How to Catch Creation by Christina Anderson

THE CREATION OF THE PLAY

- Christina Anderson was in residence at the Magic Theatre in San Francisco.
- She says “I was meeting a lot of different types of Black Folks that I hadn’t necessarily met before because I grew up in Kansas. It was just a different culture out there in the Bay Area. I was meeting so many Black intellectuals in Oakland — specifically, the kind of Black people who were reading all types of different material, and I was meeting Black men who identified as feminists.”
- Black authors such as Pat Parker, bell hooks, Alice Walker and activists like Angela Davis and Audre Lorde inspired Ms. Anderson. These women were cultural critics and outspoken voices about Black women and the feminist movement.
- This play was originally a commission from American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco, and the play takes place in San Francisco in two different time periods—2014 and 1966.

CHRISTINA ANDERSON, PLAYWRIGHT

- Born and raised in Kansas City, KS.
- Began writing plays at the age of 15.
- Went to Brown University and studied under Paula Vogel (who wrote Indecent).
- How to Catch Creation has had three productions nationally this year.
- She is the recipient of the Lorraine Hansberry Award, the Harper Lee Award for Playwriting and countless nominations.

NATAKI GARRETT

Ms. Garrett is the new Artistic Director of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. How to Catch Creation is her directorial debut at OSF. This production is Garrett’s third time directing this play at theatres across the United States including Baltimore Center Stage and Philadelphia Theatre Company. For more than 20 years, Ms. Garrett has worked as a theatre administrator, director, producer, playwright, educator, activist and mentor.
Before seeing/reading the play

1. Research Pat Parker. These and other websites provide information:
   https://poets.org/poet/pat-parker
   https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/pat-parker
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fZoMzWraS_c
   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HyWhaCdpypw

2. Research the adoption process. What are the requirements to adopt a child? These and other websites provide information:
   https://adoptionnetwork.com/how-to-adopt-a-baby/adoption-process
   https://www.americanadoptions.com/adopt/requirements_to_adopt

After seeing/reading the play

1. What is the significance of the title? What does it mean to “catch creation”? Who is trying to catch creation and how? What different kinds of creation are the characters trying to catch?

2. What does creation mean to Griffin? Tami? Marche? Natalie? What does it mean to Riley and Stokes? In what ways are they successful in catching creation? In what ways are they not?

3. How does Griffin’s recent incarceration effect his desire to have a child? Why does Tami try to make sure that Griffin understands the responsibilities of having a child? Why does Tami feel that she can give Griffin this check on reality?

4. Refer to your research on the adoption process. Why is Griffin having trouble calling the lawyer? Why might Griffin be ineligible to adopt? How might his experience of being incarcerated affect his ability to manage the adoption process?

5. Refer to the sidebar on feminism. Riley reads on the back cover of one of Marche’s books, “A singular voice that explores the revolutionary act of Black intimacy in a climate of Black rage…” What does that mean in the context of the play?

6. Refer to the sidebar on feminism. Why do Marche’s writings speak so clearly to Stokes at this moment in his life? What does he discover in her work? How does her work propel him forward and in what ways?

7. Why does Riley feel compelled to go to the art school? Why does she feel that she needs to get help for Stokes? What does this need say about Riley? About their relationship?

8. Why are Riley and Tami surprised by each other? What were their expectations about the other and what is the reality? How does the surprise and the reality of each other fuel their relationship? How does their relationship help them each to catch their own creation?

9. What kind of creation is Natalie trying to catch? G.K.? In what ways does this pursuit of creation define their relationship?

10. Refer to your research on Pat Parker. What are the concerns that Natalie and G.K. face in the course of the play? What are the concerns that Tami and Riley face? What concerns are common to both pairs? What are not? What does this say about the difference between the two couples? Between the times that they live in? How do they reflect and inform each other in the play?
11. The play takes place in 1966 and in 2014. In what ways do the two time periods intertwine? How do the characters’ lives become intertwined? How do the two time periods reflect and inform each other in the play?

12. Compare and contrast the three couples in the play. What do they all have in common? What is unique to each couple? What kind of creation is each individual seeking? In what ways does their partner help them “catch” it? In what ways is each individual responsible for their own creativity?

13. Why do Griffin and Stokes become friends? What do they have in common? What are their differences? How do the differences and similarities fuel their friendship? How do they help each other? What do they learn from each other in the course of the play?

14. Why does G.K leave Natalie? What is learned about their lives when they appear in the 2014 part of the play? How does G.K. help Natalie? In what ways are the two women at peace with their lives and the choices they have made? What are the legacies they have left to the next generation?

15. How does each character catch creation by the end of the play? How do they assist each other in achieving the act of catching creation? How do their ideas of creation change in the course of the play?

16. If you are seeing Cambodian Rock Band: both plays take place in the past and present of the play. Compare and contrast the ways in which the past informs the present of the plays. In what ways are the characters products of the past? Who has redefined themselves differently than their pasts and why?

17. If you are seeing Mother Road, Between Two Knees, As You Like It, All's Well That Ends Well or Cambodian Rock Band, compare and contrast the legacies that are passed from one generation to the next. What have characters’ had to do to achieve a legacy? When and for what characters has the legacy been negative? When and for what characters has the legacy been positive?

LGBT+ Culture of San Francisco

San Francisco is considered to be a gay mecca of the world, and the gay capital of America. But it wasn’t always open to LGBT+ folks. Before the 1960s it was known as the Eureka Valley and was mostly populated by white working-class people. In the 1940s during WWII, San Francisco became home to many soldiers as it held several bases (e.g., Fort Mason and Fort Funston). Some of these soldiers later began homosexual relationships with each other, or with the civilians of the city, and began to stay in San Francisco after being discharged from the military for homosexuality.
Hunter’s Point Riots

Hunter’s Point is a neighborhood in San Francisco. The Hunter’s Point Riots happened in September 1966, after three African-American youths were joyriding in a stolen vehicle. The car stalled just when a police car arrived; one of the boys hid behind another car while the other two bolted and ran. The white police officer tried to cut them off and then told them to stop or he would shoot. As the boys continued to run he fired four shots, killing 16-year-old Matthew Johnson. In the next few days San Francisco experienced rioting and rage as had not been seen for some time.

BLACK FEMINISM

The Black Feminist Movement is an intersectional movement born in response to the Black Liberation Movement and the Women’s Movement of the 1960s.

Definition of Intersectionality: The complex, cumulative manner in which the effects of different forms of discrimination combine, overlap, or intersect.

In the 1960s the Black Liberation Movement fought for the rights and freedoms of Black people. Led by Black men the movement largely kept Black women in the background.

The Women’s Movement of the 60s largely benefitted White women. The White middle-class woman’s experience was considered “universal”, excluding and often refusing to acknowledge experiences of women of color.

This left Black women feeling invisible in both movements and out of this exclusion grew the Black Feminist Movement. Black feminists believe that race, sexuality and class oppression interlock and that all these systems of oppression work together. The Black Feminist movement addressed, and still is addressing, the intersection and struggle of racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression that Black women face.

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