

EDUCATION WORKSHOP

Sweet Chariot



MEET THE ARTIST // Bruce Miller



Bruce Miller

Founding Producer and Playwright

After 41 years as the Founding Artistic Director, Bruce Miller transitioned to Founding Producer of Virginia Rep in 2016. He co-produced the world premieres of *Rules of the Lake* by Irene Ziegler, *Four Part Harmony* by Marcus Fisk and Douglas Miner, *War Story* by Bo Wilson and *Songs from Bedlam* by Douglas Jones. Other producing credits include *James Joyce's The Dead*, *Proof*, *How I Learned to Drive*, *Beehive*, *Mice and Men*, *My Children! My Africa!*, and *Quilters*. His play *Buffalo Soldier* was selected by the Pentagon as a morale booster after 9/11, becoming the first professional play in history to be performed within the Pentagon's walls.

He served as a site reporter for three years with the National Endowment for the Arts, and as a professional theatre panelist with the Lila Wallace—Reader's Digest Fund in New York City. He is an alumnus of the University of Richmond, and is privileged to credit three teachers as mentors: Jack Welsh, and the late Marion Waymack and Bernard Schutte.

In 2008 Virginia Governor Timothy M. Kaine announced the Governor's Awards for Arts 2008, which have only been awarded three times before - in 1979, 1985 and in 2000. Bruce Miller and Phil Whiteway share an award with Richmond's Theatre IV as the first professional children's theatre in Virginia, which has performed live for audiences totaling 28 million. Bruce's greatest blessings will always be his wife (artist and designer Terrie Powers Miller) and their two wonderful children.



ABOUT THE SHOW

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Theatre IV's production of *Sweet Chariot* shares the narratives of exslaves as told to WPA writers. These stories were compiled in the Slave Narrative Collection. Over two thousand interviews with former slaves were conducted in seventeen states during the years 1936-38.

Theatre IV combines these first-hand accounts of life as a slave and Emancipation with slave spirituals to re-create a world of longing and hope in *Sweet Chariot*. The spirituals not only held religious meaning for African American slaves, they also served as a means of communication—especially along the underground railroad. Through spirituals that served as coded messages, slaves could issue a warning to others, or communicate plans for escape or uprising.

ABOUT VIRGINIA REPERTORY THEATRE

Virginia Repertory Theatre is a nonprofit, professional theatre company and the result of the 2012 merger of Barksdale Theatre and Theatre IV. With a budget of \$5.5 million, four distinct venues, an educational touring arm, and an annual audience over 530,000, Virginia Rep is the largest professional theatre and one of the largest performing arts organizations in Central Virginia. We are dedicated to the development and production of new plays, and we seek outside producing collaboration to ensure the play has a life beyond its development and production at Virginia Rep.

For 65 years Virginia Rep has served Virginia's adults, children, families and schools and contributed to the cultural, educational, and economic life of our city and region. Check out the making of Virginia Repertory Theater [here](#).

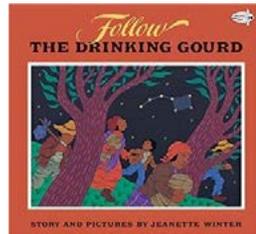
EXPLORE // Classroom Workshops



Kneebone Bend and Move Daniel

In this lesson, students will listen and identify the “call and response” musical form. Students will identify the Stickman’s rhythm and create their own rhythm pattern.

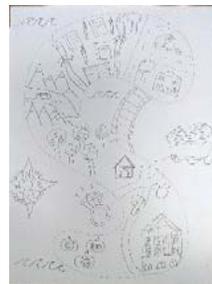
[VIEW LESSON PLAN](#) ▶



Follow the Drinking Gourd Tableau

In this activity, students will analyze the song Follow the Drinking Gourd. After they will discuss the symbolism of the Drinking Gourd and the other parts of the song. In groups, students will create tableaus for parts of the song.

[VIEW LESSON PLAN](#) ▶



Autobiography Maps

After listening to Follow the Drinking Gourd, students will create illustrated narrative maps. Students will brainstorm symbols for important things that have happened during their lives, items or activities that represent them currently, and goals that they have for the future.

[VIEW LESSON PLAN](#) ▶

CONNECT // Primary vs. Secondary Sources

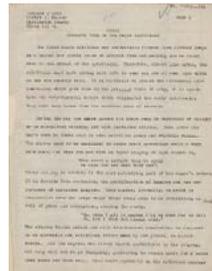
Read

WPA Federal Writers' Project Materials on African American Life, South Carolina at University of South Carolina Library



Title: Negro Spirituals
Creator: Ladson, Augustus
Date: 1936-1937

A compilation of African-American spirituals from the vicinity of Charleston, South Carolina. Click [here](#) for the digital copy.



Title: Research Work on the Negro Spirituals
Creator: Nelson, Robert L
Date: 1936-1937

Sketch about the roles of spirituals in the lives of enslaved African Americans. Click [here](#) for the digital copy.

[Characteristics of Slave Narratives](#)

[SC Slave Narratives & Autobiographies](#)

Activity

You be the interviewer! Work with a partner to learn about the stories in his or her life. Take notes and create a timeline of four events from your partner's life. Variations in this project could be: dramatic play (interviews), poster, reenactment of a memory, etc.

Watch

[Ex-Slave Narrative of Catherine Cornelius](#)

Produced by the West Baton Rouge Museum for the "Purchased Lives: the American Slave Trade from 1808 to 1865" traveling exhibit.

[Found Voices: Slave Narratives on Nightline 1999](#)

Produced by the West Baton Rouge Museum for the "Purchased Lives: the American Slave Trade from 1808 to 1865" traveling exhibit.

[Sarah Gudger Audio Reenactment](#)

Becky Stone brings the voice of former slave Sarah Gudger to life from the Federal Writers Project Slave Narratives of 1937.

ENHANCE // History of Slavery

Visit



[Old Slave Mart Museum](#)



[Boone Hall Plantation](#)



[Magnolia Plantation and Gardens](#)

[The Slave Dwelling Project](#)

[Freedom Quilts](#)

Read

