

**A CIVIL WAR
CHRISTMAS:
AN AMERICAN
MUSICAL
CELEBRATION**

BY PAULA VOGEL

MUSIC BY DARYL WATERS



**DRAMATISTS
PLAY SERVICE
INC.**

A CIVIL WAR CHRISTMAS: AN AMERICAN MUSICAL CELEBRATION
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A CIVIL WAR CHRISTMAS: AN AMERICAN MUSICAL CELEBRATION
by Paula Vogel
Music by Daryl Waters

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World Premiere production presented by Long Wharf Theatre,
Gordon Edelstein, Artistic Director; Joan Channick, Managing Director.

Originally commissioned by Arena Stage, Washington, D.C.,
Molly Smith, Artistic Director.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to thank Anna Deavere Smith for our conversations on race, and her challenge that white writers, too, need to do the research and the work on race. Her work is an inspiration. My thanks to Evelyn Hammonds for a wonderful reading list, and to my wife, Anne Fausto-Sterling, for her listening to Civil War ballads and our field trips in the last decade.

This Christmas play is dedicated to the children in my family: Zachary, Nick, Greg, Kenny, Brian, Eric, Carl Luke, Sam and Rebecca. And in memory of my mother-in-law, who heard every draft, but died two days before opening: for Dorothy Sterling, the author of *Freedom Train*, *Lucretia Mott*, *Captain of the Planter*, *We are Your Sisters*, *Mary Jane*, and many other works. My thanks for her conversation, and for her moral compass in the world.

AUTHOR'S NOTES

Music: All music in the play is public domain: Christmas carols, spirituals, and Civil War ballads. It can and should be performed simply, with guitar, banjo, fiddle, percussion, piano — whatever is at hand. We've performed the score with a single musician/synthesizer and whatever the cast can add. I am fortunate in having Daryl Waters' score to guide us. (As a schoolgirl in Maryland, I was taught the lyrics to our state anthem, "Maryland, My Maryland" sung to the tune of "O Tannenbaum." It would take me a decade to realize that I had been taught the lyrics of a secessionist slave state song. When will the State of Maryland change the lyrics to that anthem?)

And if the audience sings along on some of the carols, better still.

Casting: This is the real fun of *A Civil War Christmas*, I think. The doubling, tripling and quadrupling of parts. The chorus functions as does the chorus in the adaptation of *Nicholas Nickleby*, that is, there's no static casting — one moment an actor plays a president, the next moment, he may play an assassin. It's up to each director and cast to play with the distribution of voices: African-Americans may comment on the white Washingtonians, women may comment on men, and then there's the horse and the mule ... and gender changes with a hat or a shawl.

The character of Raz is a nineteenth-century breeches role; the actress should be able to change her gender with a skirt, a cloak, and a bonnet. Actors and directors should choose different voices and dialects for each role. (This helps keep the costume budget down!)

Setting/Costumes: It would be great if the cast pretty much stays on the stage, and we see their costume changes. The simpler, the better. This play has to move quickly; there's a lot of ground to cover.

It is possible to do this play with 8 to 12 actors, and more than possible to do it with 14. But most of all, this is a play for community: So in some towns, perhaps it would be ideal to co-produce the play with local universities, undergraduates, acting students, church choirs, schoolchildren, and if there are any, Civil War reenactors.

A CIVIL WAR CHRISTMAS: AN AMERICAN MUSICAL CELEBRATION received its World Premiere at The Long Wharf Theatre (Gordon Edelstein, Artistic Director; Joan Channick, Managing Director) in New Haven, Connecticut, opening on December 3, 2008. It was directed by Tina Landau; the sets design was by James Schuette; the costume design was by Toni-Leslie James; the lighting design was by Scott Zielinski; the sound design was by Josh Horvath; the music was supervised, arranged and orchestrated by Daryl Waters; the music director was Andrew Resnick; and the production stage manager was Lori Lundquist. The cast was as follows:

JOHN WILKES BOOTH, ROBERT E. LEE,
WILLIAM TECUMSEH SHERMAN AND OTHERS Guy Adkins
CHESTER MANTON SAUNDERS, HAY, JOHN SURRATT
AND OTHERS Justin Blanchard
RAZ, ANNA SURRATT, AND OTHERS Susannah Flood
ELY PARKER, SILVER, FREDERICK WORMLEY, MOSES LEVY
AND OTHERS J.D. Goldblatt
WILLY MACK, WALKER LEWIS, JIM WORMLEY
AND OTHERS Brian Tyree Henry
DECATUR BRONSON, JAMES WORMLEY
AND OTHERS Marc Damon Johnson
HANNAH, ROSE, AGGY AND OTHERS Bianca Laverne Jones
ELIZABETH KECKLEY, MRS. THOMAS AND OTHERS Ora Jones
HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW, ULYSSES S. GRANT,
WARD HILL LAMON AND OTHERS Drew McVety
ABRAHAM LINCOLN, WALT WHITMAN
AND OTHERS Jay Russell
NICOLAY, MARY SURRATT, CLARA BARTON,
WIDOW SAUNDERS AND OTHERS Rachel Shapiro Alderman
MARY TODD LINCOLN, SECRETARY OF WAR STANTON
AND OTHERS Diane Sutherland
LEWIS PAYNE, MOSBY RAIDER AND OTHERS Scott Thomas
JESSA, LITTLE JOE Faith Philpot, Malenky Welsh

A CIVIL WAR CHRISTMAS: AN AMERICAN MUSICAL CELEBRATION was presented at the Huntington Theatre (Peter DuBois, Artistic Director; Michael Mason, Managing Director) in Boston, Massachusetts, opening on November 18, 2009. It was directed by Jessica Thebus; the set design was by Dan Ostling; the costume design was by Miranda Hoffman; the lighting design was by T. J. Gerckens; the sound design was by Ben Emerson; the music was supervised, arranged and orchestrated by Daryl Waters; the musicians were Andrew Resnick (conductor/piano) and Morgan Evans-Weiler (fiddle); and the production stage manager was Gail P. Luna. The cast was as follows:

HANNAH, ROSE, AGGY, MATRON Uzo Aduba
 CHESTER MANTON SAUNDERS, HAY,
 JOHN SURRATT, UNION SOLDIER Chris Bannow
 WILLY MACK, WALKER LEWIS,
 JIM WORMLEY Jason Bowen
 DECATUR BRONSON, JAMES WORMLEY,
 PHILIP REE Gilbert Glenn Brown
 ABRAHAM LINCOLN, WALT WHITMAN,
 SILVER Ken Cheeseman
 JOHN WILKES BOOTH, ROBERT E. LEE,
 WILLIAM TECUMSEH SHERMAN, RAIDER 2,
 MARY SURRATT, UNION SOLDIER Ed Hoopman
 MARY TODD LINCOLN, SECRETARY OF WAR STANTON,
 WIDOW SAUNDERS Karen MacDonald
 ELY PARKER, GEORGE'S GHOST, FREDERICK WORMLEY,
 MOSES LEVY, LOUIS J. WEICHMANN,
 REVEREND BROWN DeLance Minefee
 ELIZABETH KECKLEY, MRS. THOMAS Jacqui Parker
 HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW, ULYSSES S. GRANT,
 WARD HILL LAMON, LEWIS PAYNE, RAIDER 1,
 BURWELL, MINISTER Stephen Russell
 RAZ, ANNA SURRATT, NICOLAY, CLARA BARTON,
 MULE Molly Schreiber
 JESSA Alanna T. Logan/Hyacinth Tauriac (at select performances)

CHARACTERS

CHORUS
HANNAH
ROSE
AGGY
MATRON
CHESTER MANTON SAUNDERS
HAY
JOHN SURRETT
WILLY MACK
WALKER LEWIS
JIM WORMLEY
DECATUR BRONSON
JAMES WORMLEY
PHILIP REID
ABRAHAM LINCOLN
WALT WHITMAN
SILVER
JOHN WILKES BOOTH
ROBERT E. LEE
WILLIAM TECUMSEH SHERMAN
RAIDERS
MARY SURRETT
UNION SOLDIERS
MARY TODD LINCOLN
SECRETARY OF WAR STANTON
WIDOW SAUNDERS
ELY PARKER
GEORGE'S GHOST
FREDERICK WORMLEY
MOSES LEVY
LOUIS J. WEICHMANN
REVEREND ALEXANDER
ELIZABETH KECKLEY

MRS. ELIZABETH THOMAS
HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW
ULYSSES S. GRANT
WARD HILL LAMON
LEWIS PAYNE
BURWELL
LITTLE JOE
MINISTER
RAZ
ANNA SURRATT
NICOLAY
CLARA BARTON
MULE
JESSA
MRS. JOHNSON
MATRON, ARMORY HOSPITAL
SERGEANT AT ARMS
CORPORAL WILLS
SOLDIERS, WARD A
WHITE HOUSE SOLDIERS
SOLDIERS, POINT LOOKOUT
LIEUTENANT AT EDWARD'S FERRY
LIEUTENANTS, 2ND RHODE ISLAND
MERCHANT
SENTRY
VENDOR
PENDEL

PLACE

Washington, D.C., and along the Potomac River.

TIME

Christmastime, near the end of the Civil War.

SONGS

Act One

- “All Quiet”/“Silent Night” — All
“I Heard the Bells” — Longfellow, Lee, Grant, Parker, Lincoln
“Take No Prisoners (Pounding Out His Vow)” — Bronson
“Follow the Drinking Gourd” — Company
“Gone Away to Shiloh” — Raz
“Jubilee” — Sherman
“God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen” — Company
“What Child is This?” — Keckley and Company
“Maryland, My Maryland” — Booth, Payne, Surratt
“The Holly and the Ivy” —Lamon, Lincoln
“O Tannenbaum” — Lamon, Chorus

Act Two

- “God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen” — Mary Todd Lincoln
“Roll on Liberty Ball” — Widow Saunders
“Temple of Freedom” — Widow Saunders, Chester
“Yellow Rose of Texas” — Bronson, Chorus
“There is a Balm in Gilead” — Keckley, Hannah
“Silent Night”/“Kaddish” — Mary Todd Lincoln, Moses Levy
“Children Go Where I Send Thee” — Black Chorus
“Ain’t that A-Rocking” — Keckley
“O Christmas Tree” — Chorus
“I Heard the Bells” — Chorus

A CIVIL WAR CHRISTMAS

ACT ONE

Scene 1

Introduction: Washington, D.C., Christmas Eve, 1864.

Chorus/Longfellow.

Bugles, drums, fade into a winter wind as the ensemble comes on singing.

MEN.

ALL QUIET ALONG
THE POTOMAC TONIGHT
WHERE THE SOLDIERS
LIE PEACEFULLY
DREAMING

WOMEN.

SILENT NIGHT,
HOLY NIGHT
ALL IS CALM, ALL IS BRIGHT
(Women hum.)

MEN.

AND THEIR TENTS IN THE RAYS OF THE CLEAR WINTER
MOON
AND THE LIGHT OF THE CAMPFIRE ARE GLEAMING

ALL.

THERE'S ONLY THE SOUND OF THE LONE SENTRY'S TREAD

MEN.

AS HE TRAMPS FROM THE ROCK TO THE FOUNTAIN

(Women hum.)

CHORUS 1. Welcome to our story. The season is upon us, and whether it's Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa or New Year's — it's a time when we feel our connection to a larger community.

CHORUS 2. Our story takes place in the bustling city of Washington, D.C., and along the Potomac River. The Potomac has as many twists and turns as our

story tonight: but here's all you need to know. On the northern side of the river — Edward's Ferry, the District of Columbia and Point Lookout. On the southern side, anywhere you can row, a presidential assassin might find safe harbor.

CHORUS 3. Most winters, December is gentle on the land that borders the Potomac: You can smell the promise of tilled earth and the harvest to come.

CHORUS 4. (*Sings.*)

SLEEP IN HEAVENLY PEACE

CHORUS 5. But not that blustery December of 1864. Four years of the most brutal harvesting of men has raged across both banks of this river.

CHORUS 4. (*Sings.*)

SLEEP IN HEAVENLY PEACE.

CHORUS 5. As if in wrath, the heavens have blasted the swift Potomac with ice from Edward's Ferry all the way to Washington, so thick with ice you could almost step across.

CHORUS 6. On the northern side of the Potomac, nurses at the Armory Hospital pile blankets on the rows of Union soldiers in their beds. (*The sound of wind howls.*) It's going to be a cold one tonight.

CHORUS 7. Five hundred miles to the north of Armory Hospital, the same blustery wind rattles a poet's windows in Massachusetts. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow paces in his Cambridge study; all day he'd had some strange feeling in his bones as he listened to the wind. And so Longfellow put another log on his fire, sat at his desk, put pen in hand and wrote:

CHORUS/LONGFELLOW. (*Spoken.*)

*I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old, familiar carols play
And wild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, goodwill to men!*

(*Sings.*)

I THOUGHT HOW, AS THE DAY HAD COME
THE BELFRIES OF ALL CHRISTENDOM
HAD ROLLED ALONG
THE UNBROKEN SONG
OF PEACE ON EARTH, GOODWILL TO MEN!

A CIVIL WAR CHRISTMAS: AN AMERICAN MUSICAL CELEBRATION

by Paula Vogel

music by Daryl Waters

7M, 5W (doubling, flexible casting)

It's 1864, and Washington, D.C. is settling down to the coldest Christmas Eve in years. In the White House, President and Mrs. Lincoln plot their gift-giving. On the banks of the Potomac, a young rebel challenges a Union blacksmith's mercy. In the alleys downtown, an escaped slave loses her daughter just before finding freedom. This musical by Pulitzer Prize-winner Paula Vogel intertwines many lives, showing us that the gladness of one's heart is the best gift of all.

"Ms. Vogel manages to humanize most of her many characters in a few crisp strokes of dialogue, so they come across as full-blooded people, glimpsed clearly if quickly, rather than talking statues in a historical diorama."

—**The New York Times**

"Artfully weaves historic details into the play [and] pulls it together with economical writing that reflects the poetry of the day."

—**Variety**

"Deep-rooted and ambitious ... a fascinating interface of history and fiction ... boldly inventive theater, warm and affecting."

—**Talkin' Broadway**

Also by Paula Vogel

THE BALTIMORE WALTZ
HOW I LEARNED TO DRIVE
THE OLDEST PROFESSION
and many others

DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC.

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