



REDSHIRTS

*By Dana Yeaton
Directed by Lou Bellamy*

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Educational Tools *Penumbra Theatre Study Guide*

Greetings! Thank you for visiting Penumbra Theatre Company's **Study Guide Library**. We are so pleased that you seek to extend and engage your understanding of the drama we produce and the thematic issues it brings to the fore.

Penumbra Theatre Company occupies a very unique place within American society, and by extension of that, the world. Penumbra was borne out of the Black Arts Movement, a time charged by civic protest and community action. An artist making art by, for and about the black community was charged with merging aesthetic (artistic) principles with ethical (moral) ones. Subsequently, in this historical and political context, art had an agenda to strive toward social change. African American artists were part of, and greatly influenced, the social currents that carried people from their homes, schools and places of worship to the streets.

Bonding artistic interpretation with civic responsibility engenders an important kind of creative dissonance, a harmony of balance. It creates something neither art nor civic action could do alone. This is mission driven art, informed by a black ethos and aesthetic, which can adequately illuminate our experience. **Ensemble Theatre** in that context is the creation of a community of people committed to the telling of a story that acknowledges the experience of everyone involved. This kind of art demands that each audience member recognize his or her place in relation to the art. When that happens, we begin to think about ourselves as interactive forces in a greater social context. Our own agency becomes clearer to us; our choices and reactions start to make sense within a broader, more nuanced environment. We begin to see that others have lived with similar issues, and that their perspectives have great potential to enrich our experience and help us problem-solve. This kind of art creates and sustains community. It encourages coalition.

The function of an **Education and Outreach Program** inside an institution such as Penumbra Theatre Company is to use informed discussion and interdisciplinary tools to unpack the issues stimulated by the drama. Just as an actor must learn lines and blocking before interpreting a character, we offer our audiences the practical tools so that they may respond to the art both critically and creatively. It is our job to push conversation, critical analysis, and commentary beyond emotion toward solution.

The **Study Guides** are meant to stimulate discussion, not to present a definitive voice or the "right answer." Theatre is *fluid*, active, interactive and reactive; we must engage it intellectually that way too.

We hope to create space for the themes inspired by the drama to take root and blossom. Penumbra invites audiences to participate in the art and social action, by using our Education and Outreach tools to locate their contribution, their voice, within the larger human story we tell over and over again. We love. We fail. We begin anew. Over and over, told by countless tongues, embodied by some of the finest actors and carried in the hearts of some of the most committed audience members; we speak our human lessons through the prism of the African American experience.

PENUMBRA THEATRE STUDY GUIDE
REDSHIRTS

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THE ARTISTIC PROCESS

The Social Symbolic: Individuals in Society

Art is a complicated process that we rarely fully engage. It stimulates emotional, intellectual, even physical responses in audiences. Art is so powerful because it is one example of a deep and necessary connection between an individual and the collective world. To better understand the process of art, it helps to consider this connection and how it works.

The connection between an individual and society is made through complex systems of meaning and metaphor; groups of symbols created by humans that represent how we feel, think, see and understand the world in which we live. These systems represent the tie that binds us all to one another in relationships that constitute identity, and help us comprehend our human experience. Art is one such system and there are others too.

Individuals can only access these systems through the collective, social world. In order for a human child, for example, to learn to use language (really just a system of symbols, meaning and metaphor), that child must come into contact with other human beings who already grasp and make use of the faculty of language. Once the child is inducted into this social system, the symbols, meaning and metaphor common to all members of the community will eventually dominate the life-experience of that child and his or her ability to reflect upon or process that experience. In fact, these systems are so powerful, that the child will also only come to understand him or herself in relation to other community members, and only through the system of meaning and metaphor common to that group. This process is called socialization. A community's system of meaning, metaphor and symbolism forms its culture. Socialization does two things: it sustains culture and forms an individual's identity.

Social Commentary and the Nature of Art

Art works by tapping into a community's system of meaning, metaphor and symbolism to represent the experience, knowledge or reality specific to that culture. Art is ultimately the expression of an idea, emotion or experience through the creation of a symbolic structure. The artistic product does not have to have *physical structure* to be considered art. Music, story-telling, dance are all artistic modes that are active and not permanent. Instead art is defined by its ability to recreate human experience through the point of view of the artist and affect a response within an audience. This might seem fairly simple, or even obvious. A deeper examination, however, will illuminate the special quality of art and explain why it is so important to a healthy society.

Human beings have the unique ability to critically observe ourselves. We can, in other words, reflect upon our actions, emotions and experiences. The fact that the word "reflect" can mean "to think" and "to mirror, or reverse an original image back to its source," is quite telling about the nature of art. In the most basic terms, an artist creates a piece of art as a reflection of culture. Culture is made up of individuals, their experiences and the integration of all of these things to become more than the sum of its individual parts.

Artists use many different structures, or "mediums," to communicate meaning. The artist's effort to communicate his or her intent is both informed by, and limited to, his or her cultural perspective; no individual exists completely outside of some cultural context. Within that cultural context, the artist embodies different symbols that have meaning within the culture. His or her navigation of the cultural landscape will be informed by these symbols and will also

inform the art too. This is what we mean when we talk about an artist's "voice." Even though the artistic product may not have sound (like a painting or a piece of sculpture) it was created by a particular person with a particular experience in a particular social context. The artistic product reflects those particularities (the artist's perspective or point of view) and the meaning it conveys is determined by them.

Moreover, any form of communication (like language or art) requires the use of the symbolic tools of the culture. This means that in order to reflect the culture through artistic representation, the artist has to be able to stand both outside and inside a culture simultaneously (but never be totally in either place). Only from that vantage point can the artist use the symbolic tools of a culture to communicate what he or she observes about the culture itself. This is what is known as "artistic commentary." It conveys the artist's intent, or impetus for creating something.

The Role of the Audience and the Alienation of the Artist

The process does not end with the creation of an artistic product. Art needs an audience other than the artist who created it. In solitude, the artist may marvel at his or her creation—might even be enlightened or surprised by it—but the artist will remain unfulfilled without the participation of an audience. The artist was moved to respond to cultural stimuli, the response now requires an audience to receive it, absorb it and refract it back to the artist. This is the contribution of the artistic product to the cultural landscape that inspired it. This way the artist can observe the change engendered by his or her commentary. To comment on something is to change it.

If the nature of the artist is to observe, interpret and then comment in order to change, the nature of the audience is also to observe and interpret. Because each human being has been exposed to an infinite number of symbols in widely divergent patterns and trajectories, and at different points in our lives, each spectator will "read" (or make sense of, interpret the symbols) the artistic product differently. An entire audience might have similar emotional or intellectual responses to a piece of art, but each spectator will have a slightly different experience than his or her neighbor. When the members of an audience have an opportunity to discuss their experience, the entire group is enlightened or engaged, bound by the same artistic element. This is how art creates community. A kind of spontaneous culture is fashioned by virtue of a shared experience. The culture is singular to itself because of the unique qualities of each audience member and any variance within the art.

The audience has one last critical role to play in the artistic process, and it is both enlightening and violent. The audience is invited to observe a translation of a common experience through the perspective of an artist. The audience is then momentarily able to achieve a similar distance from the culture as the artist did before creating the artistic product, but this time the audience starts at the end and works in retrospect back to the state of things to which the artist originally responded. They are afforded the benefit of the impetus for the art and the art itself simultaneously. This event illustrates the extent, or limit, to the intent of the artist.

In order to comprehend the art, in order to feel it, the spectator must contextualize it within his or her own unique experience. Of course this experience is largely determined by the spectator's cultural context. Even as the spectator experiences the art he or she changes it, manipulates it so that it will fit within the frame of reference particular to him or her. Art encourages all who use the system of symbolism, meaning and metaphor to consider it differently. This is where the integrity of the artist's original intent starts to break down, and it is the moment in which the

artist **loses** the ability to control his or her artistic product. The artist can no longer speak for the art; the art now speaks for itself and for the artist. By virtue of its nature, an audience changes the artistic product fundamentally from the scope of what is intended by the artist to the full breadth of the potential audience experience. To claim the art is to fulfill it, it is also to sever it forever from its original intent—it is no longer defined by a striving to effect change through artistic translation and commentary, it is the reception of the comment and the realization of change. The artistic product has traveled a very great distance between the artist and the audience. It is now absorbed back into the cultural system of metaphor and symbolism and becomes another tool for communicating meaning. The artist is impotent to reclaim or control the artistic product. So to reiterate, the nature of the artist is to observe, interpret, comment and in so doing effect change. The nature of the audience is to observe, interpret, and claim.

Perpetual Motion: The Circle of Art and Culture

The manipulation, possible misunderstanding and absorption of the artistic product by the culture, is both a fulfillment and a violation of the artist. The only way for the artist to regain agency or engage his or her artistic product from this point on is to produce more art in response to the culture. This is how art is perpetual and how culture and art continually constitute one another. It stimulates growth in both arenas and so keeps a society from stagnating.

Summary

To review, an artist responds to cultural stimuli through the manipulation of symbols that the culture uses to communicate meaning. The artistic product is a blend of the system of meaning specific to a culture and the artist's interpretation of that system. The art produced is the artist's commentary. The audience functions as an agent of translation as it claims the artistic product for itself and alters it in order to access it. The culture absorbs the art and the artist no longer can change or access his or her artistic product now that it has entered the social realm of the symbolic. The artist can only create more art, using the tools of the cultural symbolic, a system that has already been altered by its absorption of the original artistic product. Thus art and culture are constitutive of one another.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW ON THE HISTORY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN THEATRE

Aspects of the dramatic performing arts can be found in cultures around the world. Globally speaking, American Theater is a relatively new tradition. As theater has evolved from the **African roots** of Greek tragedy to Shakespearean epics, American stages have produced a wide range of plays, largely influenced by the diverse peoples inhabiting this nation. In its early years, American Theater reflected the lives of its proponents, namely white, property-owning, Christian men. Ironically, even as America established itself as a sovereign nation, the drama of the day came largely from Europe, which boasted a unique canon of work. Still, as early as 1821 black American artists were creating, staging and performing for mixed audiences, showcasing both existing and original work.

One of the first theater companies to approach the dramatic performing arts from an African American perspective was **The African Grove Theater** in New York City. It was founded by **William Henry Brown** and **James Hewlett**, both who had traveled by ship throughout the Caribbean, where story-telling, performance, dance and music were essential to the culture and survival of the slaves working on sugar cane and tobacco plantations, salt flats and mines. The company performed tragedies and comedies from Shakespeare to American playwrights. Eventually, the need for work that came from within the African American experience proved itself. Two years after it opened, the first play written and produced by an African American was presented at the African Grove in 1823. The play, *The Drama of King Shotaway*, by Brown, played to mixed (though predominately black) audiences that year. However, many whites were adamantly opposed to the existence of such a theater and frequent police raids, harassment and threats forced Brown and Hewlett to relocate the theater several times throughout the lower East side of Manhattan. Eventually, the white opposition won out over the tenacity of the black actors, directors and producers of The African Grove Theater Company and it closed its doors permanently.¹

As Americans established a canon of their own, dominant political and social trends were addressed by the work. One of the nation's most successful and fraught enterprises was racialized slavery in the American South. Depicted on white stages, black characters often fit into stereotypical characters which would haunt American stages for decades to come. Some of the most prevalent of those were **the Sambo, the Uncle, the Mammy and the Jezebel**. These

¹ For more information see Bernard L. Peterson Jr.'s "Introduction: The Origin and Development of the Black American Playwright from the Antebellum Period to World War II," *Early Black American Playwrights and Dramatic Writers: A Biographical Directory and Catalog of Plays, Films, and Broadcasting Scripts*. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990) 1-21.

racist depictions would be reflected over and over again in the theater, usually performed by white actors in blackface. African-American artists struggled against these stereotypical images as soon as they entered the public sphere. In 1857, **William Wells Brown**, (no relation to William Henry Brown) juxtaposed a stereotypical black male character named Cato with an exemplary black male character named Glen in his play *The Escape; or a Leap for Freedom*. This play highlighted the difference between an image created by black people for black audiences and an image created by white people for white audiences. It was an important statement.

Still the popularity of comical representations of black Americans continued. **Minstrelsy** was very popular in the 19th Century. This performance tradition was created as whites made light of and fantasized about slave life and plantation culture in the antebellum South. White entertainers in **blackface** would do comedic impressions of, or parody, the stories, songs and dance, jokes and music of blacks for white audiences. Minstrelsy was a very lucrative and beloved form of theater for white audiences for many years. White theatre-goers filled houses to laugh at representations of blacks as happy, contented and dim-witted. The tradition would continue long into the mid-1900s. Responsible for the creation of one familiar American character, **Jim Crow**, this theatre tradition was hardly benign. Its impact had a life that extended far beyond the stage in American social, political and civil rights policy.

For many years, (largely due to the audience expectations created by these white performers) the only work black performers could find was to perform in minstrel shows, *in blackface*. This absurd situation reinforces the notion that the depictions of blackness and black people on white stages was not real. Even black actors had to “perform” white ideas of blackness by darkening their skin, wearing silly costumes and miming the white actors’ racist depictions of black people.

In Hollywood, some of America’s most revered epic films depict the early stereotypes created in the theater and in the 1920s and 30s. Black artists, writers and musicians began responding to the racist depictions and creating their own artistic representations of black life and philosophy. This period of burgeoning talent and new work is known as **The Harlem Renaissance**. In 1923, the first serious play written by a black playwright was produced on Broadway. It was called *The Chip Woman’s Fortune* by **Willis Richardson**.² Still, the prevalent trend was for white artists and producers to pull from black narrative, song and dance and parody it for audiences. **Langston Hughes** and **Jean Toomer** were particularly concerned with white representations of blackness in the theater. Read below, Langston Hughes’ famous poem “**Notes on Commercial Theater**”:

² Ibid., 165.

You've taken my blues and gone --
 You sing 'em on Broadway
 And you sing 'em in Hollywood Bowl,
 And you mixed 'em up with symphonies
 And you fixed 'em
 So they don't sound like me.
 Yep, you done taken my blues and gone.

You also took my spirituals and gone
 You put me in Macbeth and Carmen Jones
 All kinds of Swing Mikados
 And in everything but what's about me --
 But someday somebody'll
 Stand up and talk about me --
 Black and beautiful --
 And sing about me,
 And put on plays about me!
 I reckon it'll be
 Me myself!

Yes, it'll be me.³

This poem echoes one of the founding tenets of another critical moment in black theater history, the **Black Arts Movement** of the 1960s. It was during this period that some of the most celebrated black writers responded vociferously to the racism American citizens were struggling against in the Civil Rights Movement. Self-representation became a major focus of the movement—art was created by, for, and about black people. Artists such as **LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka**, **Ed Bullins**, **Nikki Giovanni**, **Harold Cruse**, **Ray Durem**, **Adrienne Kennedy**, **Larry Neal** and **Sonia Sanchez** all produced seminal work during this period of time. In 1959 **Lorraine Hansberry's** famous play *A Raisin in the Sun* opened on Broadway in New York City. It was the first time a play written by a black playwright, directed by a black director (**Lloyd Richards**) and written about black people was presented at this level. The next twenty years saw an eruption of African American theater companies springing up around the country, one of which was **Penumbra Theatre Company** in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Founded in 1976 by Artistic Director **Lou Bellamy**, Penumbra addressed issues of racial tension and misrepresentation between what were visibly separate black and white Americas. Over the last 30 years, Penumbra has provided a consistently clear message that the African American experience is rich, dynamic and critical to the American theater canon. While visiting the Twin Cities, playwright **August Wilson** said of Penumbra:

³ Hughes, Langston. *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*. (New York: Vintage, 1995) 215.

It was with the indomitable spirit associated with pioneers and visionaries that Lou Bellamy took a handful of actors over [sic] twenty years ago and challenged them not only to believe in themselves but to have a belief larger than anyone's disbelief. When I walked through the doors of Penumbra Theatre [sic], I did not know that I would find life-long friends and supporters that would encourage and enable my art. I did not know I would have my first professional production, a musical satire called *Black Bart and the Sacred Hills*. I did not know then what Penumbra Theatre would come to mean to me and that there would come a time when Penumbra would produce more of my plays than any other theatre in the world. And that their production of *The Piano Lesson* would become not only my favorite staging but a model of style and eloquence that would inspire my future work. I only knew that I was excited to be in a black theater that had real lights, assigned seats and a set that was not a hodgepodge of found and borrowed props as had been my experience with all the black theater I had known. We are what we imagine ourselves to be and we can only imagine what we know to be possible. The founding of PTC enlarged that possibility. And its corresponding success provokes the community to a higher expectation of itself. I became a playwright because I saw where my chosen profession was being sanctioned by a group of black men and women who were willing to invest their lives and their talent in assuming a responsibility for our presence in the world and the conduct of our industry as black Americans.⁴

Through artistically excellent theater, Penumbra has sought to plumb the depths of the human experience by presenting culturally specific and historically accurate depictions of African Americans. Sadly, many of the black theater companies founded during the BAM have closed over the years, largely due to lack of funding, managerial problems and poor attendance. Penumbra's survival is a testament to all the people who believe in its power for social change. Our artists, administration, audiences and community have consistently buoyed us up and kept this important institution afloat on the occasionally stormy seas of non-profit arts administration. Today, because of our growth and the changing world, Penumbra is widely regarded as a pioneer of cross-cultural dialogue. Our template of finding the universal through the specificity of human experience has become a model for teaching, arts application and criticism. We are nationally and internationally recognized as a preeminent African American theater company.

Lou Bellamy explains that black people not only "have to be at the table" to engage in cross-cultural conversations, but host such debates as well. In an America that increasingly more often accepts oversimplified answers, we seek out nuance and enjoy disturbing the veneer. At Penumbra, we provide the table at which artists and audiences alike may sit down and rigorously engage one another with complicated questions. We are proud to have these artists in our midst and excited to produce work that circumvents a hackneyed black / white binary.

⁴ August Wilson, excerpted from a speech given at Penumbra Theatre Company, 1997.

INTRODUCTION

Dana Yeaton's play *REDSHIRTS* tackles formidable and valid issues that face young athletes. Yeaton's tailbacks could represent the athletes at many Division I schools. They are young, eager, and self-assured. We are inspired by their potential, in awe of their talent and a bit nervous about the compulsivity that some tend to exhibit. These freshman "redshirts" are the next generation of star athletes, the hopefuls. They are eagerly anticipated by their coaches, their fellow students, university alumni, general public and, already, even professional recruiting representatives. They seem to have the world by the tail. As the play progresses, however, it is revealed that these young men are struggling in ways not everyone can see. We realize each one is insecure about his status on the football team. All of them are uncertain as to their place within the larger culture of the university. Perhaps most challenging is that these football players are unclear about how to prioritize their responsibilities as students and athletes at the highest level of intercollegiate competition. Yeaton's tailbacks are responsible for tasks that require both life experience and skills they are only just beginning to develop. For student athletes of color on American campuses, additional layers are added to an already complex negotiation of social place, direction and sense of self.

CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

- Dante Greene:** 18 year old black freshman tailback. Dante is energetic, talented, eager yet insecure. A wordsmith.
- Dale Mayo:** 18 year old white freshman tailback. Dale is jovial, self-aware and easy-going. A peacekeeper.
- Jahzeel Wilson:** 18 year old black freshman tailback. Jahzeel is pensive, romantic and quiet. The virtuous son.
- Curtis Combs:** 22 year old black junior tailback. Curtis is tenured but aging. A bull in a china shop.
- Coach Tyrell Moore:** Middle-aged black running back coach. A man who wants to live life offensively but continuously finds himself on the defense. A problem-solver. Coach Moore is organized, disciplined, thorough.
- Dr. Audrey Yantz:** Middle-aged white special needs coordinator. Dr. Yantz is nurturing, patient and witty.
- Dr. Charlene Bigelow:** Middle-aged black assistant professor of English. Dr. Bigelow is rigorous and quite brilliant.
- Tori:** Late twenty-something white writing tutor. Tori is a graduate student and an aspiring actress.

SYNOPSIS: A SCENE BY SCENE BREAKDOWN

SYNOPSIS

When four college football players at Tennessee Southern University are accused of academic dishonesty, scandal threatens to erupt. At stake are a college professor's tenure, a coach's reputation, a tutor's motives, and the players' hopes for continuing their burgeoning athletic careers. As they deliberate about their next moves, each character must re-examine his or her personal integrity and sense of identity. The consequences of their decisions will shape the future of their lives, the success of the team, and the athletic and academic infrastructure of the university.

SETTING

Various locations around Tennessee Southern, a fictional Division I university.

Fall. The present.

SCENE BREAKDOWN

ACT I

Scene 1: Prologue, on the sidelines of the football field

A giant JumboTron flashes images of the players and their stats as Dante introduces them one by one.

Scene 2: Post-game press conference

A player has been seriously injured. Coach Moore addresses the press who are eager to hear details about the severity of the injury and its impact on the team's standing. Coach Moore tries to divert reporters' attention away from the injured player and onto Curtis who makes a blunder when trying to show gratitude for the opportunity to play and concern for his fellow player.

Coach Moore wraps up the press conference suavely and remembers to acknowledge that the athletes are also students.

Scene 3: The tutoring lab, Holloway Athletic Center

Dante, Jahzeel and Dale visit writing tutor, Tori. Each vies for her attention, flirtatiously at first. Then it becomes clear that she can only help one at a time according to academic rules and they tussle over who needs the most help. Dante's reliance on his ADD as an excuse to get what he wants from people is made evident. We also find out that Dale is attending TSU on a scholarship and he is concerned about keeping his GPA above a 3.0.

They have an assignment to analyze a poem. Jahzeel chooses to work on Robert Frost's "Stop By The Woods On A Snowy Evening." Dante teases him, calling the poem "gay." It is evident that they are all uncomfortable with poetry, with its inherent emotion. Least so is Jahzeel, who has already written a draft of his paper.

Dante tries to read the poem aloud, but does not take it seriously. Jahzeel takes offense and he and Dante face off. Dale comes between them to quell the rising tension. Jahzeel leaves upset.

Scene 4: The weight room

Coach Moore finds Curtis in the weight room lifting. Curtis has disobeyed specific orders not to lift and he has chosen to visit the weight room instead of meeting with the writing tutor, Tori, as was expected. We learn that Curtis is afraid Jahzeel will replace him because he performed well the day before. Coach Moore reassures Curtis that he is needed and tells him to leave the weight room.

Scene 5: The library

Jahzeel is working with Tori on his paper again. This time they are alone. We learn that Tori is an aspiring actress and is learning lines for William Shakespeare's Twelfth Night. She temps and tutors while in graduate school at TSU.

Jahzeel is ill-equipped for their meeting, unfamiliar with even the most basic tools the library has to offer (computers, disks, email, etc.). They analyze the poem together. Tori clarifies that the writing assignment requires Jahzeel to take an analytical position on the text. He considers working on the other, more popular poem "If We Must Die."

Scene 6: The weight room

Curtis is lifting again. His determination is frightening.

Scene 7: The office of Dr. Audrey Yantz, Special Needs Coordinator

Dante is in Dr. Yantz's office taking a computerized diagnostic test. An object appears and floats across the screen. The cursor clicks on it and it disappears. This repeats. Dante is talking in spite of Dr. Yantz's instructions not to. He pretends he is killing the images on the screen. He makes light of his ADHD.

Scene 8: The locker room

Dale finds Curtis in the locker room drenched with sweat. He is surprised to see him there and reminds Curtis that he is supposed to be meeting with the writing tutor Tori. Curtis is uncommunicative and asks Dale for Advil. He seems dazed. His hearing is affected and he does not register much of what Dale is saying to him.

Scene 9: The library

Jahzeel is working with Tori on the poem. He is excited because he has found the natural rhythm to it and the poem is resonating more for him now. He compares the poem to a preacher's sermon, something from his own life and experience. He is tentative because he disagrees with the poet but Tori encourages him to begin. He gears himself up to try.

Scene 10: Dr. Yantz's office

Dante is explaining his rapping to Dr. Yantz, one rhyme he's recently composed talks about how the ultimate adversary is oneself. She encourages him to share it with his English professor. It is clear that Dante does not feel it warrants academic recognition. We find out that his priority is definitely not school; he has his sights set on going pro and he is just a redshirt freshman. His dreams are big, a television series, the Heisman trophy, the NFL Hall of Fame. He ends with saving Africa as his goal. He laughs this off and tells Dr. Yantz he realizes that he's dreaming big. He asks her if Muhammad Ali

went around telling people he was the second greatest in the world. No, Dante says, he told people he was the greatest of all time. Dr. Yantz challenges Dante to be serious, to articulate some of his fears about not being the greatest. He finds this threatening. He finishes the diagnostic test and Dale beckons from the hallway. He whispers something to Dante and the two exit quickly, leaving Dr. Yantz behind with the prize she had offered Dante for “winning” his diagnostic test, a magic marker.

Scene 11: The classroom of Professor Charlene Bigelow

Professor Bigelow has called Dale and Jahzeel into her office. She tells them that she suspects Dante, Dale and Jahzeel of plagiarism. She returns their papers back to them without grades giving them two options: Professor Bigelow could submit the papers to Judicial Affairs for review and they would face expulsion, or she would give each an F on the paper. Jahzeel is greatly disheartened because he was very proud of the paper and worked hard on it.

Dale and Jahzeel say it’s unfair that Dante does not get to make a choice for himself because he is not at the meeting with them. Dale and Jahzeel demonstrate their loyalty to Dante by refusing to make a decision until they can come to one collectively. Professor Bigelow agrees to give them until 3:30pm that day.

Scene 12: The running back room

Dante, Jahzeel and Dale disclose their problem to Coach Moore. He warns them that Judicial Affairs will likely not rule in their favor and that the decision would be irreversible. They tell him that Professor Bigelow is out to get them because they are football players. Coach Moore conveys some skepticism about the situation and Jahzeel becomes frustrated, realizing that Coach Moore thinks they are both unintelligent and that they’ve cheated. Frustrations are high in the room and the scene ends.

Scene 13: Professor Bigelow’s classroom

Coach Moore goes to visit Professor Bigelow, attempting to decipher the situation himself. She is cautious, expecting that he’s come to try to swing a deal to get the football players out of trouble. We learn that Professor Bigelow is facing a benchmark in her career, she is up for reappointment. Coach Moore reveals that he came to TSU largely because it seemed to be an institution of academic integrity. He asserts his commitment to preventing academic fraud or compromised academic standards. He stands up on behalf of the accused football players. She assures him that she has documented her query into their academic integrity.

Scene 14: The writing lab

Tori and Curtis are working on his paper. Jahzeel enters. Curtis claims he needs to see someone about a brain injury. Jahzeel is left but it is Tori that approaches first. Tori is impressed by Jahzeel’s recent public spotlight on national television. Jahzeel reveals to Tori that Coach Moore has forbid him to work with her because Dante, Dale and Jahzeel have been accused of cheating on the paper with which she helped them. Jahzeel finds out that Tori is from South Georgia, an area that boasts the winningest football program in the country.

Scene 15: Press conference

Coach Moore is addressing the press. He talks about Jahzeel’s great run and touchdown but also addresses a fumble that could have cost the game. The press is eager to hear

when the freshman redshirts will be unleashed on the field. Coach Moore announces Dante's arrival.

Scene 16: Dr. Yantz's office

Dante is furious. He shows Dr. Yantz a transcript that shows Professor Bigelow plans to fail him not just for the paper in question, but for the entire course. He is edgy, upset, and will not settle down. Dr. Yantz tries to calm him.

Scene 17: The writing lab

Tori and Jahzeel get closer. He talks about his insecurities about being considered a dumb jock. He tells Tori he thinks she sees him that way. She swears she doesn't. As she is trying to explain her impressions of him, Dale bursts in with a letter.

Scene 18: Dr. Yantz's office

Dr. Yantz attempts to counsel Dante as to how to proceed. Dante finds out he does not have ADHD. Dr. Yantz shows him the scores of his diagnostic test.

Scene 19: The writing lab

Curtis, Jahzeel and Dale are talking. Curtis is convinced that Jahzeel has made a play for his position. He finds out he will be placed on academic probation which means that he will be ineligible to play. They square off and nearly fight but Dante enters and interrupts them. He amps them up to help each other. A battle is beginning to take shape.

Scene 20: The hallway outside of Professor Bigelow's classroom

Coach Moore and Professor Bigelow are talking. Coach Moore shares his admiration for Professor Bigelow for trying to challenge the students to think. He recognizes that her climb to Professor as a young, black woman must have been very challenging. He tells her that he doesn't want any cheaters on his team. A kid who would cheat in the classroom will also cheat on the field and that player is no good for the team, he explains.

Scene 21: Professor Bigelow's office

Professor Bigelow sits in her office with Coach Moore, Dante, Dale, Curtis and Jahzeel. She reads the sentences in which their papers sound similar aloud. They half-heartedly try to explain but obviously feel ill-equipped to do so. Dante challenges Professor Bigelow, reminding her of her threat to send the issue to Judicial Affairs. Dante points out that she is up for review. Coach Moore warns Dante to be prudent and respectful. Jahzeel starts to see that Professor Bigelow is not out to get them. Dante begins conspiracy theorizing. Coach Moore challenges him. Dante tries to leave. Coach Moore orders him to stay and to sit down.

Jahzeel asks if there is some way they can prove they didn't cheat. Professor Bigelow explains that she is unwilling to compromise, expressing frustration with the exceptions that have been made (at the detriment of the student-athlete, ultimately) just to keep them eligible for play. They suggest a plan to demonstrate each player's comprehension of the coursework. They must each rewrite the paper in the same testing room, analyzing a poem they have never seen. They must do it now. All must partake and all must pass. Dante does not want to. He gets riled up. He and the Coach face off. Dante insults Jahzeel and leaves ready to fight. *End of Act I.*

ACT II

Scene 1: A dorm room balcony

Jahzeel is on the telephone, reciting a prayer from memory. Dante apologizes for his behavior, blaming it on his ADD. Jahzeel tells Dante that Professor Bigelow has agreed to let them try to write a new paper and prove they did not cheat. They have ten days to prepare for the exam. Even with more time to prepare, Dante refuses. It is revealed that Dante helped Curtis finish his paper. Dante explains it is because Curtis had a concussion. They argue about whether or not this qualifies as cheating. Dante claims it does not matter, if it isn't directly related to the game, like steroids or shaving points. Jahzeel reminds him that it could cause a scandal that the press would definitely care about. Dante points out that all Curtis has is football and that he couldn't let him down.

Jahzeel checks his email and finds a message from Coach Moore waiting. It is titled "Sunrise Sessions."

Scene 2: The running back room

Curtis, Dale and Jahzeel are gathered in front of Coach Moore who writes on a dry erase board as he outlines the basics of a poem to the players. They read aloud and debate the genre. Dante enters. The guys are frustrated with trying to interpret the poem. The players encourage Dale to share his conjecture with the coach. Dale wonders if Tori didn't have something to do with the accusation. The players start piecing together bits of a theory that places Tori at the center of a conspiracy to defeat TSU by bringing down their team with a scandal. Curtis expresses worry that he won't be able to pass the test because he's not smart enough. Coach chides him. Curtis says he doesn't care. He does what he does well and that's all that matters in his eyes.

Scene 3: Dr. Yantz's office

Dante surprises Dr. Yantz by being in her office when she enters. He is very concerned that after all this time he does not have ADHD. They discuss his fear of weakness. Dr. Yantz finally addresses Dante directly about his attitude. Dr. Yantz asks Dante to leave and explains to him that she has been notified that she might have to testify should the matter go before the Judicial Affairs Committee.

Scene 4: The football complex, outside the men's room

Tori goes to see Coach Moore to ask if she can continue working with Jahzeel, even though her pay has been suspended until a decision is handed down. Coach Moore tells her to stay away from the football program entirely. Tori claims Coach Moore has no jurisdiction over her. He reminds her that he has the power to send Jahzeel back home to Mississippi if he wishes.

Scene 5: A dorm room balcony

Dante is studying a poem with Jahzeel. Tori calls and Jahzeel wants to go to her. Dante reminds him that they are all supposed to stay away from her. Dante alludes to a romantic liaison between Tori and Jahzeel. Jahzeel denies it but he leaves to meet her regardless.

Scene 6: Tori's car

Dante asks Tori if his essay is satisfactory. She makes it clear she finds talk about academics dull. She tries to tell him not to worry about the upcoming test. She reminds

him that he cannot do anything about the other guys, that all he can do is the best he can. He reminds her that unless they all pass, no one will. Tori kisses Jahzeel who is shy but interested. He tells her he has to wait. She goes back to his paper.

Scene 7: The home of Professor Bigelow

Someone rings in a threatening call to Professor Bigelow at her private residence suggesting she will be fired soon for her actions against the football players.

Scene 8: The running back room

Coach Moore is still trying to help the freshman redshirts to prepare for their test. He adds a midnight session to their already scheduled morning sessions. The football players are tired. Coach Moore shares a racist comment online that read, “ ‘course those boys cheated. Monkeys were born to run, run, run, not read.” Coach Moore explains to them that when he was playing ball all of the commentary about his agility and skill made it seem as though it was natural instinct, not something he worked hard—trained—for, while his white counterparts were allowed to be quarterbacks and were considered smart. When Dale Mayo tries to claim he is just like the others, they remind him that he is white. The team is threatened.

Scene 9: A dorm room balcony

Dante, Curtis, Jahzeel and Dale are studying again. They begin to argue about a poem. Curtis lets it out that Tori is from a rival school. They speculate as to her loyalties. Tori enters and offers her help. Curtis posits that Jahzeel had Tori set them all up so that he could advance. Curtis gets in Tori’s face and Jahzeel threatens him. Curtis makes a nasty comment. Jahzeel jumps on Curtis and they fight. Dale jumps into the fray, trying to stop his teammates from fighting. Already suffering from a concussion, Curtis hits his head on the floor. Tori storms out, calling them animals. Curtis is badly dazed. They are scared. As Curtis begins to vomit, Dale says he’s going to call 911. The others argue about whether he should.

Scene 10: The home of Professor Bigelow

Professor Bigelow receives another distressing phone call. This time it is Dante. He has called several times. He is scared and wants to tell her about Curtis. She finally answers and he appears behind her on a cell phone. Dante has broken into her home. She asks him to leave immediately and threatens to call the police. He explains that Curtis has a severe head injury. Professor Bigelow is concerned but wants confirmation from a medical professional. Dante explains that they have not taken Curtis to see anyone, that it’s happened before and that he’ll be fine. She says she expects to see all of them in her office tomorrow morning and that if she receives a call from a medical professional that would excuse Curtis from taking the test she will consider postponing the exam. If she does not, and they do not show up, they fail her course, as determined. Dante questions her loyalty, alluding to the fact that because she’s black she should be “on their side.” She explains that by calling them on their cheating she had risked her security at the university. She fully expects to be asked to leave, after all of her hard work. She explained that she was very sad that what she had seen in those papers was the demonstration of real brilliance, unbridled, angry, overly optimistic, but something potentially powerful and she was in a position where she would have to extinguish it. For the first time, Dante reveals his vulnerability. He starts talking about Curtis and his injury and breaks down.

Scene 11: Outside Professor Bigelow’s office

Jahzeel and Dante are waiting in Professor Bigelow's office for Dale and Curtis who are almost late. Coach Moore shows up and suggests that they don't take the test. He has talked to the head coach who would rather go after Tori as though she had purposely lead the tailbacks into academic question than let them try to take a test the coaches expected them to fail. Dante who is by now fed up with all of the unfairness he has seen, fesses up finally. Dante tells the coach he cheated. Jahzeel wants him to explain that he was just trying to help Curtis who'd suffered a head injury. He will not. Curtis and Dale show up. They get ready to go in for the test. Coach Moore listens as Dante recounts what happened. Coach Moore tells him he can't know that and let Dante play any longer. Dante is disappointed but expected this. He goes in with his teammates to take the exam.

Scene 12: Epilogue, Press conference

REDSHIRTED: WHAT'S IN A NAME?

For anyone outside of the sports world, the term redshirts is puzzling. It seems as though the color-coded jerseys might rank athletes on a team. Actually, a redshirt is a college athlete (almost always a freshman) who is officially excused from a year of competition without it affecting the duration of his or her eligibility for play. If that seems confusing, think about a bright red stop sign. The freshman tailbacks in Dana Yeaton's play *REDSHIRTS* have been put on hold. Dale, Dante and Jahzeel are still on the team, they go to practice every day and they work out just as hard as everyone else, but they cannot play in games. Seem unfair? Why would anyone agree to this? Actually, there are many reasons why an athlete might be redshirted.

They Aren't Ready to Play. Joining a well-known college athletic team is challenging. There are athletes who are as good if not better than incoming freshman, older players who have tenure and experience. Some athletes are afraid that they will not be able to live up to expectations to be great, or they feel frustrated by the fact that they are not offered a spotlight in which to shine as they have had in the past. It is probably just as thrilling as it is intimidating for rookie freshman to find themselves on a college team amongst many talented athletes. Accepting this, and finding one's place within it, is the first lesson in being a mature, successful team member.

At big-time sports schools, a successful football team is one that wins games. Designing such a team can be a trial. Each year, coaches must adjust the team to account for the loss of graduating senior athletes and the added presence of incoming freshmen. Coaches are responsible for selecting players that balance each other out and work well together as a team. This means players have to have physical talent and technical ability, courage and strategy, enthusiasm and experience. Not every athlete brings all of these things to the table.

When rookie freshmen join a team, it takes a while for them to adjust. Not only are they acclimating to a college atmosphere, they also have to learn the rapport between coaches and players, between teammates, between the team and their fans. As they learn appropriate

behavior and how to respond to various situations, they begin to feel more comfortable and confident. They begin to feel more at home. This takes time. Often recruiters will draft young athletes who show incredible potential but do not have the experience necessary to successfully compete at a Division I level. Rather than pass them up and risk losing the talent to another school, college teams sometimes accept inexperienced, talented players intending to train them.

Dante, Jahzeel and Dale are talented athletes but Coach Moore is not quite ready to let them play. Curtis, a junior, is still performing well, though both he and Coach Moore anticipate that his performance will soon diminish. We know that Curtis is working too hard and taking illegal drugs to enhance his field performance. However, Curtis has something none of the freshmen redshirts have: experience. Curtis has played for two full seasons with Coach Moore. The coach knows how to accentuate his strengths, strategize to account for his weaknesses, and what he can realistically expect from this athlete on the field. Coach Moore can trust that Curtis will employ lessons that he has learned in previous seasons to every situation, a skill that can be pivotal to winning games. Without experience playing at a Division I level, the freshmen are riskier. Replacing an older, more experienced player with a rookie freshman is a chance coaches will take, but they do so understanding that they are sacrificing a degree of peace of mind.

Coaches do not know how rookie freshmen will handle the pressure of intense competition. Some may find the attention of the fans and media distracting. Others will find that the responsibility of being both a student and an athlete is overwhelming. Further, the coaches do not yet know how freshmen will fit with the other players on the team. This also takes time. Finally, in some cases, even though an athlete may be quite agile and skilled, he may not be physically strong enough to compete at a Division I level. In this case, coaches will invest time and training in young athletes to strengthen those aspects that make them vulnerable.

In each one of these cases, coaches take advantage of the time allotted to athletes to take time off from competition but still stay eligible to play at a later date.

They Get Hurt. One of the more common reasons a player redshirts is due to injury. For example, if an incoming freshman tears an ACL or suffers a bad sprain that could risk additional injury if aggravated, the athlete can sit-out his play time and take the opportunity to heal. During this time, a player will train only lightly, alternating between regular workouts with the team and specialized physical therapy sessions. The injury might not be immediately apparent and there could be pressure on the coaches to prematurely reintroduce an athlete they feel needs more time to train. Sometimes athletes find that their confidence is shaken after an injury and a lot of time off from play. In this case, even though the injury may have physically healed, the coaches still regard the athlete as a liability on the field because they are not psychologically prepared. Redshirting athletes is a way to keep them on the team and eligible for play while giving them an opportunity for a second chance.

Their Grades are at Risk. Another common reason an athlete is redshirted is due to poor academic performance. Because there are rules in college sports that require student athletes to maintain a certain level of academic performance, if an athlete is placed on academic probation, his eligibility to compete is threatened. In cases where an athlete has been awarded a scholarship to attend the university, academic performance is even more important. As we see in *REDSHIRTS*, sometimes students expect to be let off the hook because of their athletic talent. They are often not to blame for these kinds of expectations. They are often treated as though they are exceptional and the rules are often bent—even broken—to keep them on the field and winning games. In recent years as scandals involving academic fraud began catching more attention, colleges have increased their policing of such behavior. Still, it is hard to eliminate the special treatment of athletes completely because the larger system is flawed. Even now, tacit agreements are occasionally made between the athletic department and the rest of the college. Students are still required to keep their grades up. To do this, student athletes must be regimented with their daily schedules.

In addition to spending several hours training every day, student athletes are also expected to dedicate time to studying so that they can maintain their GPA at or above the level required to play sports. Anyone who has spent time studying for an exam or writing a paper can imagine how much time and effort is required to take many classes and keep up at a college level. The more celebrated the school is for its academics, the higher the expectations on its students are to excel academically. To this already busy day, athletes add a social life, time to eat, relax and sleep. First-rate student athletes must be responsible, organized and disciplined people. For many this is difficult.

Opting out of a year of field-time is supposed to give a redshirted football player a break from the pressures of competition so that he can focus his attention on raising his grade point average. However, this does not always happen. Occasionally, student athletes are unable to concentrate on their academic responsibilities. Because many of these students have been admitted to schools based on their athletic merit, their personal goals have been arranged accordingly. To them, what is most important is playing ball, not sitting in a classroom listening to a lecture or going to the library to study. These students see their academic responsibilities as little more than a debt to be paid so they can play. Time away from the field—even when it is meant to help them—can feel more like a penalty rather than an opportunity. Unless they learn to see both academics and athletics as important to their college experience, and recognize their responsibility to do both, they will eventually lose their ability to play, or their grades will suffer.

Eventually redshirts will play with their teammates. After a year's worth of practice and no competition, all are hoping that the time off was well spent. Young athletes have had a chance to sharpen their skills and their strategies with seasoned players in practice. Coaches have had time to watch their new players to look for weak points that need work and strong points that can contribute to the rest of the team.

It is an exciting time for fans and coaches as the new players take the field.

THE COLLEGE GAME: RECRUITMENT AND URBAN EDUCATION

Dana Yeaton's play *REDSHIRTS* is about a group of football players who are top freshman recruits at a school where college sports are as, if not more important, than academics. It is a fictional school, but Tennessee Southern could represent any number of Division I colleges in the country. Scouts from this school could have been watching Dante, Jahzeel and Dale Mayo since they were fifteen or sixteen years old, in some cases even younger. For these freshman athletes, Tennessee Southern University is a place to play football, make connections, and a way to help them build toward a professional sports career. Less important is the fact that TSU is an institution of higher learning; a place to read, think and study. When an English assignment to analyze a poem presents these freshmen tailbacks with an unfamiliar challenge, they find themselves in uncharted waters. Suddenly their academic responsibilities become real. They are not just football players, but students too, and they must keep up their grades in order to play.

Colleges with serious athletic programs set aside quite a lot of money specifically for freshman recruitment. This money goes to sending scouts out to high school and intramural sports games. They spend time with high school coaches and keep their eyes trained on young people who demonstrate athletic skill and show potential. If such an athlete is identified, recruiters begin trying to woo him or her.

Recruitment these days is about more than finding the best athletes for any given sport, although that is the main focus. To fill university quotas, recruiters also look for ways to create a diverse athletic department. Since the department is bigger than just one team, recruiters may focus on things like gender, location, ethnicity, even academic interest when searching for students. This is all secondary, though. What really matters to recruiters is performance on the field.

In order to find star players, scouts focus their efforts by targeting areas where communities value athletic competition. Increasingly this is true in urban, ethnically specific,

economically stressed neighborhoods. With professional sports representing a more diverse ethnic spectrum than ever before, black, Latino and Native kids are being recruited with great rigor to American universities to play sports. For some young people, developing athletic ability seems to be a faster, more obvious pathway to success than school or community involvement. Unfortunately, many recruiters bank on this and draw talented youth to their schools by alluding to professional careers and fame. Consequently, in many of these communities, athletic ability actually comes at the expense of intellectual or personal development. Scouts cruise such communities for talented youth eager to reach the big leagues. Like professional athletes with celebrity endorsements, sometimes college scouts will come bearing gifts of sneakers, cleats or jerseys supplied from corporations that outfit the college teams. Already they are being coaxed with material goods. We often do not think of college athletes having access to corporate endorsement; this seems to be one of the perks reserved for professional players. Instead, *USA Today* recently reported that there is “a tidal wave of money from schools' lucrative television and apparel contracts — and from the latest skyrocketing revenue sources, multimedia and marketing rights deals for entire athletic programs or entire campuses.”⁵

More specifically, popular media encourages black American youth to choose sports as a plausible and appropriate career goal. This begins well before college. Data shows that it is rarely parents who push their children to strive for professional athletic careers. Instead, the media “is a more crucial influence than the family in prompting black and white working class boys to view sport in this manner.”⁶ In the fall of 1990, a Lou Harris poll found that “59% of African American high school athletes said they expected to play sports in college, and 43% of

⁵ “Million-dollar coaches move into mainstream.” *USA Today*. November 16, 2006.

http://www.usatoday.com/sports/college/football/2006-11-16-coaches-salaries-cover_x.htm

⁶ Carrington, Bruce. “Social Mobility, Ethnicity and Sport.” *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, Vol. 7, No. 1. (1986), pp. 3-28; 7. (Carrington is quoting from Melvin Oliver’s study “The Transmission of Sport Mobility Orientation in the Family.” Originally published in the *International Review of Sport Sociology*, 2, (15), pp. 52-73).

this sample said they could make it in professional sports.”⁷ Well before understanding that they have options, many black youth make real and weighty investments based on unrealistic impressions of professional athletics.

When combined with the glamorization of professional sports and celebrity status, it can be immensely difficult for students to feel confident about or gauge their academic success. In urban areas where public school classrooms are overcrowded, resources become scarce. Extracurricular or after-school programming is often out-of-date, and students suffer. To counterbalance an environment as chaotic and unsteady as many of these classrooms are, some students look for affirmation and personal success outside of school. Athletic competition is one place where students can develop a sense of self-worth and capability. Playing sports allows young people the opportunity to set goals and work toward them. They are clearly rewarded for good performance. It is easier to see one’s efforts pay off in competitive sports than it is in schools where the lack of funding and staff make it nearly impossible for students to get the kind of one-on-one attention they need. Statistics show that low matriculation (college-enrollment) rates in racially uniform areas often correlate with under-funded and under-staffed public schools.⁸

Even though academic expectations are clearly defined at the college level, “many African American athletes enter universities under-prepared for the academic rigors they face.”⁹ It is important that Americans deal with the poor state of public education in urban areas. It is becoming increasingly more evident that high school students who show athletic promise without demonstrating comprehension of coursework suffer from inadequate, unsupportive education programs. While in some cases college athletes outperform their counterparts academically, this data does not often pertain to male football or basketball players. Typically,

⁷ Snyder, Peter L. “Comparative Levels of Expressed Academic Motivation Among Anglo and African American University Student-Athletes. *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 6. (Jul., 1996), pp. 651-667; 654.

⁸ Carrington *ibid.*, 6.

⁹ Snyder, *ibid.*, 653.

the athletes that are most successful academically play elite sports (golf, downhill and cross-country skiing, swimming, tennis, etc) most to which inner city youth do not often have access. Our country must redouble its efforts to advocate for the rights of all young people to have access to excellent academic programs that can empower them to feel confident, capable and enthusiastic about their roles in civic society.

Staging Success: Living The Dream

What does success look like? Today in America success means money, flash, popularity. Successful people, the media tells us, are celebrities. They are not schoolteachers, spiritual advisors, or local advocates for social and political justice. Even though it is hard to admit it, we live in a world where people care more about AIDS in Ethiopia if Brad Pitt tells us it is worthy of our attention. When the cameras zero in on professional athletes, young people drink up the media portrayals. They hear stories about how Randy Moss went from a tiny mining town in West Virginia to the New England Patriots, how quarterback Donovan McNabb took the Eagles to their first Superbowl, or how Peyton Manning followed in his father's footsteps to become the star quarterback for the Colts, and kids become enthralled. We know that rags to riches stories make money. These stories seem to make untouchable players more human, more real. Young people are seduced not just by the celebrity status and athletic prowess, but also by the fact that a player grew up facing challenges that look and feel familiar. The problem is that many times the media sugarcoats an athlete's rise to stardom. The stories emphasize one athlete's climb to the top, but do not offer young admirers and other fans a sense of the vast number of athletic hopefuls who bet it all and did not make the grade. We rarely hear about what happens to those who once had serious aspirations but failed to reach the big leagues. Recruiters and media encourage young people to develop an extremely unrealistic idea of what it means to shoot for a pro career.

Young people do not hear about the racism Randy Moss faced as a teenager, going to a predominately white school in a small-town West Virginia. They do not hear about how his anger landed him with an assault charge for which he did jail time. They never heard about how having a white girlfriend—the mother of his first child—caused him a lot of trouble in a town where interracial dating was risky business. What young people see is an immensely talented, hotshot football player who struts his stuff on the field. They see a guy who has cool hairstyles that look like the ones their friends sport. They see a guy wearing “bling” in his ears and buying clothes that reflect a hip-hop culture familiar to them and they use these things to relate and make their dream to achieve similar success seem more possible.

Young people do not consider the stress that striving for perfection might have had on Peyton Manning, as he tried to impress his father, a celebrity in college competition, and his mother who firmly believed that education was imperative to success. Young people probably see a kid who grew up with the way all but paved for him to go pro. But Manning often trained harder than the rest to prove his own athletic merit independently of his father. He dedicated enormous efforts to his education in order to pull good grades. His hard work paid off. He spent his last few years in high school with college scouts from some of the biggest schools in the country watching him. Manning was such a desirable student that a recruiting war between Michigan, Florida State, Notre Dame, Mississippi and Tennessee ensued. This is not often part of the story of Manning’s success that the media highlights.

Moreover, because scandal is more popular in the media (the recent case with Michael Vick’s dog-fighting ring, for example) young people do not often hear about celebrities that do charitable work to service their community. Donovan McNabb is an outstanding quarterback who is also dedicated to fighting diabetes. His foundation annually raises thousands of dollars, and partners with charities that advocate on behalf of young people like the Boys and Girls Clubs of Philadelphia, Big Brother/Big Sister, the Police Athletic League, Ronald McDonald

House and others.¹⁰ The media focuses instead on the scandals in which some athletes become embroiled versus the charitable work other athletes do. Unfortunately, this means that young people do not get a sense of how athletic competition can help individuals grow important skills that support the greater community as well as personal self-development.

Sometimes athletic departments will identify students that are very talented but do not plan to attend college or university because their families do not have enough money to send them to school. Recruiters offer scholarships that can cover part or all of a student's tuition and cost of living expenses (dorm, meals, books, etc). Sometimes recruiters will focus their efforts more on parents rather than the athlete. If recruiters can convince parents that a scholarship to college is worth certain sacrifices, the recruiters have found powerful advocates in pushing a young athlete to their program. But what are they selling to parents?

Recruiters describe the value of their offer by stressing three major points: 1) a quality education; 2) higher earning power after graduation; 3) the possibility of going pro. The reality, however, is that none of these selling points are guaranteed. In fact, where recruitment and retention policies are in question, none are possible. In these cases, from the beginning students are under-prepared to glean anything meaningful from the academic aspect of higher education. The challenge to graduate is overwhelming and probably unrealistic for students lacking proper preparation. Finally, the possibility of going pro is almost impossible for most of the athletes enrolled. Young people have a better shot at becoming a successful lawyer, doctor or business person than they do becoming a professional athlete. Some would say that it is more likely for them to become astronauts than it is to get signed with a professional sports team. How can college scouts justify encouraging young athletes and their families under false pretense? This is just one of the questions brought to the fore in Dana Yeaton's play, *REDSHIRTS*. The play illustrates how the reality of college ball—versus the dream of it—are two very different things indeed.

¹⁰ See McNabb's website for more information: www.donovanmcnabb.com.

GO PRO OR BE IN THE KNOW? BALANCING ACADEMIC AND ATHLETIC RESPONSIBILITIES

Most college athletes dream of the opportunity to play for professional recruiters, get signed and make it big. Only a handful make it. The others reach the end of their four-year college program and must put their dreams of going pro to bed. If these students have not spent time developing alternate skills for a more practical future, they face great challenges upon graduation.

Many student athletes think of college ball as a necessary due to be paid along the way to developing a viable, professional athletic career. Such sentiments discourage respect for the process or purpose of higher education, as well as the participation in intercollegiate athletics as a developmental piece in building strong character. Division I student athletes are not entirely abandoned, however. Camaraderie amongst their teammates and support from coaches is instrumental in building confidence and finding stability. Those who participated in the AIR Research study reported that in addition to athletic and social advice, “their coaches were important in encouraging good academic performance.”¹¹

Almost all Division I schools recite the importance of developing well-rounded individuals, but it is rare that systems are in place to assist students. Especially as freshman and sophomores, the responsibility to wed athletic and academic identities is a heavy burden to bear. Student athletes of color are further burdened by being culturally isolated. If the mission of institutions of higher education is to promote the balanced growth and achievement of students, administrators have a duty to care for students in such a way as to allow them to glean the most from their educational experiences. If the mission is to promote excellence in athletic performance, that intent should be clearly stated, formalized and structurally relevant. As colleges struggle to have it both ways, student athletes are left to pick up fragmented pieces.

¹¹ Snyder, Peter L. “Comparative Levels of Expressed Academic Motivation Among Anglo and African American University Student-Athletes. *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 6. (Jul., 1996), pp. 651-667; 655.

Why do colleges—self-described institutions of higher learning—retain athletic programs that seem incongruent with intellectual development? The answer to this question is more complicated than the oft-quoted notion that involvement in sports creates well-adjusted individuals. Successful athletic teams generate millions of dollars for universities. To illustrate the priority, some universities pay their coaches more than they pay their faculty. “The million-dollar coach, once a rarity, is now the norm. Head coaches at the NCAA's top-level schools are making an average of \$950,000 this year, not counting benefits, incentives, subsidized housing or any of the perks they routinely receive. At least 42 of the 119 Division I-A coaches are earning \$1 million or more this year, up from five in 1999.”¹² Meanwhile, the median faculty salary at a Division I school is under \$70,000. Andrew Zimbalist, a sports economist for Smith College wonders, “what kind of message does that send? What does that say about the value system? What does that say to students?”¹³ This question has prompted much dialogue and debate both within the academy and amongst the general populace. Quite often, even in these debates, the student athlete—while on the agenda—is often located near the end of the list of items to address.

The more coaches are paid, meanwhile, the louder the argument that the sport's most essential personnel — players allowed little more than scholarships covering room, board, books and tuition — are under-compensated and exploited. “They're saving tens of millions by not paying their players,” Zimbalist says. “So they spend it on coaches.”¹⁴

Publicity and commercialism greatly affect college administration. A school with successful athletic teams garners huge publicity, largely because the public feels afforded a sneak peak at the up-and-coming stars that will be hand-picked for professional competition, even though the majority of these athletes will not have that opportunity. Many of the finest and most promising black athletes are enticed to enroll at Division I schools primarily for visibility it affords for professional recruiters. This is especially distressing when historically black

¹² “Million-dollar coaches move into mainstream.” *USA Today*. November 16, 2006.
http://www.usatoday.com/sports/college/football/2006-11-16-coaches-salaries-cover_x.htm

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

colleges and universities classified under Division III ranking outline the mission of their guiding philosophy to:

place highest priority on the overall quality of the educational experience and on the successful completion of all students' academic programs . . . to strengthen the integration of objectives and programs in athletics with academic and developmental objectives and to assure the integration of athletes with other students.¹⁵

While some might argue that students of color recruited to schools based on their athletic ability is one way of integrating higher education, others find it extremely disturbing that young black students are drawn to Big Ten and Division I schools as athletes as opposed to historically black colleges where they would not be considered ethnically exceptional.

As Barr and Covell point out, “[t]o host an NCAA Division I athletic program, a school must provide winning teams comprised of athletes who are also students, for the entertainment of those associated with the school and its constituents—students, faculty, community members, alumni, fans—to develop prominence at the national level and to strive for financial success.”¹⁶ In other words, it is a monumental endeavor that one can imagine might detract attention and resources from the academic mission of schools. “Efforts to attract, admit, and retain players on the basis of the athletic skills” become primary.

The NCAA defined regulatory practices for recruitment in 1946 precisely because colleges and universities had become embroiled in escalating and sometimes fiercely unsavory competition to enroll promising young athletes. The atmosphere was so frenzied that the nationwide plan to outline principles of governance became known as the “Sanity Code.” By reigning in college athletic recruitment, the NCAA hoped to “restore sanity to the conduct of intercollegiate athletics.”¹⁷ This decision had great impact on the culture of college and

¹⁵ Snyder, *ibid.*, 663, quoting the National Collegiate Athletic Association. *NCAA Convention Handbook*. (Overland Park, KS: NCAA Publications, 1995).

¹⁶ Covell, Dan & Carol A. Barr, “The Ties That Bind: Presidential Involvement with the Development of NCAA Division I Initial Eligibility Legislation.” *The Journal of Higher Education*. Vol. 72, No. 4. (July. – Aug., 2001), pp. 414–452; 417.

¹⁷ Covell and Barr, *ibid.*, 422.

university campuses. It checked only some of the fervor around the voracity for victory; successful athletic programs bring a great deal of publicity, celebrity and actual revenue to American colleges and universities. In fact, recently the House of Representatives turned a critical eye on the business of college ball. *USA Today* reports that,

The rise in salaries caught the eye of the House Ways and Means Committee, which in October asked the NCAA to justify why such a revenue-generating enterprise deserves tax-exempt status. Chairman Bill Thomas, R-Calif., in a letter to association President Myles Brand, contended "excessive compensation ... makes less revenue available for other sports, causes many athletic departments to operate at a net loss, and may call into question the priorities of educational institutions." Thomas went on to ask: "What actions has the NCAA taken to encourage its member institutions to curb excessive compensation for college coaches?"¹⁸

After considering all of this, one wonders if the term "college sports" is incongruous, even an oxymoron. The union between athletics and academics is largely imaginary. The environment is unstable. Certainly we can imagine the challenge student athletes face when they are asked to accomplish feats even the college itself cannot manage. Student-athletes must integrate a full course load, off-season practice and competition, along with other necessary elements to student health such as rest, recreational activity and a social life. As intercollegiate athletic competition is cast as a stage for professional recruitment, student athletes often rearrange their priorities and focus to field performance. Recruiters continue to target students based on athletic talent and promise as opposed to demonstrated academic competence or intellectual potential. Covell and Barr rightfully point out that, individuals "who possess such [expert athletic] skills may or may not have any interest or abilities pertaining to academic pursuits."¹⁹

Creating an environment which values both academic and athletic pursuits, without reducing the rigor of either in the name of egalitarianism, will require a radical shift in the way Americans understand the role of higher education in the lives of young men and women. It is critical that colleges strive to model practical examples of how athletics can complement academics and vice-versa. As Kirsten Benson points out, multicultural representation and a

¹⁸ "Million-dollar coaches move into mainstream." *USA Today*. November 16, 2006. http://www.usatoday.com/sports/college/football/2006-11-16-coaches-salaries-cover_x.htm

¹⁹ Covell and Barr, *ibid.*, 417.

multiplicity of voices and opinions within that representation on campuses is key to providing student athletes, especially those underrepresented in the general college but overrepresented on the field, an opportunity to see beyond a singular, monolithic track toward a professional athletic career or no option at all. A good education should provide students with choices, not predictions.

Learning and growth occur both on the field of play and in the classroom. A well integrated program encourages learning on many levels, and cares for the whole person. Student athletes of color confront a complex negotiation of social place, direction and sense of self, that is often ignored on American campuses. For reasons that include publicity, alumni endorsed endowments, revenue, status and image, primary focus often shifts from the health and success of individual student athletes to larger systems that both impact and rely on college athletic programs. Systems that force student athletes to align themselves with one element of higher education against another when they are responsible for both are stressful and frustrating. Students must learn to value academic pursuits as well as athletic ones. Administrators, coaches and professors must model balance for the dedicated student athlete by offering well supported programs so that students can rise to meet rigorous, but practical expectations. The students who are admitted and recruited to elite athletic programs at prominent universities have already accomplished incredible feats of skill, sacrifice and determination. If we give our students the tools to be successful, they will rise to meet our expectations.

SPORTS AND POLITICAL PROTEST

College sports are often cast as having more heart because “college athletes play to represent their alma mater with pride, [playing] not for money but for love of the game.”²⁰ Many people do not realize that one of the reasons why college sports are so popular in America is actually because of The First World War. The nation was hungry for community arenas through which patriotism could be displayed. On the field, student athletes showed heart, skill, valor and sportsmanship that comforted an insecure national populace during a chaotic time of social and political instability. While it may have helped to heal a nation, all this attention only increased the commercialism of college sports.

Athletic competition has long been an important site of resistance, protest and opportunity for African Americans. Black athletes often catalyzed social change by struggling against segregationist rules that kept them from competing. If, as was the case at New York University in 1940, the institution did not amend its segregationist policy, at the very least public protest created awareness that prompted dialogue and debate.²¹ International tournaments in which black athletes were allowed to compete created patriotism that was unparalleled making room for allegiance where typically there would be animosity. Donald Spivey regards Jesse Owens and Joe Louis as exemplar of this kind of situation. The country embraced them as national heroes that, as Spivey points out, had both political and psychological implications for America and its citizens. Perhaps because both Owens and Louis were competing at an international level against a clearly defined and demonized foe, their blackness was less threatening. “Jesse Owens’ four gold medals in the 1936 Olympic Games

²⁰ Covell, Dan & Carol A. Barr. “The Ties That Bind: Presidential Involvement with the Development of NCAA Division I Initial Eligibility Legislation.” *The Journal of Higher Education*. Vol. 72, No. 4. (July. – Aug., 2001), pp. 414-452; 418.

²¹ Donald Spivey details a case in which, Leonard Bates, a star football player was prevented from traveling and competing with his teammates against the University of Missouri team that had an anti-integration policy. The subsequent protest that arose around this decision “brought together all facets of the university community, white and black, fraternities and sororities, Communists and would-be Jesuit missionaries, the Women’s Coalition, various Jewish students’ organizations, and concerned faculty.” See Spivey, Donald. “The Black Athlete in Big-Time Intercollegiate Sports, 1941-1968.” *Phylon (1960-)*, Vol. 44, No. 2, (2nd Qtr., 1983), pp. 116-125; 119.

were a triumph for American democracy over Nazism. . . .the same can be said of Joe Louis' defeat of Max Schmeling in their second fight in 1938."

These events were more than just an opportunity for America to move beyond the pain of racial discrimination in the name of patriotism. The athletes themselves claimed these moments of trial and triumph as platforms from which they pledged allegiance to the *ideals* of America, charging their country in a national forum to uphold its principles for the rights of its entire citizenry. Given that national ideals were rarely achieved and practiced by and for all American citizens, public objection was not always tolerated, much less welcomed. An exemplar demonstration of protest by Tommie Smith and John Carlos turned the victor's stand in Mexico City's 1968 Olympic Games into a political platform from which stellar black American athletes stood at the precipice and saluted the fight for racial equality and social justice even as their national anthem and flag rose behind them.

Today, athletic competition still creates a special forum for Americans to consider issues of race and racism. As professional black athletes like Tiger Woods (golf), Serena and Venus Williams (tennis), Anson Carter (ice hockey) Debi Thomas (figure skating), Vonetta Flowers (bobsledding), and Maritza Correia (swimming) set records in previously racially exclusive athletic arenas, old stereotypes are brought to the fore and challenged in a public forum. Correia stared down the myth that black people cannot swim, going on to become the first African-American woman to be on the U.S. Olympic swim team and first African-American woman ever to set an American record in swimming. Tiger Woods has valiantly whittled away the racial hierarchy that has organized golf for centuries. Attempts to forbid entrance into racially exclusive realms of sport prompt impassioned and vehement protestations that are surprising and straight-forward. When Woods won the Masters Tournament in 1990, controversy sprung up around the fact that the Augusta National Golf Club (home of the Masters) operated according to a white-only membership policy. The Founder of the Masters Tournament, Clifford Roberts declared that, "[a]s long as I'm alive, golfers will be white, and caddies will be

black.”²² Ironically, such sentiments are often expressed under the guise of gallantry and custom, one such “gentleman’s agreement’ . . . kept African Americans out of professional golf [and was formally] adopted in 1916 by the Professional Golfers Association, [thereby excluding blacks] from joining the organization and . . .from tournaments.”²³

While trailblazing athletes have had to contend with monumental obstacles just to compete, most attribute their determination, confidence and mental strength to the sports they play. 1956 Heisman Winner Paul Hornung, celebrity alum of Notre Dame, recently suggested that in order to recruit the star black athlete, the college should lower its academic standards; “we can’t stay as strict as we are as far as the academic structure is concerned because we have got to get the black athlete.”²⁴ The idea that the level of scholarship must be lessened illustrates a serious lack of care for the development of black youth at Division I schools. As though by virtue of their race, young black athletes are considered more athletically capable, like commodities to be won, rather than potential students in whom to invest. This so-called strategy for recruiting talented black youth uncovers an endemic problem of academic underachievement in urban communities. The problem has precedence on a national scale. It sends a clear message to young black athletes that they are not considered worthy of an education, should not strive to develop a sound and diverse intellectual life, and that their emotional well-being matters little at the highest levels of intercollegiate competition where winning means everything.

There are those students who will not stand for such treatment, who refuse to be belittled or railroaded away from serious academic study, even as they remain wholly committed to their athletic pursuits. For example, after Don Imus hurled sexist and racist remarks at the Rutgers University Women’s Basketball team, one of the players told the radio shock-jock “I don’t want

²² Clifford quoted in excerpt from “We Are Tiger Woods.” Online editorial article: <http://www.americancatholic.org/messenger/jun1997/Editorial.asp>

²³ Jeffries, Hasan Kwame. “Fields of Play: The Mediums through which Black Athletes Engaged in Sports in Jim Crow Georgia.” *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 86, No. 3. (Summer, 2001), pp. 264-275; 267.

²⁴ Elder, Larry. “The Soft Bigotry of Low Expectations Comes From Many Directions.” *Capitalism Magazine* (online resource) April 15, 2004. See <http://www.capmag.com/article.asp?ID=3629>.

you to think that I question myself because of what you said. I'm a classy woman at a great university. I will pray for you."²⁵ Donna Lopiano, executive director of the Women's Sports Foundation says "that's what [sport] does." She extols the power of collegiate athletic programs to "breed strong, confident women." The Scarlet Knights Women's Basketball team is comprised of student athletes who have gleaned the best from their education and their athletic pursuits.²⁶ They set an example to which other college and universities should strive to emulate on their athletic teams and campuses.

²⁵ Kosova, Weston. "The Power That Was." *Newsweek*. April 23, 2007 pp. 24-35; 33.

²⁶ Statistics have shown that gender-based variations in student's aspirations for higher education must be taken into account as it pertains to a healthy, balanced sense of self and purpose, male students "typically chose to go to college in order to play sports and relied on sports scholarships to get them there. Their future educational and occupational successes were ultimately threatened when they did not qualify for the awards. The female students, on the other hand, chose to go to college to pursue more specific academic and career goals and therefore relied on grades and academic scholarships to get them to college. Their decisions safeguarded their enrollment in college and increased their likelihood of positive career experiences." See Lea Hubbard's "College Aspirations among Low-Income African American High School Students: Gendered Strategies for Success." *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No. 3, High School Identity Games. (Sep., 1999) pp. 363-383; 364.

HANDLE THE SCANDAL: RACE AND THE ELITE COLLEGE ATHLETE

What happens when student athletes find they cannot achieve a healthy balance between their athletic and academic responsibilities? Counselors, typically either athletic or academic, but rarely both, frequently advise with an insufficient understanding of the tension student-athletes experience to integrate their athletic and academic lives. Without adequate support student athletes feel overburdened and isolated. True empathy is rarely available outside of their teammates. Though it might create team cohesion, this atmosphere is eventually destructive to the wellbeing of the individual. Team solidarity is a created response to feelings of lack and insecurity, not from a sense of potential and capability. Dana Yeaton's play *REDSHIRTS* illustrates the frenzy that can overtake a team when publicly exposed on a code violation. The scandal mushrooms from the team to the athletic department throughout the student body and the general college to the alumni association and beyond into the greater media context of popular culture. It is quite a rude awakening to find that the spotlight many had craved is not focused on their athletic prowess but on scandal.

Donald Spivey points out that the "post-war era was the coming of age of big time intercollegiate sports and the final victory in collegiate athletics of the win-at-any-cost mentality. The result was that recruiting abuses and scandals became the order of the day."²⁷ His conjecture is that there is a disproportionate emphasis placed on black athletes as it relates to public scandal. Spivey outlines three contributing factors,

the vast majority of blacks in big-time intercollegiate sports are from lower-class backgrounds and, hence, most desperately in need of financial assistance. Second, the black athletes recruited are blue-chip players and highly sought after. The third contributing factor is racism.²⁸

Race and racist policies and practices have long haunted the public scandal that perennially erupts around college sports. Whether due to shady recruiting tactics or eligibility violations, ultimately "newsworthy" situations involving student athletes of color on traditionally white

²⁷ Spivey, Donald. "The Black Athlete in Big-Time Intercollegiate Sports, 1941-1968." *Phylon* (1960-), Vol. 44, No. 2, (2nd Qtr., 1983), pp. 116-125; 122.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 123.

campuses often end up stirring up feelings of shame, fear and anger due to prejudice and racism. Several scholars have alluded to a “cycle of scandal and reform in college sports,” that, over time, has followed a racially “distinctive pattern and heritage in American culture.”²⁹ The process in which colleges manage public scandal as it relates to sports teams or individual athletes is often to emphasize the academic merit of the student(s) versus the talent of the athlete(s). John Thelin uncovers “a remarkable continuity in themes and language” that mitigates the dispersal of a scandal into the public sphere.³⁰ It is critical to recognize that “university scandals are not confined to football and basketball, or that the racism and gender discrimination found in college sports programs also can be identified in faculty hiring or tenure decisions.”³¹ The insularity of institutions of higher learning governed by principles that may or may not resonate with greater society only adds to the potential for scandal.

When an athlete who is recruited based on his or her athletic prowess becomes embroiled in a scandal, the department response is often to overemphasize the athlete’s status as a student as a diversionary tactic. For individuals wholly vested to an athletic identity, giving primacy over to an academic persona may feel inauthentic. This likely engenders a kind of identity crisis that can be experienced as mild discomfort to total disorientation. A sudden emphasis on academic status distances individuals from their primary collective system of support, namely their teammates. Often student athletes do not relate easily to non-athlete students. *REDSHIRTS* depicts a collapse of the terms by which a group is supposed to relate to one another, and a forced revision of foundational characteristics of individual players due to an accusation of plagiarism.

The running backs, with the exception of Curtis, are strung together vis-à-vis their insecure freshman status. This is a particularly disorienting, exciting and stressful time for

²⁹ Adelman, Melvin. “Reviewed Works: Games Colleges Play: Scandal and Reform in Intercollegiate Athletics, by John R. Thelin. (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994).” *The Journal of Higher Education*, Vol. 66, No. 5. (Sep-Oct., 1995) pp. 598-600; 598.

³⁰ Thelin, John R. *Games Colleges Play: Scandal and Reform in Intercollegiate Athletics*. (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994).

³¹ Ibid.

freshman athletes. The University of Minnesota offers a rookie training seminar for incoming freshman that is designed to inform the young athletes of potential distractions due to their highly visible and elite status on campus. These workshops warn against threats that could sully the public image of the team and the college. Drug and alcohol abuse, sexual promiscuity and criminal behavior are often underscored as enticing though inherently destructive elements with which college athletes have to contend. Interracial dating has been a site for scandal throughout the years and is occasionally still flagged in the media as newsworthy.³² Academic challenge frequently amounts to no more than the maintenance of a GPA score in service of athletic eligibility. Intellectual pursuits beyond the field are not necessarily encouraged, especially when studying might harvest precious hours that could be spent training. Again, the responsibility is left to the student athletes to create a streamlined, holistic, college experience. Kirsten Benson's findings support that *REDSHIRTS* realistically depicts what is commonly experienced by many black student athletes at predominately white, elite universities.

³² See Donald Spivey's record of the complaints of black athletes at big time colleges and universities that include "stacking, where a number of blacks are placed in competition for the same position; about racial stereotyping; about the bias of local sports commentators in favor of white athletes; about the athletic association's policing of their social activities (*the most severely sanctioned social activity was interracial dating*); . . ." and more. Spivey, *ibid.*, 124. Emphasis mine.

DRAMATURGICAL NOTES: STEPHANIE LEIN WALSETH

Penumbra Theatre Company August Wilson Fellow

The August Wilson Fellowship in Dramaturgy and Literary Criticism provides a nominated graduate student with support, mentorship and practical experience at Penumbra Theatre Company. Having produced more August Wilson plays than any other professional organization worldwide, including two that the playwright considered exemplar of his work at its best, Penumbra is uniquely situated to afford students the opportunity to explore the signature Penumbra staging process that inaugurated the playwright's career in 1983 with *Black Bart and the Sacred Hills*. Before his death in 2005, August Wilson was lauded with praise from critics and contemporaries in addition to being twice awarded the highly esteemed Pulitzer Prize.

Administered by the Department of Theatre Arts & Dance and in conjunction with Penumbra Theatre Company, the fellowship can extend up to three years of study, leading toward an MA or PhD at the University of Minnesota. The award is based on merit, achievement, creativity and community involvement. The Fellow is the resident scholar at Penumbra and provides dramaturgical research, and critical essays that are often used in support of thesis or dissertation work. Penumbra Theatre Company member August Wilson created this fellowship in part to solidify a connection between the country's preeminent black theatre company and area students.

DRAMATURGICAL NOTES

Recent sports-related scandals, some involving prominent professional athletes, some implicating previously unknown college students, scream from the headlines of newspapers and websites on an almost weekly basis. Often, critics are quick to single out the accused, and to isolate the incident as a personal failure. Rarely, however, do the news stories reveal the complex social structures that may be contributing factors to the condemned behavior, nor the scope of implications for everyone involved. It is here, at the intersection between individual responsibility and larger social systems, that the heart of the matter truly lies.

In *REDSHIRTS*, playwright Dana Yeaton takes us into the heart of a controversy, and reveals the layers of complexity that ESPN misses. Beneath their outward bravado, each character has a burden to bear, a difficult ethical decision to weigh. What should a coach do when he faces losing his best new talent? Should a black, female college professor overlook potential wrongdoing because of the fallout it will cause? Is an undergraduate athlete's highest loyalty to his own playing time, his homework, or his teammates? Layers of antagonism –

between academics and athletics, black and white, male and female, adult and student complicate each encounter, each relationship. And yet, despite the gravity of the situation, humor erupts and unexpected alliances are forged. In *REDSHIRTS* one thing is certain: nothing is simple.

This production marks the world premiere of the play, a co-presentation with Round House Theatre of Montgomery County, Maryland, where it will travel next. A project three years in the making, its evolution has included a staged reading by the Sight Unseen Theatre Company of California, and a live performance of excerpts by the football players whose voices and experiences helped to shape the piece you'll see today.

With this production, Penumbra kicks off its 31st season. Before journeying back to the beginning of the last millennium, and the beginning of the last century with the rest of the season's productions, *REDSHIRTS* focuses the theatrical lens on an aspect of the African American experience that is ripped from the headlines of the new millennium.

A UNIVERSITY'S PLEDGE TO ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: A CASE STUDY

In 1999, the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* ran a story that detailed serious academic fraud within the Golden Gopher men's basketball program. According to Mark Yudof, the president of the University of Minnesota at the time, the *Press* had uncovered "one of the most serious cases of academic fraud ever reported to the NCAA."³³ Yudof went on to say that he was angry, "I felt I was lied to my face... the problem was much deeper, and... this program was corrupt in almost any way one can think about it."³⁴ The accusations brought forth by a tutor indicted coaches and the University's athletic department, in claims that she had been sanctioned to write academic papers for players.

The University's response was swift and serious. Clem Haskins, the head coach of the men's basketball team since 1986, agreed to step down on June 30, 1999. In a press release Yudof said, "it is important to note today that Coach Clem Haskins has established an enviable record as Gopher head coach. He and his teams have provided many moments of entertainment and value for the university community and the citizens of the state of Minnesota. He has communicated to his players the goals of playing hard, working hard to achieve career goals, respecting others-including opponents-and becoming honorable men. The University is grateful for the 13 years of service Coach Haskins has provided, and we wish him a future of success and good health."³⁵ Haskins' contract, which would have extended another three years, was terminated. He was paid approximately \$1.5 million in a settlement agreement.

The story did not end with Haskins' resignation, however. "Eight months after the story, the university released a report, prepared for it by a law firm, concluding that Clem Haskins [head coach of Gopher basketball team] had lied to investigators about "widespread academic misconduct" and had also told his players to lie. It criticized the athletic department, academic counseling supervisors and faculty members for allowing the cheating to occur." Shortly before the report was released, the vice president for student development and athletics and the men's athletic director resigned. The University returned nearly ninety percent of

³³ Minnesota's Basketball Cheating Scandal Case Study. February 15, 2003. Online resource: <http://www.journalism.org/node/1758>

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ "U of M Reaches Contract Agreement with Head Coach Clem Haskins." Press Release from University of Minnesota, June 24, 1999. Online resource: http://www.gophersports.com/ViewArticle.dbml?&DB_OEM_ID=8400&ATCLID=253369&SPID=3302&SPSID=38661

revenue earned—estimated at about \$350,000—during the three preceding NCAA tournaments, including the 1997 Final Four.³⁶

University Response

Since this unfortunate incident, the University of Minnesota has been staunchly committed to demonstrating academic support for student athletes. In 2000 the University of Minnesota completed construction of the McNamara Academic Center, named after Richard, “Pinky” McNamara who has said, “If I lived five lifetimes, I couldn't repay the University of Minnesota for what it has meant in my life and my career. I had academic advisers and teachers who guided me and saved my academic life with their dedication.”³⁷ McNamara donated an unprecedented \$10 million dollars to his alma mater, thirty percent of which went to the development of the McNamara Alumni Center.

In addition, The McNamara Academic Center was named in his honor. The McNamara Academic Center is a comprehensive center for the support and development of student athletes at the University of Minnesota in academic excellence, athletic excellence, personal development, career development, and community service. In addition to offering tutoring and learning support, the Center administers life-skills workshops and training and service opportunities to develop well-rounded, responsible student athletes.

The University of Minnesota also makes its policies pertaining to academic integrity clear and quite visible on the Gopher Athletics website, as quoted below:

The McNamara Academic Center is guided by and upholds the following principles:

1. Commitment to Academic Excellence
To support the academic progress of the student-athlete toward intellectual development and graduation.
2. Commitment to Athletic Excellence
To build philosophical foundations for the development of athletic programs that are broad-based, equitable and dedicated to the well-being of the student-athlete.

³⁶ http://news.minnesota.publicradio.org/features/199903/11_newsroom_cheating/

³⁷ Moore, Rick. “McNamara steps down, but his legacy continues.” The University of Minnesota News. December 6, 2005. Online resource: http://www1.umn.edu/umnnews/Feature_Stories/McNamara_steps_down2C_but_his_legacy_continues.html.

3. Commitment to Personal Development
To support the development of a well-balanced lifestyle for student-athletes, encouraging emotional well-being, personal growth and decision-making skills.
4. Commitment to Career Development
To encourage the student-athlete to develop and pursue career and life goals.
5. Commitment to Service
To engage the student-athlete in service to his or her campus and surrounding communities.

University of Minnesota students are expected to act with integrity regarding academics. In general terms integrity on the part of students means earning grades/credit honestly— earning credit where it is due through one's own efforts.

The most common forms of academic dishonesty by students are:

1. Cheating on exams— for your own protection, avoid even the appearance of cheating— do NOT sit near friends during tests, etc.;
2. Cheating on assignments— copying another's work, turning in work that you have not done, or turning in the same work for more than one assignment/class;
3. Plagiarism— improper or inadequate citation of references for papers which misrepresents another's work as yours— when in doubt, provide a reference!

Remember, anyone who is a party to misrepresentation is guilty of misconduct! With this in mind, be particularly careful not to lend your computer disk to others or lend your work on computer hard drives.

In order to remain eligible for play, University of Minnesota student athletes must:

1. Be enrolled full time (no less than 12 crs.)
2. Maintain a 2.0 Big Ten cumulative gpa
3. Pass 24 degree credits going into the 2nd year 51 degree credits going into the 3rd year 78 degree credits going into the 4th year 105 degree credits going into the 5th year
4. Pass 75% of required credits during the academic year (for example, 24 X .75=18, thus a first-year student-athlete must pass a minimum of 18 credits fall and spring semester)
5. Declare a major by your 3rd year (or 5th semester)
6. Big Ten 5-year graduation rule: a student-athlete must always be able to demonstrate that he/she can graduate within 5 years of his/her initial date of full time enrollment in a college or university.
7. Athletes must minimally pass 6 credits per term to be eligible for competition the following term. For example, if you compete during the Fall, you must pass 6 credits the previous Spring term. If you compete in the Spring Term, you must pass 6 credits the previous Fall.

It is critical that the fans support the University in its commitment to create a holistic development and support program for student athletes. When the Clem Haskins' scandal was uncovered, the *St. Paul Pioneer Press* was criticized for its ill-conceived timing. The story broke one day shy of the NCAA tournament. Many fans were furious, and in a particularly prominent display of frustration, the governor Jesse Ventura called the story "despicable," and "accused the paper of rigging the timing so the story would come out right before the game, all for the sake of "sensationalism [sic] journalism."³⁸

As the Executive Editor of the paper, Walker Lundy, said of Jesse Ventura at the time, "I just wish he'd found time to say that academic cheating is not a very good thing either."³⁹

³⁸ Minnesota's Basketball Cheating Scandal Case Study. February 15, 2003 . Online resource: <http://www.journalism.org/node/1758>

³⁹ Ibid.

SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEW: THE PLAYWRIGHT

by Stephanie Lein Walseth, August Wilson Fellow

Conducted on August 2, 2007 at Nina's Coffee Café in St. Paul, Minnesota

Lein Walseth: How did you, and this play in particular, come to be connected to Penumbra?

Yeaton: The connection to Penumbra came not only because both Blake [Robison, the Producing Artistic Director of Round House Theatre] and I knew Lou, and knew Penumbra's reputation as not just one of our oldest African American theatre companies in the country, but definitely as one of the most respected. We knew that we needed this piece to be directed by an African American. I wouldn't say that it could never be a good, intelligent, heart-felt production directed by somebody else, but certainly coming out of the gun we knew we'd benefit greatly.

You get a 300 pound guy who can say "I'm a momma's boy," and nobody's going to challenge him about whether or not that's a bad thing.

Lein Walseth: What was absolutely critical about having an African American director?

Yeaton: More than half the cast is African American. I guess some of it comes from my lack of confidence being a Vermonter and having very little relationship with the African American experience except through the media, except through what I've read and what I've seen. Before that residency at a Tennessee university, before I went down and worked with these athletes, I knew I couldn't possibly write this play. It came not just from interviewing the players, but spending time in their presence, observing them and then getting substantial access by working with them as a tutor. I was the oldest, most northern tutor there, but I ended up proposing a writing project with all of the freshmen. So, all 22 of the freshmen ended up getting interviewed by me. I came back with a transcript of what they'd said, and we edited it together. What they knew of it was that it was a project helping them with their writing, but that the end result was going to be a play that they did for local high school football players. That happened to be in Knoxville in two predominantly African American high schools who had great football teams and a great football rivalry. And of course, those players would idealize the university players. So, it was a great theatrical opportunity for them because those college students, those new recruits, had been superstars in their towns. They *know* those high school students in a way. They *were* those high school students in a way. And now, despite the fact that they're low man on the totem pole in college, they're gods to these local students. They get to speak truth to people who really want to hear what they have to say, about a topic that they couldn't be more interested in. Some of the topics were very practical, but others were about things like what it's like being away from home. Some of the more confident, tougher players had no trouble sharing that they were really homesick and they'd talk to their mothers every night. When I was hearing that stuff I was thinking, "This is paydirt. This is what these high school students need to hear." It's not all bravado, it's not all what ESPN would like to present. There's a human side to this, and you get to be this guy, you get to be you. You get a 300 pound guy who can say "I'm a momma's boy," and nobody's going to challenge him about whether or not that's a bad thing.

Lein Walseth: How much of this is the players' voice, and how much of it is your voice? What's that intersection?

Yeaton: I'm hoping that you never hear my voice in this play. That's one of the things I love about playwriting -- the words you are hearing are supposed to be filtered through somebody else's consciousness. I think voice gets used in a number of ways. So, where my voice *does* come

out in here is in my fascination with these college athletes and the ways in which I admire them and sympathize with them.

Lein Walseth: How did the performance go when the players presented it?

Yeaton: They performed it for high school students, and we only had one rehearsal so to speak in a theatre. I kind of love the fact that “Okay football players, we’ll meet at the theatre this Monday night.” The rehearsal was god-awful, predominantly because of one player who could just turn a room. Whatever his mood was, that was the mood of the room, and I don’t know what was going on, but he single-handedly kept the rehearsal from happening. But this was happening in a theatre in which Blake Robison, the Artistic Director, gave them a little locker room speech, but I guess it was a green room speech. He said “You know you guys, if you go out

“Don’t write a play about football. Women choose whether or not to go to a play, and they’re not going to want to go watch a football play.”

on stage and do what you just did, these guys are going to see you as a bunch of losers.” And I think that word ‘losers’ triggered something. Because they wouldn’t mind being idiots, and they wouldn’t mind being jerks, and they wouldn’t mind being a lot of things, but these guys don’t ever want to be seen as losers. So they went up and completely nailed the performance, they really came to life because they had an audience. It was *their* voice saying something truthful to them to people who they knew were really interested.

Lein Walseth: How did you approach them?

Yeaton: I was scared. I don’t put myself in those kind of situations. I was talking to people for whom I have no status. I was in a world where there was absolutely nothing they wanted or needed from me. So, I wasn’t in my professor role, and I wasn’t in my writer role, I wasn’t even in my dad role or husband role. It was gut-check time for me because if I had done the comfortable thing down there I would have sat in my apartment and done my teaching and maybe scheduled an interview with a few coaches and tried to talk to a few students. But it was clear to me that I was only going to get somewhere if I put myself out over and over again. So, my typical introduction would be to say “Hey, I’m a writer, and I’m going write a play about football, and I don’t know if you know this, but there are no plays about football that I’ve found. And my goal is to get a review of the play in *Sports Illustrated*.” So, they’re thinking, “Okay, this guy’s got a goal in a publication that I actually do look at.” And I meant it. I mean it.

What interests me about this project is that it is about two worlds that don’t really have a lot to do with each other. I mean I worked in a theatre program, and classes in theatre often go over into the forbidden zone that conflicts with sports. On the assumption that nobody would be doing both, which I’ve always objected to because I was a bit of a jock. Never at football, though.

Lein Walseth: Talk a little about your background. What was your impetus or catalyst for creating this piece?

Yeaton: In this case I had a warning, from a good friend’s wife, who said “Don’t write a play about football. Women choose whether or not to go to a play, and they’re not going to want to go watch a football play.” So, I took it as a challenge. In a way, I thought of it as a red state/blue state issue, the way in which people think of themselves. I think most people think of themselves as either arts people or sports people. And I wanted to look at the ways in which performers are performers regardless of where they’re performing.

That writer I mentioned, Dorothy Allison, made a point the other day. She said, “Most everything we write is our way of trying to get people to pay attention to some people we don’t think they pay enough attention to, to appreciate them [*sic*].” It’s sort of our bag to get some love for people who may not have it. In this case, I think it’s easy to look at an athlete and dismiss them as only an athlete. I think it’s a fascinating, awful thing we do to young people, works out great for some and terrible for others, that to be a professional athlete in some sports means that you’ve got to go to college.

I had no interest whatsoever in exposing what everyone already knows, which is that college athletes are under enormous pressure, and one of those pressures is academics. From the start I knew I wanted to look at these guys – they are the winners. They’re the ones who didn’t get the career ending injury, didn’t run into the academic problem, who managed, through a combination of luck and skill and intelligence and talent, to land themselves at the highest level. And they’re 18. They come with all these skills and nowhere near enough skills. And then, they find themselves among a bunch of people just like them. Now the competition has risen to the highest level. So that’s a higher dramatic situation. And I tend to be interested in dramatic situations where we get to watch people we don’t normally get to watch. In the past that used to be kings and queens, but now we have *People* magazine, and we have popular culture to show us the lives of the rich and famous. But we don’t get to look at the not-yet famous.

When we first see these guys, they’re in their uniforms with their helmets, and that also means their masks, their facemasks. Then they take their helmets off and the show happens. In an original draft three of the four players, the last time we see them, put their helmets back on again. And the protagonist does not, which makes sense in the context of the play. What I would like about this image, if it is the final moment, is that it would directly or subliminally, unmask these anonymous athletes for us to look at, and then make them anonymous one more time. That will be something of a reminder that behind these masks are these kind of people, and not even these *kind* of people, they *are* these people, and then they’re all the ones that aren’t going to play. That’s a little like any group that we’re tempted to think we know based on their uniform and based on their mask. And there’s dramatic theory that talks in terms of a mask, about the premise of a story being that we meet a character who’s wearing a mask. Halfway through we start seeing behind it, seeing the cracks, and the climax is the tearing off of the mask, and that person confronting his or her unmasked self in all their horror and majesty. And then the ending is, well now what? Does it go back on? Does it stay off? Does it become displaced?

The climax is the tearing off of the mask, and that person confronting his or her unmasked self in all their horror and majesty.

Does the world need this play right now? I guess what I mean by that is, is there something politically or socially timely about it? Obviously I think so, and if I were to make my case for it, it would go back to what I was just saying. We seem to be very willing to categorize and assume we know things about people based on surfaces.

What I realize as I sit in rehearsal, just two days in, is this play, well it’s probably true of any play, works on the theory of putting every character in a maximum amount of pressure, maximum amount of conflict. The more impenetrable, the more both sides of whatever dilemma they’re feeling are powerful, then the more I’m building a kind of implausible situation in which we’re going through this decision with them. It is not as clear as “Here is an ethical decision and we know what that decision is going to be,” because that’s not an ethical situation. That’s not how we experience it.

Here's a guy who's really trying hard, and someone has information about him that could ruin everything for him. But it's the truth and he did it. Here's a guy who serves two masters at a moment when both of them are pulling in very distinct directions. Here's another guy who really cares about this person, but he's going to lose his job if he cares too much for that character right now. So, that's what the play is built on, and I just noticed it in our rehearsal yesterday. I wouldn't want to be any of these people and I kind of want to be all of them.

Lein Walseth: In the script your characters represent at least three viewpoints, which are often at odds with and entangled with one another. Do you expect your audience to follow with or side with any of these individuals or groups? Do you hope they will see all sides?

Yeaton: My prediction, based on the audiences who come to readings, is that yes, they will take sides. So much of what the production will amount to is trying to thwart any easy associations with a character and to keep complicating matters. It's just going to be much more interesting if you side with somebody and three minutes later you question that, and you side against that character. So, the more times you can get somebody to hop across the frontier, I think the better. My ideal audience member would get to those final moments and still be torn about what should happen to this character, about what this character should do. And they would realize, despite the fact that some characters have played the antagonist, that they're characters they like despite that by the end. I would hope that they can see the full complexity of that character, of the antagonist, that this person, at a minimum, had reason to do what he or she did.

Lein Walseth: While researching for this play, what surprised you the most?

Yeaton: To tell you the truth, one of the things that surprised me was the way in which the university did not fit my preexisting idea. They are trying very hard, it seems to me, to clean up a really difficult situation, a big mess. So many places, and I think University of Minnesota is very likely one of them from the little I've heard since I got to town, have had to deal with this. There's no place that *hasn't* had to deal with this. If you have scholarships, even if you're Division III but certainly if you're Division I, you're in a kind of un-winnable fight, and the economic forces, and even the forces that are trying to get you to help somebody, are opposed by other forces that are also trying to do something, and those things cannot co-exist. They are working really hard to make these students be better students, to get them to buy into the idea that their future is probably more in academics than in sports. Now this becomes a bit of a mantra. They hear time and time again, "Only a few of you will make it outside of the classroom." And most of these guys are looking around and going "His future's in the classroom, and his is, and his is, but mine is not." You know, because that's part of the attitude that they need.

Not only are the forces powerful for a kind of corruption in the system, but there are definitely people who are acting on it, who are putting team welfare ahead of school welfare. In a way, I guess, that's no different from life in general, it's just that the stakes are high and the pressures are great. But it was a surprise to me how much the university is doing to get these guys an education, to get them to graduate.

The NCAA, every time it pushes in one direction for one kind of reform, it seems to create a herneation in another, so that when they try to push harder to make students better, to some extent they're pushing harder to make students cheat. Because these guys, if the standards rise, to make what they're doing academically more legitimate, the pressure to do that rises with

that, and they've still got to go to practice, and they've still got to do all these other things. And they still only had whatever education they had before they got there.

I go into most every play, into every situation assuming that the people I'm going to work with are smarter than I think, and even doing that I was surprised by how intelligent the players were. I saw immaturity, but I saw amazing maturity too. I met some young men who were really philosophical about their situation and who really understood, in part because I think sports teaches it, the value of community, really understood giving it up for teammates.

I didn't fully appreciate what a massive industry college sports was. I didn't understand, and I guess I still don't understand fully how it is so big in the hearts and minds of the states and the areas in which it exists. It seems like everything. It seems like the way that an entire world view can be expressed. Every college team has its logos, its colors. I say I don't understand it, but I guess I'm creeping towards it.

Lein Walseth: This play raises a myriad of issues – athletics vs. academics, scandals, strategic essentialism, who has a right to education, individual vs. the team, academic dishonesty, a disconnect between 'classic' poetry and modern hip hop rhyming, etc. What issue, for you, is at the heart of this piece? Does one rise above the others?

Yeaton: I hope there's a single thing at the heart. I know I can get it down to two. If you follow the central character, you watch someone who's in the process of defining and redefining himself, and you see the role that his estimation of himself plays, you see how his thoughts about what his abilities are determine his abilities and how his thoughts about his intellect determine that. The way I think that reverberates is, there's a line where a character in all honesty turns to someone and says, "Do I sound ignorant to you?" That brings tears to my eyes every time I hear it and when I think about it; the thought that we all feel that sometimes, that we all are afraid of seeming ignorant, and sometimes we cover it up. But the idea that someone, essentially because of educational opportunity or lack thereof, walks around with that question on their mind and that awful self-awareness that disturbs, I think that drives a big part of the play for me.

The other, if I get it down to only two, is I keep being drawn to the African American experience. Not always, but in the past 5 years. It seems to me that the professor, when she talks about seeing African American students who get to be at a southern university, and they are treated to some extent like kings, the fact that they don't get civil rights, that they don't get what got them there, must make her feel such rage, being the daughter of the civil rights. She's too young to really have been active at that time, but she would've been raised in the waves caused by that. Her line that reverberates for me is when she says, "There are people who were ripped up by dogs to be able to come to a southern university library, and I don't think you even know where ours is." When she comes out with that line, that's another moment for me of, "How awful and how did we get here?" The fact that when you read about higher education you pretty quickly get into the controversy about affirmative action, and you pretty quickly get into uncomfortable questions about "How do we explain this achievement gap thing? Is it real?" That is something that really matters to me a lot and that I find infinitely interesting. Maybe those two things are connected enough that that's the heart of it.

A thing that I honestly feel and want to convey, is that two days in I can already feel the play growing exponentially because of what those actors are bringing to it and some of it is the questions that they've got at this point. A lot of it is their initial hits and instincts that are almost, they're too far in, too deep down to be conscious. I'm learning about this play on a cellular level. It's really coming to life because the casting is pretty phenomenal. I think you're

going to see that. And the guy steering the ship has done this. It's very interesting, the first rehearsal with Lou yesterday was, it's a wonderful time for the playwright to hear the director talk about your characters to the cast. It's a little bit like hearing someone talk about your children. It's like "Hey, he gets my daughter. He *notices* that thing about my daughter. And not only that, *I haven't.*" That's a really exciting part of this process. And Lou is the kind of director who doesn't ask for re-writes. He doesn't assume that if there's trouble the trouble is the script. He's a 'make it work' director. But at the same time he's quite open to these re-writes. And I'm really grateful for that, because you have to be a really confident director to let somebody into your process. We're still figuring out how we're going to work together. My early sense of it is that he's got no ego issues around this thing and it's all just, "Go team go. Let's take this thing for a spin."

SPOTLIGHT INTERVIEW: THE DIRECTOR

by Stephanie Lein Walseth, August Wilson Fellow

Conducted on August 9, 2007 at Penumbra Theatre Company

Lein Walseth: What made you select this piece to be a part of your season, and how have you approached it?

Bellamy: I view theatre as having a purpose. I would have a tough time justifying spending all the time, effort and money if all I was doing was playing around with plays. The plays provide a space where the community can engage issues and think about things. I take the lead from the Black Arts movement that prescribed exactly what the role of an artist inside a community is, and I take that very seriously.

The young man who got the baseball that Barry Bonds hit out when he broke the homerun record . . . people were kicking him in the head to make him drop the ball so they could have it. You know, come on, this is a *baseball*.

The idea of black people being used as gladiators, for entertainment, goes all the way back to slavery, and society has generally had sort of that function where that figure, a fighter, a wrestler, a track person, whatever, sort of takes on the clothes, becomes emblematic of a group in society. The idea is that it is less violent to have those two duke it out than to have the whole society duke it out. Because of the way we've structured professional sports and so forth, it's the way many black males barter their body for an education. It was important for me to bring this before the community and ask them to think about it.

Lein Walseth: Has Penumbra ever done a script written by a white male? What bearing do you think this has on the work? Do you think it's critical for this piece to have an African American director? To be done at an African American theatre company?

Bellamy: We did Neil Simon – we did a black and white *Odd Couple* in the second year of our existence. I think that the truth is the truth, perhaps no matter who tells it. But since the stage itself is a metaphor and you're already a few steps away from reality, the farther you get from that portrayal of an ethos, the more dangerous it gets. That's where a black director or a culturally-based person becomes of great worth. Whenever you step away from the reality and begin to "metaphorize" it, unless you're sure, unless you're grounded, then you get farther and farther away from truth. I think that is the worth of culturally-based artists, because they are grounded in the culture. You see, I don't think race makes much difference. Culture makes all the difference in the world, however. There's a cultural shorthand, a nuance, and that's what I bring to a production that is unique. Unless you're raised in that culture and know that shorthand, you can't speak that way. You can try, but it's stilted, and you don't know the extent or the power of it.

I remember directing *Angels in America*. I had been around many, many gay men – my brother was one of the first sex changes in Minnesota, so I've been around it all my life. But I didn't know the power of "snap." I *thought* I knew it, but that was from an outsider viewing. When you get in there and really begin to understand what's going on, and the way in which a marginalized culture reflects back the main culture's mores, values, all that sort of stuff, changing it just a little for effect, it's *powerful*. And that's the way this culture can speak. And I think that Dana [Yeaton, the playwright] appreciates it, and I think that Blake [Robison, the Producing Artistic Director for Round House] appreciates it. When you see it, it's not that you

don't understand it. I'm human, I can't do anything that you don't get—that doesn't come out of you as well—but it's twisted just a little, just enough, so that the signifiers are there, so that the ownership is there. It's like tilting a hat. There's a way in which one moves through the world culturally, and it has to do with posture, with the way you dip...it's walking but it tells a different story. And there's no way to write it down. So someone has to bring that to the piece.

Lein Walseth: So, as someone that's culturally-based, and as the director, do you feel you're able to bring that nuance? Is that where the synergy happens, between the written script and the live production?

Bellamy: Yeah. Dana did tremendous amounts of research, but he's still viewing it through a window or a lens. He isn't one that's *of* that culture. He's *really* observant, and I think intuitive, or else I wouldn't be doing the play.

I was an undergrad psych major, and we used to do these things, or I read about them, called controlled twin studies. When they first starting doing those things, they thought the twins had the same environment, they thought they were holding the environment steady, and that was going to be the independent variable. It turns out that the other twin changes the environment *significantly*. So they cannot have the same environment. The presence of one being there alters the other's reality. Dana knows what he knows when he's in the room. He doesn't know what happens when he's not in the room. And I submit that something happens differently. It's like men writing about women. You know, I know what women say when I'm around. I don't know what they say when I'm not around. And it is different, isn't it? I think that is what I'm charged with bringing to this.

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I'm also charged with placing it inside of a wider cultural, racial context because I know what black athletes, or what their parents are thinking when they're there; how they're used. And I'm bringing all that sort of thing to it as well. For instance, when one of those boys says, "My mother's gonna kill me," for some behavior or something, I'm the one who will be talking to his mother. I've had that experience. And I will do it on campus now. And I've gotten in trouble because of it. I will say, because of the privacy thing, I'll say to a student "Does your mother know what you're doing here? I'm gonna tell her." You know, because I'm old black, and that's what you do. You say, "You know man, I'll take care of you. I'm gonna have your mother in here." And then, you know, they get it. They go "Okay. Yes sir, yes sir." You know, they don't want that momma in there on their ass. Those are the things that you just have to be raised in the culture to understand.

Lein Walseth: So, can you talk about the larger cultural context that this play is working within? From among all of the myriad issue that this play raises, is there one at the core for you within this cultural context?

Bellamy: I think that what we have done in America is we have overemphasized this role of sports. That isn't any sort of revelation. I think anybody could come to that and say, "This is kinda out of whack." I was looking at this young man who got the baseball that Barry Bonds hit out when he broke the homerun record, and he fell upon the ball and people were kicking him in the head to make him drop the ball so they could have it. You know, come on, this is a *baseball*.

The reason sports are connected to the university goes back to the Greeks, where they felt that you had to educate or develop the entire being, and so they didn't want these egghead bandy-legged brains. You had to be smart and you had to be physical, and all gymnasium is about that. And so, that's the linkage that should be there.

Because we want to win so badly, these young African American men are separated out when they're 5 or 6 years old, and they start sidetracking them and sending them on a different thing. Perhaps it's just specialization. I don't know. But, what you end up getting is young men who are physically threatening, powerful, and able, and we neglect that socialization in many cases that make them responsible human beings. Because culturally there are some things that are important to blacks, like basketball let's say, these kids are sidetracked and the rest of their

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development is sort of muted while this basketball thing goes on. And no one cares that there are 500 kids that are trying to get there. All the recruiters want is one good one. So, 500 kids go by the wayside. They don't get any schooling, they can just bounce a basketball.

So, this play begins to get at that nexus between athleticism in the college setting and intellectual development. When money gets in it, I think all you need to do is look at salaries. And that's public information, you can get them at the University of Minnesota. You can see the priorities of the institution by looking at the professors' salaries. You can go over to the med school, and then go over to theatre arts. It tells you about what they perceive as being worth something. These coaches are making 2 million dollars a year. Perhaps they're worth that. I don't know. I think a plumber might be worth more if you need one badly.

For the black athlete, the game is to barter physical prowess for an education. At least, that used to be the game. Now the game seems to be to audition while on a field at a college for the pros. See the shift?

Lein Walseth: Dana talked about part of the impetus of this play being the bringing together of two words and worlds that you rarely see in conjunction – theatre and football. Any thoughts on that?

Bellamy: Putting sports on stage has been done. For me it's more about social commentary. I think that Lance, the scenic designer, has done some wonderful things in bringing the feel of that arena, that idea of gladiatorish, hyperextended, it pulls way back to a vanishing point, so it just charges at you in a kind of way. I think the script demands it and I think his design helps that out.

Lein Walseth: Is this piece in any way connected to your life experience? If so, how?

Bellamy: I wasn't gifted like that, but yeah, I ran track in high school and college and was in gymnastics and many of my friends have been athletes. I've always been around it. For me, girls changed all that. There were more girls in drama than there were in track. They're way more fun. So that's what got me out of it.

Selection of the school that I went to had to do with meeting the coach. And curiously enough, not with the head of the psych department or the sociology department. I didn't have a clue what I was going to major in. I started out in biochemistry. But I knew that I was going to

run track. The choice would have been made for me whether I made it or not, because I just wasn't that good. But when you really are, and your education depends on your ability to keep healthy, not be injured, and do all that sort of stuff, it's a tremendous strain. I remember coming home and having a paper due in English and I could not write. I couldn't hold the pen because I was shaking from practice. So, just physically, there's a competition there.

I appreciated especially for young black males, and increasingly females as Title 9 has come along and women's sports are beginning to make money, you're seeing the same sort of culling.

Lein Walseth: Do you see this play as a call to action? How is this part of Penumbra's belief in the power of art to affect social change?

Bellamy: I don't have to say what I want the community to do with it. In fact, I think that makes for bad art. What I do have to do is put truthful situations on stage that provoke the audience, and give them enough of a tinge of reality so that people will take the outcomes on stage as emblematic or indicative of real life. It should spur them, get them engaged emotionally, and then get them to jump in and out of an intellectual decision. That's the best kind of art. The audience is pulled to it, they're into it, and then they go "Oh my god." That's what I hope the piece will do. Then afterwards, I think that there are all sorts of resonators that should kick into intellectual examination after that emotional connection was made. Beckett, Brecht, they do this thing, they don't want you emotionally engaged. There's this 'alienation effect,' whatever that's supposed to mean. I prefer that emotional involvement because if you're in that intellectual place, you're in too much control. I want to wrest that control from them and make them go to a place they might not have gone. Because we're too smart. How many times have you seen a movie and you say "I don't feel like crying today." You make an intellectual decision. So I want to catch them. In fact, I think audiences are happiest when you mix as many of those emotions as you can. Get 'em crying, and then make them laugh while they're crying. Right in the middle, so they have to wipe their face, and they're thrilled by it, they love it. I love it. So you want to mix those things up. Because you never know what humans will do with that mix. We don't know, all we do is mix them up.

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Lein Walseth: While researching for this play, what surprised you the most? How about thus far in the rehearsal process – what has surprised you there?

Bellamy: The power of the language really surprised me. The flat-out craft of the playwright. I thought I had this play really compartmentalized, that I knew what it was. And I got in there and I see some of the stuff he was manipulating, the stylistic kind of decisions that the text forces you to make. When Dante comes out and does those raps in there, it mixes and breaks this reality plane consistently, and has that alienation effect. It also makes him, at the same time that he has all this physical prowess, it adds a kind of, well verse, generally makes somebody smart. It adds an intellectual dimension that I did not know that was there until it got on its feet. Theatre is always more than you thought it was going to be. It always surprises us.

Lein Walseth: How do you see this play as fitting into the framework of this season, which also marks the beginning of Penumbra's 5-year undertaking of August Wilson's 10 play cycle? Do you find it resonant or dissonant? How so? Why this play, why now?

Bellamy: What an Artistic Director does is to live life fully with one fist in the air. And when I say fully I mean not prophylactically, I mean dirty, getting stuff on you. Somehow that translates into an artistic outcome. You know, after this interview, something may happen here, and it just plagues me, and I have to talk about it. The way I talk about it is on stage. And that's what Artistic Director's do. That's why everyone's seasons should be different.

This idea of blacks in sports and in college, I've been worrying about it for a while. Because it is the entree for so many poor people – they've got a body, you know. And that body can be used for many things – slavery, to plant cotton, to pull barges, to barter, for football. And that's what I want to interrogate. I want to make sure, because it's a big trade. Because you've got one back that gets broken, one neck, and all these kinds of things, and that's all you get, is that one chance at it. So you want to be sure whatever rewards you might get at the end of the rainbow are worth taking that chance. I'm not sure that many young people really understand

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it. I want somebody to think about it. I'd like parents to think about it. When you think how much potential is lost, I don't know how many NFL or NBA slots there are, there may be 1,500. All these kids are trying to get to be in one of those 1,500. My god, their chances are better at being a doctor, at going to medical school, than they are to making it into professional sports. So look at what's being wasted.

We talk about this raging anti-intellectualism in the United States. We're rewarding them for that kind of thinking. It goes even deeper, because when those people go into whatever business they're going to go into, they become the stewards for the society. They become the elders, eventually, of that society. They're not equipped, because what they're reinforced for is physical prowess, being able to bash their heads together and this sort of thing, while other people are being reinforced for intellectualism and personal development. Those are the things that make for a strong society. Not just sports. And so we go around and we say

'How come there aren't blacks contributing to the arts the way that we'd like them to do?' Well, they haven't been trained. So, the cost of skewing your reality toward sports and those kinds of things is way more than just the individual. The society at large just doesn't get the benefit of what is lost.

Lein Walseth: Can you talk about how this piece deals with the reconciliation between the individual and the community in a broader sense?

Bellamy: Look for a minute at these sports figures, you look at these young men and someone will say, the coach will say "You've got to conduct yourself a certain way if you're going to be on this team. I want you to look a certain way.." and the players say, "Man, I don't want to be anybody's role model." Well, I don't know. If you're going to do Nike commercials, then maybe you are, then maybe there is a responsibility there. Look for instance at Michael Vick's career. This guy fights pit bulls. And his life is ruined, his professional football life is ruined because of something that had absolutely nothing to do with that. They are special, whether or not they like that, they are. I don't know whether we have a right to expect a different kind of conduct from them. I think it has to do with a certain kind of balance. And that balance is all out of whack. The individual vs. the community or society, that's what a team sport is supposed to teach. That's one of the arguments of people making for Title 9. Women never had the

opportunity to create team type relationships. I think it has great potential to be used by educators. It doesn't have to be a bad thing.

You will hear intellectuals talk about situation ethics, where the situation determines the ethical response. Rather than a list of things that are ethical. And that's a relativism that many would chafe at but I think that often as your economic level may get lower, those kinds of decisions come against each other more often. Is it better to not eat or to steal this crust of bread? Is the structure of the society so already made putrid and non-functional for such a large group that they disregard the morays of the society because there's no way to satisfy Maslow's hierarchy of needs by staying within the lines? There's no way. For instance, if someone wants their child to go to school. Well, they can't do that if they have no education and they're at McDonald's. You know, *Raisin in the Sun*, Walter Lee. He wants so much to be a capitalist. But he's not trained to be a capitalist. He has no experience, so he makes dumb mistakes. So cheating to keep a comrade eligible, because he's a good blocker and he's going to be able to let you run farther and then get picked up by the pros or whatever, the situation demands a different kind of ethical response.

DESIGN STATEMENTS

The creative design team is responsible for making the text on the page into a literal reality onstage. By using sound, lighting, set and costumes elements, the designers create an atmosphere inside which the actors play. Designers use methods such as color, temperature, or volume to help them as they work. Each of these methods can create a feeling onstage based on which tools the designer chooses to use.

In production, the design elements come together with the text, the actors and the direction, to create a three dimensional world. Penumbra Theatre is guided by an ensemble aesthetic, which means that no element is more important than another. This is Penumbra's ethical approach to art, in which every voice is unique, necessary and communally rooted. This approach also creates artistic balance and excellence. The audience often does not realize that any of the elements were at one time separate. They are totally bound; the result is something greater than the sum of each of its parts. Patrons of Penumbra Theatre Company often say the work looks effortless because the end result feels magical, feels surreal. This is one way the creative team, including the director, designers, cast and crew, can evaluate the success of their endeavor.

It is not magic, though. A lot of work goes into creating a production. Here you can read about the intent of the designers, how they arrived at their concepts and what challenges and methods they used to make their part of the play come to life. (For information on production internships, please visit our website at www.penumbra theatre.org, or call 651-288-6791)

SCENE DESIGN LANCE BROCKMAN

The scenic and properties design for *REDSHIRTS* is a departure from traditional environments created by me for past productions, like the recent hits *Ain't Misbehavin'* and *Get Ready*. The playwright calls for the action of the play to take place on a football field and although the opening scene is located on the sidelines, the main action of the play takes place in various spaces across the campus of Tennessee Southern University. One scene unfolds in an instructor's apartment and another inside an automobile. These are unique challenges for a designer. To facilitate the cinematic changes and to not impede the action, each scenic element has to be carefully chosen to give the audience a symbol representing the specific environment or location.

Scenic designers try to balance two important elements in creating a stage setting: UNITY and VARIETY. This set presents to the audience a basic unit that is clearly defined as "football and athletic spaces" on the audience's left representing the sidelines, weight room, locker room, backfield room etc. On the audience's right, we see more generic spaces found around campus—athletic dorm, faculty offices, etc. Variety is created by the images on the projection screen that is configured like a goal post. The goal is to give audiences sufficient information from the projections to discern when a location change takes place and where it relocates the scene without the need to continuously shift cumbersome scenery or properties.

SOUND/MEDIA DESIGN
MARTIN GWINUP

My first function with both design hats on [sound and media] is to help the audience understand and follow the story. This is a story that takes place in many different locations and has to flow quickly and smoothly. It is my job to use sound and media to help the audience know where the area is while supporting the action in the play. This production did not require a lot of underscored music, which is sometimes used to convey emotion or demonstrate intensity. The raw emotion and intensity of this play is carried through the writing, characters and performances. Adding a music element would only confuse the audience. Thus, the main focus of the sound design will be to represent the location of the action. This is especially important as the set is very minimal. The media is to serve three purposes: 1) help situate the audience to understand where they are in each scene so that they can focus on the story; 2) to support action where necessary—like cluing the audience into the writing struggles the student-athletes have, or a particular play that the coach discusses with his team; and 3) to demonstrate the intensity and pressure around college football with images that show the gloss, financial impact, notoriety, and professional qualities that amateur college football has come to represent. All of this will be done through a selection of quality images.

REDSHIRTS is a provocative story about the struggle of students caught between the intensity of university football and the rigor of pursuing a degree. The pressure of dealing with both agendas simultaneously is challenging. Having been in academia for a number of years, and having had athletes in my classes—including football players—this story has an extra ring of truth to it. I am excited to be a part of it.

LIGHTING DESIGN
MICHELLE HABECK

Although *REDSHIRTS* may on the surface appear to be centered primarily on college/university football, young football players, student relationships, coach mentors and faculty mentors in an academic setting, the play also investigates a variety of very real experiences relevant to many of today's young persons on their path to adulthood. The characters encounter a number of societal pressures that apply beyond university and the playing field. They are challenged by the pressure to succeed, the pressure to rise above their class, the pressure to survive in a community very different from their own and the pressure to communicate with persons of authority who appear to have power over the success or failure of their future. All the while each character struggles to find the makings and matter of their own identity.

The lighting design will follow the tale; identify location, character and conflict in a visual manner that is clear and meaningful. There will be moments in which the lighting attempts to re-create the shape and illumination of a seemingly common place, for example a classroom or a locker room. The composition of the space will alter with the action and/or the transformation of one place to the next. There will be moments of high craft and elemental storytelling when the shape and the illumination of a place transform and become intentionally specific. The crafted moment might explore the story beyond the lines of the play that the characters speak or serve as a window to a private secret held by a character or a place. The moment may point or counterpoint an event having just occurred or an event that is about to

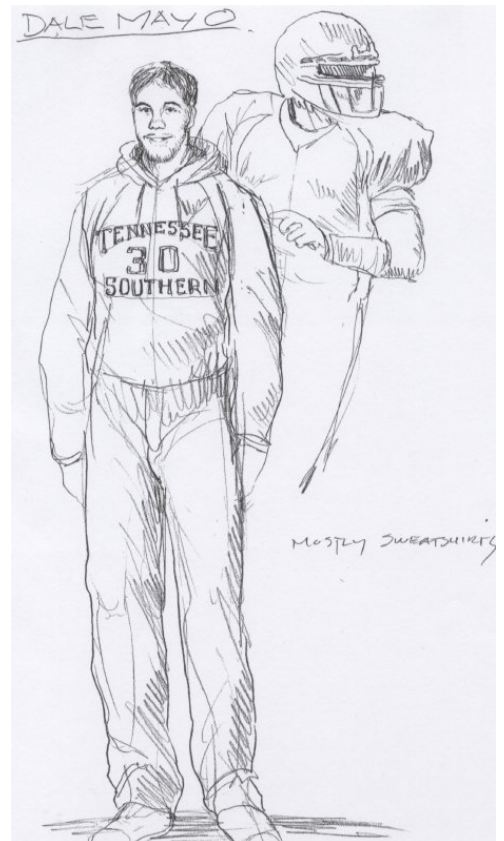
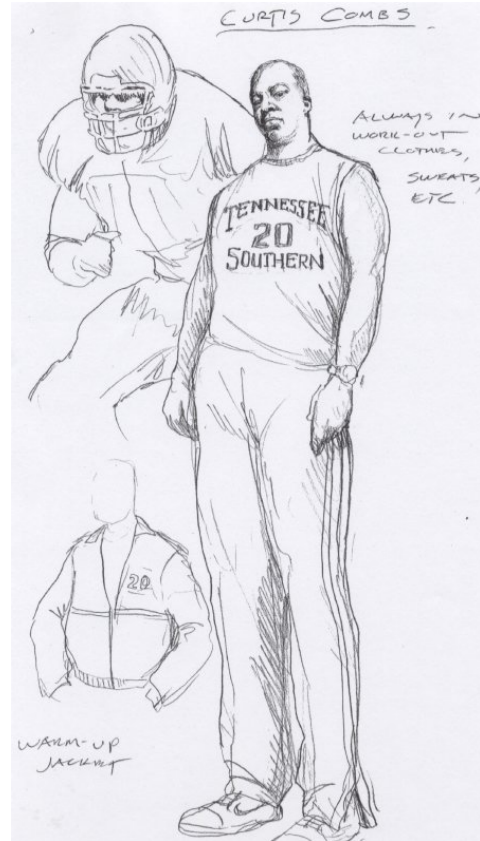
occur. No matter the specificity employed, every moment is meaningless until the moment it is shared with you, our audience.

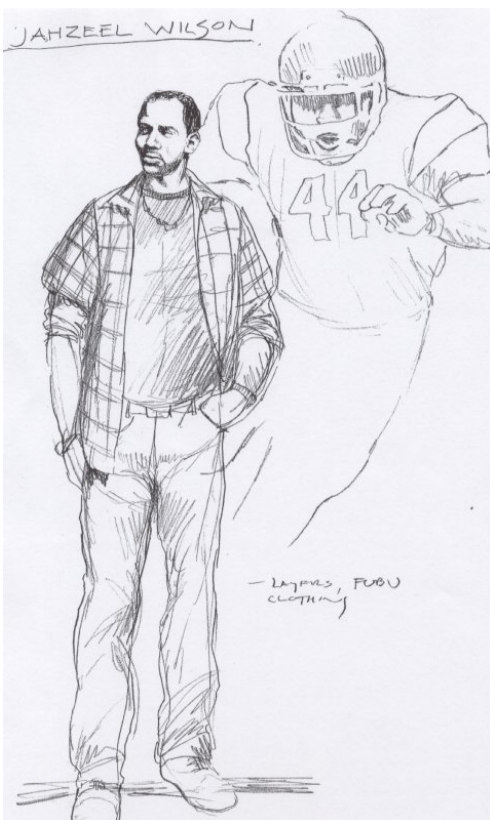
COSTUME DESIGN

MATTHEW LEFEBVRE

Most of the time as a costume designer, my approach is to create costumes that tell the audience a lot about the characters before they ever open their mouths. For *REDSHIRTS* however, there is a great deal of ambiguity concerning the characters. As an audience, we spend most of the play uncertain what are the true motives of each of the characters. Rather than give away too much about each of the characters visually, I chose to follow the ambiguity of the script and am working on a minimal design approach. It is my intent that this will support the story telling by not giving away too many clues about the individual characters. In some cases the choices are obvious, for example the costume choices for the coach are just what you would expect, but for Doctor Bigelow I'm working against the inclination of dressing her as a stuffy, inflexible character, and opted for something that has a more worldly quality, perhaps clothes she picked up on her travels around the world. Although this doesn't give away anything about her motives, it does put her in stark contrast to the compulsory athletic wear of the football players.

Another way I am approaching the ambiguity of the characters is through use of color, or lack thereof. I'm using a very tightly controlled palette of blacks, grays, and blues, for a number of reasons. By dressing everyone in the same color palette, it helps support the ambiguity, because color is not used to differentiate character. Also by reserving the intensity of the orange football uniforms in contrast to the monochromatic palette, it helps exemplify how important football is to this University. Lastly, the cool color scheme is in keeping with the hi-tech influences on college football that the playwright alludes to in the play.





TOOLS FOR TEACHING

The following are a series of questions meant to prompt discussion, critical analysis or dialogue about this play. They may be used either before or after the play, either to guide audiences toward specific issues as they watch or, to stimulate conversation about topical issues afterward.

These questions are intended to meet the state standards for High School Language Arts and Literacy set by the Board of Education. (Grades 9 through 12).

Penumbra Theatre Company also offers Lesson Plans that use the script, the production, and the study guide to investigate specific themes. Each plan can run from approximately 15 to 45 minutes for discussion. Please contact the Education and Outreach Director for more details: sarah.bellamy@penumbrateatre.org

A Feel for the Times -- *Comprehension Questions*

1. *REDSHIRTS* takes place on a fictional college campus. What clues tell you about its location? Its athletic division ranking? Its student demographic?
2. Can you think of three examples of African American athletes using their sport as a forum for political protest? What were the relevant historical events or movements of the period?
3. How did the end of World War II affect American culture? Why did college sport become so popular?
4. Name three recruiting issues that negatively impact student athletes.
5. Think of a professional African American athlete that has reached celebrity status. What kind of issues do you imagine he or she has experienced? Site any specific examples?

Critical Thinking and Analysis -- *Short Essay Questions*

1. What sacrifices might families have to make in order to send a student to college?
2. In your opinion, is it possible to be both a great athlete and a successful student? What elements or people affect this?
3. Do you think that Professor Bigelow is too stringent with Dante and the other running backs? How do you feel about them being treated as a team as opposed to individuals?
4. What happens when Dante's diagnosis of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is rebuked? How does this change his sense of self and personal identity?

Language Arts and Theatre – Reflection

1. How do the following elements of design help to situate *REDSHIRTS* within a particular socioeconomic, culturally specific moment?

Costumes:

Set Design:

Sound Design:

Hair and Make-up:

2. What do you think would be the most difficult to communicate from a designer's perspective, race or class? Why? What elements might you employ?
3. How might the staging of this show at Penumbra Theatre be different than if it were staged elsewhere?
4. How is music used to contextualize the play and add nuance?

Vocabulary –Important Terms

* Many of these terms were derived from and can be further elucidated online at www.wikipedia.org.

Acts:	An act is how a play is divided into parts, this is the first division. Under acts, the play is further divided into scenes. The end of an act is usually signaled by raising the house lights (meaning theatre is lit up and the audience can now see one another). Sometimes a curtain is lowered on the stage. Typically this signals an intermission. Acts are often divided based on location changes or to mark an important passage of time.
Aesthetics:	The philosophical theory and meditation about the concept of beauty and art.
Antagonist:	The source of the protagonist's conflict—can be a person, place, thing, or abstraction.
Aside:	a remark made by a character that is not supposed to be audible to the other characters on stage.
Cast:	A group of actors that makes up an ensemble. A cast is decided based on the characters the playwright creates and the actors that the director selects to play those characters. Together this group is called an ensemble. When a cast is directed as an ensemble, like at Penumbra, there are no stars and every role or character is seen as equally important to tell the story of the play.
Characters:	The people or elements depicted in a dramatic work. Characters are developed through their motives, actions, relationships and dialogue. The characters make up the cast.

Class:	A device used to delineate social status within a society based on wealth, perception of wealth, and notions about who is deserving of wealth. Class also includes meditations on poverty, gender and race within the American context.
Conflict:	The dramatic struggle between the antagonist and the protagonist.
Crew:	The people that work behind the scenes during a play to make it run smoothly. This includes production staff, run crew and backstage people. Some of the duties the crew is responsible for are: light board operations, wardrobe quick changes, and follow spots, and preset. The crew are on location before, during and after every live production.
Culture:	The defining characteristics of a group in relation to another group within a social sphere. Culture is defined in many ways including but not limited to a group's language, history, religious affiliation, race, gender, sexuality, class, economic status, education, cuisine, collective memory, media representation, legal history, political prowess, and ambassadorial relations.
Diction:	The choice of words, imagery, sentence structures, etc. employed by a playwright to create meaning. Poetic or high diction refers specifically to "elevated" and highly stylized diction. This is the type of language one might find in a Shakespearean tragedy. Middle diction, while still employing "correct" language usage, is less formal—this kind of language might be compared to the kind of language that you find in the newspapers and on news broadcasts. Informal diction includes the vocabulary of everyday speech, slang, regional dialects, etc.
Dénouement:	What happens after a story's climax when the conflict in the story is resolved.
Dialogue:	Conversations or other verbal exchanges between two or more characters. Unlike novels or dance pieces, this is the main way we learn about characters in a play.
Drama:	From the Greek word "dran" ('to do' or 'to perform'), the word "drama" refers either to a single play, a group of plays, or to all plays. Drama is generally intended for theatrical performance. Usually, a single work of dramatic literature is called a play and the person who writes (not "wrights") a play is called a playwright.
Ethics:	The philosophical theory and meditation on morality.
Foil:	A character who reveals by contrast the distinctive qualities of another character.
Jim Crow:	A state and local project to categorize, delineate, territorialize, and define American culture and society through institutionalized enforcement of racial segregation. The notion that black and white Americans should remain separate at all levels of social and civic engagement dates back to the middle of the 1800s through the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1965. Often Jim Crow laws were open to interpretation and frequently used to justify the terrorist violence enacted on black Americans by the Ku Klux Klan and their supporters.

Monologue: A long speech given by one character to the other characters on stage.

Morality: A concept of ethics that deals most essentially with concepts of good and evil.

Plot: The arrangement of events and actions within a play. This can be chronological, told in flashback, or in media res (“in the middle of things”; when the story starts in the middle of the action, without exposition).

Protagonist: The main character in the story.

Race: The categorical separation and distinction of one group of people from other groups based on genealogy, skin color, hair type, geography, nationality, and other socially constructed elements of humanity.

Redshirt: A college athlete (almost always a freshman) who skips a year of play without losing a year of eligibility. A player will often redshirt because of an injury or academic problem. Examples: A redshirt freshman is a player who is actually in his second year of school, but is playing his first season of football. A player can only be redshirted once.

Setting: Where the play takes place. The setting may change from scene to scene of the play.

Soliloquy: A long speech given by one character that the other characters on stage are not intended to hear. Soliloquies let us know what the characters are thinking.

Stage directions: instructions from the playwright for the actors and director to help them understand how actors should appear, move, and behave in a play.

Stereotype: A socially constructed image or assumption of a particular group of people that relies on falsehood, caricature, and misrepresentation intended to subordinate, criminalize or make deviant that group of people within a particular social context.

Subjectivity: The state of being known to oneself and recognized within society. The ability to speak in the first person. The ability to know and name others vis-à-vis one’s position in the world.

Subplot: A plot within a plot.

Suspense: Tension in the plot that makes the audience anxious.

Theater: From the Greek word “theatron” (‘show place’), the word “theater” refers to the space in which plays are performed. “Theater” is also used to refer to the institution of dramatic performance.

Theme: The main idea or ideas emerging from a literary work.

Tone: The mood of a play. This is usually established by the dialogue of the play but also depends on the scenery, lights, sound element, choreography and direction.

AFRICAN AMERICAN SPORTS HISTORY TRIVIA QUIZ

Think you know sports? Take our quiz and find out!

1. Track and field star Carl Lewis won how many gold medals at the 1984 Olympic games?
 - a. Two
 - b. Eight
 - c. Four

2. In 1957 Althea Gibson became the first African American to do what?
 - a. She won the US Open tennis championship.
 - b. She joined the Ladies' Professional Golf Association.
 - c. She was named chairperson of the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports.

3. Stripped of his heavyweight title in 1967 for refusing induction into the U.S. military, Muhammad Ali regained the heavyweight championship on October 30, 1974, in Kinshasa, Zaire (present-day Democratic Republic of the Congo), with an eighth-round knockout of which prizefighter?
 - a. George Foreman
 - b. Joe Frazier
 - c. Leon Spinks

4. What do African-American football players Ernie Davis, Archie Griffin, and Tony Dorsett have in common?
 - a. They all played for Pittsburgh.
 - b. They all won the Heisman Trophy.
 - c. They all led their teams to Super Bowl titles.

5. Which track and field star overcame childhood polio to become one of the greatest athletes of her time?
 - a. Wilma Rudolph
 - b. Gail Devers
 - c. Florence Griffith Joyner

6. Credited with breaking the "color barrier" in baseball by becoming the first African American to play in the major leagues, Jackie Robinson played for which team?
 - a. Baltimore Orioles
 - b. Brooklyn Dodgers
 - c. New York Yankees

7. Which radio "shock-jock" was recently fired for racist comments made against the Scarlet Knight's women's basketball team?
 - a. Steven Dahl
 - b. Don Imus
 - c. Howard Stern

- 8. The all-black basketball team the Harlem Globetrotters was formed in what year?**
- a. 1927
 - b. 1938
 - c. 1959
- 9. Who was the first player from the Negro Leagues to be elected to Baseball's Hall of Fame?**
- a. "Shoeless" Joe Jackson
 - b. Oscar Charleston
 - c. Leroy Robert "Satchel" Paige
- 10. Only two non-kickers led the league in scoring in the 1980's, one was Marcus Allen in the 1982 strike season. The other non-kicker did it in 1987. Who was the player?**
- 11. Who was the first black athlete to be admitted into the Hockey Hall of Fame?**
- 12. Who was the first African American man to win the US Championship (1968) and Wimbledon (1975) in tennis?**
- 13. Which female track star nearly had both feet amputated due to a severe thyroid disorder known as Grave's Disease?**

AFRICAN AMERICAN SPORTS HISTORY TRIVIA QUIZ ANSWERS

How did you do? Check your answers with the ones below!

1. Correct answer: C.

Carl Lewis won four gold medals in 1984, taking a gold medal in each of the following competitions:

- 100m
- 200m
- 4x100m
- long jump

Carl Lewis has won nine Olympic gold medals in all: four in 1984, two in 1988 (100m and long jump), two in 1992 (4x100m and long jump), and one in 1996 (long jump).

2. Correct answer: A.

Althea Gibson won the US Open tennis championship. Althea Gibson went on to become the first African American to win a singles title at Wimbledon in August 1957.

3. Correct answer: A.

Muhammad Ali knocked out prizefighter George Foreman on October 30, 1974, in Kinshasa, Zaire. Ali defended his title in a famous 15-round victory over Joe Frazier on October 1, 1975, in the Philippines. Ali finally relinquished the crown to Olympic champion Leon Spinks in a 15-round decision on February 15, 1978, in Las Vegas, Nevada.

4. Correct answer: B.

They all won the Heisman Trophy. Ernie Davis was the first African American to win the prize in 1961, and Archie Griffin is the only player to have won it twice, in 1974 and 1975. Only Dorsett played for Pittsburgh. Davis played for Syracuse and Griffin played for Ohio State. Only Dorsett did lead his team to a Super Bowl title as NFC Rookie of the Year in 1977-78.

5. Correct answer: A.

Wilma Rudolph won 3 gold medals (100m, 200m and 4x100m relay) at the 1960 Olympics.

6. Correct answer: B.

Jackie Robinson played his entire career with the Brooklyn Dodgers from 1947 to 1956.

7. Correct Answer: B.

Radio host Don Imus referred to the Rutgers University women's basketball team as "nappy headed, hardcore hos" on his nationally syndicated program, "Imus in the Morning." Imus questioned the players' looks, describing them as tattooed "rough girls." Imus was promptly fired from his post. Rutgers coach C. Vivian Stringer said in a statement,

"I am deeply saddened and angered by Mr. Imus' statements regarding the members of the Rutgers women's basketball team. These talented, articulate young women put forth a great deal of hard work and effort this past season to reach the nation's grandest stage — the NCAA title game.

Throughout the year, these gifted young ladies set an example for the nation that through hard work and perseverance, you can accomplish anything if you believe. Without a doubt, this past season was my most rewarding in 36 years of coaching. This young team fought through immeasurable odds to reach the highest pinnacle and play for the school's first national championship in a major sport.

To serve as a joke of Mr. Imus' in such an insensitive manner creates a wedge and makes light of the efforts of these classy individuals, both as women and as women of color. It is unfortunate Mr. Imus sought to tarnish Rutgers' spirit and success. Should we not, as adults, send a message of encouragement to young people to aspire to the highest levels as my team did this season?"

8. Correct answer: A.

The Harlem Globetrotters were formed in Chicago in 1927 and originally named the Savoy Big Five. Serious competitors on the court, they won 100 games and lost only 6 in their first season. Later they also became known as comedians on the court, famous for their trick shots, suddenly switching to the rules for baseball or soccer, and their fast and tricky dribbling and sleight of hand with the ball.

9. Correct Answer: C.

In 1970 the Baseball Hall of Fame established a Negro Leagues Committee that began reviewing the great black players. In 1970, it inducted Satchel Paige; in 1971, Josh Gibson; and thereafter one black player from the Negro Leagues each year for almost nine years.

10. Willie O'Ree played for the Boston Bruins beginning in 1958.

It was not until January 18, 1958 when Willie O'Ree took to the ice for the Boston Bruins in a game against the Montreal Canadiens that a black man would debut in the NHL. By doing so O'Ree ensured himself a place in hockey history as the "Jackie Robinson of hockey."

"They've called me the Jackie Robinson of hockey, and I'm aware of being the first, and of the responsibilities, but I'm also aware that there have not been, and are not many colored players able to play hockey, that there has never been the discrimination in this game there was in baseball, and that I didn't face any of the very real problems Robinson had to face."

11. Grant Fuhr was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame on November 2, 2003.

12. Arthur Ashe was the first African-American man to win the US Championship (1968) and Wimbledon (1975).

13. Gail Devers overcame a thyroid disorder (Graves' disease) that nearly resulted in her having both feet amputated. She went on to win the Olympic gold medal in the 100 meters in 1992 and 1996.

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