

THEATRESQUARED
PRESENTS



KEVIN D. COHEA'S
**SUNDOWN
TOWN**

A WORLD PREMIERE

FEBRUARY 4-20 FEATURING 3 PENNY ACRE

FOR TICKETS — DIAL **571-2728** — VISIT **THEATRE2.ORG**

AT WALTON ARTS CENTER'S NADINE BAUM STUDIOS IN FAYETTEVILLE



Arkansas
Arts Council

“LIVES ENTANGLE LIKE WEEDS, THRIVIN' AND SUFFOCATIN' EACH OTHER AT THE
SAME TIME. SUN UP, SUNDOWN, TIME'S CHANGE... OR SO THEY SAY.”



NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE ARTS



TheatreSquared

"We believe that theatre, done well and with passion, can transform lives and communities." – from the T2 Vision Statement

TheatreSquared (T2), founded in 2005, is a regional professional company dedicated to creating exceptional works of theatre. Merging a strong artistic vision with innovative educational programs, TheatreSquared develops new audiences through creative partnerships, and fosters economic and artistic growth in Northwest Arkansas.

T2's annual season of plays includes four productions and the Arkansas New Play Festival of emerging works. Productions are presented in the 130-seat Studio Theatre at Nadine Baum Studios, a Walton Arts Center venue, in downtown Fayetteville, Arkansas.

In addition to its season of theatrical works, T2 creates innovative educational programming including student and teacher workshops, professional training academies, and immersive student matinees and discussions.

3 PENNY ACRE

3 Penny Acre is a musical collaboration between three up and coming songwriters: Bayard Blain, Bernice Hembree, and Bryan Hembree. Fans and critics have quickly identified their unique, Ozark-inspired sound as distinct, yet universally appealing. Listeners in all corners have begun to appreciate their attention to lyrics, harmony, and carefully crafted acoustic arrangements steeped in roots music traditions but with a focus on fresh, new songs. For *Sundown Town*, they will be joined by Fiddler Ann Mesrobian.

Shortly after forming as a band, 3 Penny Acre won the 2008 Walnut Valley Festival (Winfield, Kansas) NewSongs competition. The exposure the win brought 3 Penny Acre helped to solidify their path as emerging artists. In the 18 months that followed, they toured extensively throughout the nation, were invited as an official showcase artist to the 2009 and 2010 International Folk Alliance Conference, and released a debut album that was selected as one of the Top 40 albums of 2009 by Norm Mast and Al Kniola of The Back Porch 88.1 WVPE (Indiana) and won "Album of the Year" at the Northwest Arkansas Music Awards.

3 Penny Acre, whose name comes from the cost of the Louisiana Purchase, is a fitting name for a band whose members were all raised inside its borders. They create music that paints a portrait of their homeland two-hundred years on. The songs are beautiful and longing, yet at times anti-nostalgic, resisting the temptation to "gold wash" the tough history of the people and places they portray.

KEVIN COHEA'S SUNDOWN TOWN

A PLAY WITH MUSIC

Kevin Fox, director

Jeannie Lee, musical director

Morgan Hicks, assistant director/dramaturg

Anna DeDe Pankin, stage manager

Courtney O'Neil, scenic designer

Michael Riha, lighting designer

Shauna Meador, costume designer

Josh Tillotson, production manager

CAST

Valarie Andrews

Bill Rogers

Quin Gasaway

John T. Smith

Halley Mayo

David A. Wright

Kris Pruett

Alex West

Bruch Reed*

*Member of The Actor's Equity Association

**Member of United Scenic Artist of America Local 829, IATSE and USITT



CHARACTERS

DUB HALE

Honest and hard-working. A good man. He serves his farm, his family, his country, and his God. In that order.

LORETTA HALE

Dub's wife. A Sunday-Sunday-Wednesday Baptist. The rock of the family. Rocks can also fracture.

ANNIE HALE

Daughter of Dub and Loretta. Innocent, curious about the world, and Moses LaRue.

REV. JOHN LOFTON

A Southern Baptist minister, all hellfire and brimstone. The savior of, if not souls, at least his own ideals.

BILL CHEATHAM

A land developer, seeking Annie's hand in marriage. Wants to buy Hale's Orchard and Kelley's General Store and build hotels. A crook.

MUTT MCCLELLAND

Once a drifter, he's now Cheatham's right-hand man. Rough and ready. An alcoholic. He's done very bad things in his life.

JOSHUA "JUNEBUG" KELLEY

More simple than slow. Scratch's "nephew"; helps Scratch run the general store. Townsfolk call him "Junebug." A childhood friend of Annie's.

HAROLD "SCRATCH" KELLEY

Owns Kelley's General Store. A Civil War veteran, fought for the Confederacy. Blinded and left unable to walk by cannonball shrapnel, a large scar running across his left eye, down the side of his face, earning him his nickname. A fiddle player.

MOSES LARUE:

An African-American drifter, originally from New Orleans. An old soul, looking for a new life.

SUMMARY OF THE PLAY

The play begins in the late summer of 1918 in the small Northwest Arkansas community of Healing Springs. The town, much like many small towns in Arkansas is made up entirely of white residents of the Christian faith. At the beginning of the play, we join a Sunday service of the Healing Springs Baptist Church, already in progress. Dub, who serves as the narrator of the play, introduces us to the members of this tight-knit community.

Later that afternoon, while Dub is working on patching up the barn roof at his orchard, his knees fail him and he begins to fall. A stranger happens to be headed down the road at that moment and is able to break his fall. The stranger is Moses LaRue, a young African American man. Moses asks if Bill Cheatham is looking for hired hands to help build his new hotel, and Dub advises Moses that it is not a good time to be in Healing Springs. Moses was unaware that Healing Springs has unwritten laws that prohibit members of minorities from being in town after sundown.

Dub offers Moses shelter for the night, but soon the two become friends and Moses stays to help Dub re-roof his barn. Moses soon meets Dub's teenage daughter, Annie Hale. The two have an immediate attraction, but during this time any type of relationship would have been unthinkable. Moses also becomes friends with Joshua, who decides that they should attend the town's end-of-summer hay dance. The dance is held in the town square after dark, and Bill and Mutt are upset that his attendance violates the Sundown Laws. They express their unhappiness in very threatening and racist language.

Moses, understanding that he is not universally welcome in Healing Springs, packs his bags to leave, but before he goes he is visited by Scratch Kelley, a former Confederate soldier. Moses is surprised by Scratch's lack of racism. Scratch encourages Moses to stay in town and promises to teach him how to play the fiddle. Annie also encourages Moses to stay. Joshua offers to baptize Moses and take him to church, which doesn't go over well. Reverend Lofton later tries to reach out to Moses by giving him some work at the church. Annie arrives to practice piano and attempts to teach him a music lesson, but he, in turn, tells her about his past and shares with her some of his family's music. Despite their differences they make a strong connection and kiss. Joshua arrives on the scene and sees the kiss. This is the end of Act 1.

At the beginning of Act II, Joshua is hurt because he feels that this is a betrayal, and goes to the Hale home to confront his friends. The confrontation happens in front of Dub and Loretta. Dub warns Moses that although he likes him as a person, any type of relationship between he and Annie would be unacceptable. Word spreads quickly about the kiss, and Mutt and Bill go to Scratch's store to find Moses and chase him out of town. He isn't there, and they try to scare Scratch into telling them where he is. Scratch resists and Mutt becomes physical. Things go too far, and Scratch is beaten to death. Mutt and Bill leave and when Joshua finds his body, he drags him to the "healing springs" in hopes that he will be made well. Dub finds Joshua at the springs and tries to comfort him.

Reverend Lofton advises that the Lord calls for "an eye for an eye", so he and Dub go into the night looking for Mutt. Loretta tries to keep Annie inside, but they argue. Annie goes out looking for Moses to warn him about the danger. When she finds him, he has been brutally beaten by Mutt. Mutt returns to the store where Joshua is alone. They fight and Joshua stabs Mutt to death.

When Dub arrives home, he finds Annie and the badly beaten Moses. He advises Moses to leave town immediately for his own safety. Annie insists that she will go with him. Dub and Moses agree that it is unsafe. Their love is not enough to protect them from harm. Shortly after Moses leaves, Dub finds a note from Annie. She has left Healing Springs to be with Moses.

Dub tells Loretta about Annie's departure, and Loretta reveals that she is the one who sent Mutt to murder Moses. Dub is horrified by her actions. We also learn that at some time in the past, Loretta and Mutt had an affair. Dub cannot forgive her and pushes her away. Loretta drowns herself in the river. Dub tells the audience that after these events transpired, the Reverend left the town and Bill Cheatham continued to build his wealth. Dub decides to burn his barn to the ground. He and Joshua "took care of each other. Like ghosts take care of each other. Lives entangle like weeds, thrivin' and suffocatin' each other at the same time. Sun up. Sun down. Times change. Or that's what they say... "

WHAT IS A “SUNDOWN TOWN”?

Not long after the Civil War, many African Americans began to move from the South and migrate North in search of work and the promise of a better life. Thousands of towns across the United States did not welcome the idea of an integrated society and took steps to forbid African Americans from living in them. These towns were considered “sundown towns” because members of minorities were forbidden from being in town after dark. Many of these communities marked their city limits with signs. A sign that read “Nigger, Don’t Let The Sun Go Down On You In Alix” was at the city limits of one town in Franklin County as late as 1970.



Sundown towns in Arkansas range from hamlets like Alix to larger towns like Paragould and Springdale. Entire counties went sundown, such as Boone, Clay, and Polk. Although there were not towns like these prior to the Civil War, precedents existed for the exclusion of free African Americans. As early as 1843, Arkansas denied free blacks entry into the state, and in 1859, Arkansas required such persons to leave the state by January 1, 1860, or be sold into slavery.

Several Arkansas counties and towns show a slowly diminishing number of African Americans between 1890 and 1940 because they did not allow new black people in, and those who remained gradually died or left. In Mena, African Americans did not even have to attempt to live in town to get in trouble. Shirley Manning, a high school student there in 1960–61, describes the scene: “The local boys would threaten with words and knives Negroes who would come through town, and follow them to the outskirts of town shouting ‘better not let the sun set on your black ass in Mena’ and they often ‘bumped’ the car with their bumper from behind.”

An undated newspaper clipping from Rogers, probably between 1910 and 1920, tells of the terror that African Americans might encounter in sundown towns even during the day. A contractor was building a brick building in Rogers and brought with him a black carpenter. “A group of young men were gathered in the Blue saloon when the Negro entered, probably looking for his employer. The group seized the Negro and began telling what they were going to do with him.” They threatened to drop him in an old well in the rear of the construction site after they had hanged him, “but others objected on the ground that the odor from the ones already planted there was becoming objectionable to the neighborhood.” Eventually, they let “the trembling Negro” slip, “and in a matter of seconds, he was just a blur on the horizon.”

Here’s a partial list of Arkansas towns that were likely Sundown Towns:

Alix, Alma, Altus, Alpena, Amity, Ash Flat, Bauxite, Batavia, Bellefonte, Bergman, Black Rock, Booneville, Bradford, Brookland, Cabot, Calico Rock, Cammack Village, Cedarville, Chester, Clay County, Cleburne County, Cotter, Decatur, Delight, Desha, Diamond City, Dierks, Dover, Dyer, Dyess, Elkins, Elm Springs, Eureka Springs, Evening Shade, Everton, Fairfield Bay, Fouke, Gassville, Gentry, Glenwood, Goshen, Grannis, Gravette, Greenway, Greenwood, Greers Ferry, Grubbs, Hardy, Harrison, Hillcrest, Imboden, Jasper, Johnson, Kibler, Lacrosse, Lakeview, Lamar, Lavaca, Leachville, Lead Hill, Lepanto, Leslie, Little Flock, London, Lonoke, Marble Falls, Magazine, Magnet Cove, Manila, Marion County, Mena, Mount Ida, Mountainburg, Mountain Home, Mountain View, Mt. Ida, Mulberry, Norfolk, Oak Grove Heights, Oakland, Omaha, Oppelo, Oxford, Ozark, Pangburn, Paragould, Perryville, Piggott, Portia, Pottsville, Provo, Quitman, Rogers, Scott County, Sheridan, Siloam Springs, Springdale, St. Francis, Stone County, Subiaco, Sulphur Springs, Taylor, Valley Springs, Van Buren, Waldron, Wickes, Williford, Western Grove, Zinc

Often, the expulsion of African Americans was forced. Harrison, for example, had been a reasonably peaceful biracial town until the early 1890s. “There was never a large Negro population,” according to Boone County historian Ralph Rea, “probably never more than three or four hundred, but they had their church, their social life, and in the main there was little friction between them and the whites.” Then, in late September of 1905, a white mob stormed the jail, carried several black prisoners outside the town, whipped them, and ordered them to leave. The rioters then swept through Harrison’s black neighborhood, tying men to trees and whipping them, burning several homes, and warning all African Americans to leave that night. Most fled without any belongings. Three or four wealthy white families sheltered servants who stayed on, but in 1909, another mob tried to lynch a black prisoner. Fearing for their lives, most remaining African Americans left. Harrison remained a sundown town at least until 2002

SILOAM SPRINGS, ARKANSAS

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A good place to
Make a Living

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beautiful homes

A City of
Industrial Ac-
tivities

A City of
Healing Waters

A City of
Beautiful Parks

A City of
Real Hospitality

A City of
Many Springs



The City Owns
the
Water System
Electric Lights
Sewer System
All the Parks
Public Hall
Public Library
City Hospital
A Great Con-
vention City

No Malaria
No Mosquitoes
No Negroes

Cool Nights
Pleasant Days

THE MUNICIPAL BUILDING

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Include Siloam Springs, Arkansas, in your trip this Summer

WRITE ABOUT IT

History is full of unwritten chapters. People make unfortunate choices and do bad things. The writer of “Sundown Town” wrote the play after learning about the dark history of the town where he lives. He decided that it was important to address the historical event, and chose to do so in the form of a play.

Have you ever learned something about a friend or a family member that surprised you?

On a private sheet of paper, write about it.

What were the circumstances?

Did it change the way you thought about them?

Did it change the way that you interacted with them?

Write a speech that you would deliver to them to tell them how you feel.

In a play, the audience is allowed to see more than one point of view. All plays have conflict.

Use your speech to now create a scene where the other person speaks back to you.

Make sure that you allow their character the opportunity to explain their actions and opinions.

Allow both sides of the argument to be seen.

INTERVIEW WITH THE PLAYWRIGHT



KEVIN COHEA holds an M.F.A. in playwriting from the University of Arkansas, where he received the Carrie Hamilton Memorial Scholarship and was a member of the Arkansas Project led by Linda Bloodworth-Thomason. His writing credits include the plays *2A.M.*, *Strays*, *The Love Molecules*, *Scoop*, and the screenplays *The Grimoire*, *30 Minutes or Less*, *The Last Days of Winthorpe Vance* and an adaptation of the novel *Towing Jehovah*. As an actor, he has appeared in numerous productions from University Theatre and Not A Penny Productions, as well as *Moonlight and Magnolias* for TheatreSquared. He currently teaches English at Main Street Academy in Siloam Springs, Arkansas.

What gave you the idea to write a play about this topic?

I've been in the process of writing *Sundown Town* since the fall of 2008. I thought about the show and researched possible story subjects for a few months, while listening to hundreds of bluegrass, gospel, and "old timey music" songs. I began to do historical research (much of it online, using a great source: encyclopediaofarkansas.net). In doing research to pick an historical Arkansas story, I came across the concept of sundown towns having been present in Arkansas. A print advertisement for a town in Northwest Arkansas, from circa 1913, encouraged people to come visit this beautiful town. Amongst the selling points, according to the ad, the town had "natural beauty, cool days and pleasant nights, healing waters, no mosquitoes, no malaria, and no negroes." In the center of the advertisement was a picture of the building where the school that I work at holds its graduation ceremony. That was what motivated me to write about this subject.

How did you select the music to include?

The selection of the music consisted of listening to hundreds of bluegrass, gospel, and "old timey music" songs. My father was a dobro player in a bluegrass band and I grew up listening to bluegrass. So I had a good idea of songs I wanted to use from the bluegrass lexicon. I borrowed CD collections from my sister, David Pickens, and my own collection, as well as using the internet to find other songs (a great bluegrass and old timey website is [The ToneWay Project](http://TheToneWayProject.com)). I selected songs from across the genres that spanned hundreds of years to find songs that held together to tell a story. While a few songs have changed or been added as the script has changed, most of the songs from the original draft have remained.

In the play, you use racially inflammatory language. Why did you feel that you needed to include this language in the play?

As a playwright, it is my job to be honest to subject matter, story, and characters with which I am dealing. I do not use it gratuitously, I use it honestly as those characters would. I neither condone the use of that language, nor do I want to sweep under the rug the ugliness that is sometimes at the heart of some people. Even in 2011, we are far from where we should be in race relations. I still hear people use racist language and make racist comments on a daily basis. It may be that the brunt of such racism has shifted from African-Americans to Latino-Americans, but make no mistake: it still exists in vast quantities. Such language must be faced and accepted for the vulgar stain on our culture that it is.

Why do you think that Arkansans should be interested in seeing this play?

I think this play speaks not only to Arkansans, but to Americans everywhere. It shows a dark side of our history that many people would kindly rather just forget than to acknowledge it still exists. As far as Arkansans, there is something about the music and the heart of this show that feels very "Ozarkian." When I listen to this music, it feels like going home.

What impact do you hope the play has on its audience? How do you want people to leave the theatre ?

My hope for any audience member is to leave the theatre changed. Whether they've just seen a comedy, that brightens their spirits and puts them in a better mood, or whether it's been a powerful drama that makes them look at their own views on things and wonder about their state of being, a change is a change. There is a certain dislike of what is different, especially in some religious circles, that is downright hypocritical. This is one reason my play is partially set in the world of the church. My goal is that this script will help shed light on the idea of bigotry and intolerance and hatred of the "other", be that "other" another race, or nationality, or religion, or sexual orientation, or way of thinking.

WHAT'S THE STORY

Playwright Kevin Cohea wrote "Sundown Town" after selecting the songs that he wanted to use. Divide students into small groups. Have them imagine that they've purchased the rights to several songs and they will be creating a play with music.

1.) First have students select a "story song" that establishes characters and a conflict. Examples include:

A Boy Named Sue by Johnny Cash
Coward of the County by Kenny Rogers
Come Dancing by the Kinks
The Last Time I Saw Richard by Joni Mitchell
Harper Valley PTA by Jeannie Riley
In The Ghetto by Elvis Presley
Cat's in the Hat by James Taylor
Alice's Restaurant by Arlo Guthrie

Many musicals are based on true events in History. Help students select a period of history in which they can imagine placing the story from their selected song. They will be creating a musical with 5 songs (including their story song) that will be set in a historic period. Explain that they can use facts from history as well as their imagination to help tell their story.

2.) Allow for some time for groups to research the historical period, as they will want to include historically accurate information to give their play credibility. In their research, as students to consider what were the most important things about this time period. What are the important who, what, where, when and whys?

3) Now have groups work together to determine how they will adapt the story.

- o What characters will need to be in your musical?
- o What new scenes will need to be included complete the story?
- o Is there anything that you will leave out?
- o When will the scenes occur?
- o What scenes will be spoken and which will be sung?
- o What other songs will you use? Remember that you can change the meaning of some songs by using them in a new context. Not all of the songs in "Sundown Town" were written before the play is set. Some were written much more recently, but they feel authentic because of how well they fit in the story. Experiment with some of your favorite songs. How can they help tell your story?
- o What will your musical be called?

4.) Now have students organize their scenes in the order that they will appear in their musical. Which scenes will be shown through songs and which will be performed as dialogue?

5.) Have students cast the roles with popular actors and prepare a poster to advertise their show, or continue on in the writing process to create dialogue, rehearse and perform their piece.

Study Guide
materials created by
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TheatreSquared
northwest arkansas' professional theatre company



Suggested Reading

Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension in American Racism
by James Loewen
2005, The New Press

Like Judgement Day
by Michael D'Orso
1996, Putnam's

Buried in Bitter Waters: The Hidden History of Racial
Cleansing in America
by Eliot Jaspin
2007, Basic Books

The Fanatics
by Paul Lawrence Dunbar
1901, General Books

Gentleman's Agreement
by Laura Hobson
1942, Simon and Schuster

Forsaking All Others: A True Story of Interracial Sex and
Revenge in the 1880s South
by Charles Robinson
2011, University of Tennessee Press

Dangerous Liaisons: Sex and Love in the Segregated South
by Charles Robinson
2003, University of Arkansas Press

Behind These Ozark Hills
By Jessie Lewis Russell
1947, Hobson Book Press

Online Resources for Further Research:

www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net
www.springdaleark.org/shiloh/
www.pbs.org/independentlens/banished/harrison.html
www.3pennyacre.com