion wouldn’t be possible without the unwavering support and belief of her daughter, Allyson, her mother and family. To explore more about her work, check out www.jdhdirectedit.com.
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