

STUDY GUIDE: STUDENTS & EDUCATORS

**BETWEEN
RIVERSIDE**

AND

CRAZY



Director of Education
HEATHER BAIRD

Education Associate
TYLER EASTER

Education Coordinator
FRAN TARR

Between Riverside and Crazy
written by
STEPHEN ADLY GUIRGIS

Between Riverside and Crazy
directed by
AUSTIN PENDLETON



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Atlantic Theater Company, Atlantic Acting School



*Stephen McKinley Henderson
(Photo: Kevin Thomas Garcia)*

SECTION 1: THE PLAY

SYNOPSIS

City Hall is demanding more than his signature, the Landlord wants him out, the liquor store is closed — and the Church won't leave him alone. For ex-cop & recent widower Walter "Pops" Washington and his recently paroled son, Junior, when the struggle to hold on to one of the last great rent stabilized apartments on Riverside Drive collides with old wounds, sketchy new houseguests, and a final ultimatum, it seems the Old Days are dead and gone. After a lifetime of living between Riverside and Crazy, will Pops survive physically and emotionally?

CHARACTERS

Walter "Pops" Washington: An ex-cop and recent widower.

Junior: Pops' recently paroled son.

Lulu: Junior's girlfriend.

Oswaldo: Junior's friend.

Lieutenant Caro: Pop's ex-colleague.

Detective O'Connor: Caro's fiancée.

Church Lady

SETTING

Modern day Manhattan.



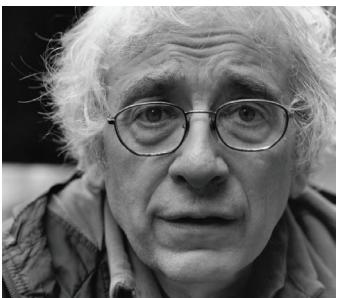
*Stephen McKinley Henderson & Ray Anthony Thomas
(Photo: Kevin Thomas Garcia)*

SECTION 2: CAST & CREATIVE



STEPHEN ADLY GUIRGIS (*Playwright*)

Stephen Adly Guirgis is a member and former co-artistic director of LAByrrinth Theater Company. His plays have been produced on five continents and throughout the United States. They include *Our Lady of 121st Street* (Drama Desk, Lucille Lortel, Outer Critics Circle Best Play Nominations), *Jesus Hopped the 'A' Train* (Edinburgh Festival Fringe First Award, Barrymore Award, Olivier Nomination for London's Best New Play), *In Arabia, We'd All Be Kings* (2007 LA Drama Critics Best Play, Best Writing Award), *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* (10 best Time Magazine & Entertainment Weekly), and *The Little Flower of East Orange* (with Ellen Burstyn & Michael Shannon). All five plays were directed by Philip Seymour Hoffman and were originally produced by LAByrrinth. His most recent play, *The Motherf***er with the Hat* (6 Tony nominations, including Best Play), was directed by Anna D. Shapiro and marked his third consecutive world premiere co-production with The Public Theater and LAByrrinth. He has received the Yale Wyndham-Campbell Prize, a PEN/Laura Pels Award, a Whiting Award, and a TCG fellowship. He is also a New Dramatists Alumnae and a member of MCC's Playwright's Coalition, The Ojai Playwrights Festival, New River Dramatists, and LAByrrinth Theater Company. As an actor, he has appeared in theater, film and television, including roles in Kenneth Lonergan's film *Margaret*, Todd Solondz's *Palindromes*, and Brett C. Leonard's *Jailbait* opposite Michael Pitt. A former violence prevention specialist and H.I.V. educator, he lives in New York City.



AUSTIN PENDLETON (*Director*)

Austin Pendleton was last represented as a director in New York by the production at 59E59 of *Gideon's Knot*, by Johnna Adams, with Karen Leiner and Dara O'Brien. Other recent New York productions have been at CSC: *Ivanov* (with Ethan Hawke and Joely Richardson, among many others), *Three Sisters* (with Maggie Gyllenhall, Peter Sarsgaard, Jessica Hecht, Juliet Rylance, Josh Hamilton and Marin Ireland, among many others), and *Uncle Vanya* (with Denis O'Hare, Mamie Gummer, George Morfogen and Louis Zorich, among yet many others). This winter he will direct *Hamlet* at CSC, with Peter Sarsgaard, and appear at the Public Theater in *Straight White Men*, by Young Jean Lee. He has also directed (and acted) extensively with Mississippi Mud, working with Jen Danby, most recently in *SeaGull69*; and at Mother of Invention, working with Gina Stahlnecker, most recently in *Look Homeward, Angel*. He is a member (as actor, director, and playwright) of the Ensemble at Chicago's Steppenwolf Theatre, and directed *Tribes*, by Nina Raine, there. He has acted and directed extensively on and Off-Broadway, on TV, and in about 150 movies. He has written several plays (*Orson's Shadow*, *Uncle Bob*, *Booth*), all published, and produced in NY and around the country and the world. He also wrote the libretto for the musical *A Minister's Wife*, produced at Lincoln Center.

SECTION 2: CAST & CREATIVE



VICTOR ALMANZAR (*Oswaldo*)

Victor Almanzar is a native of the Dominican Republic, and longtime resident of Queens, New York. He has performed in productions throughout New York City, at venues including Center Stage New York, Repertorio Español, Aaron Davis Hall, and as part of LAByrnth Theater Company's NYNY Festival. He is currently pursuing a Masters of Fine Arts degree at the Actors Studio Drama School at Pace University. In the fall, he will be starring in the feature film *11:55 Holyoke*.



ELIZABETH CANAVAN (*Detective O'Connor*)

Elizabeth Canavan has appeared in *The Little Flower of East Orange* at The Public Theater, *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* at The Public Theater, *Our Lady of 121st Street* at The Union Square Theater, *Jesus Hopped the 'A' Train* (NY and London), all by Stephen Adly Guirgis and directed by Philip Seymour Hoffman; *Black Lace* by John Patrick Shanley, *Seven* at USC Visions and Voices, *Love Sick* by Kristina Poe, *Thinner Than Water* by Melissa Ross, Philip Roth in *Khartoum* by David Bar Katz, *Penalties and Interest* by Rebecca Cohen, Eugene O'Neill Playwrights Conference, The 52nd Street Project, Summer Play Festival. TV: "Law and Order," "Law and Order: SVU," "Sex And The City."



ROSAL COLÓN (*Lulu*)

Broadway: *A Free Man of Color* (Lincoln Center) directed by George C. Wolfe, *The Motherf**er with the Hat* directed by Anna D. Shapiro. Off-Broadway: *Much Ado About Nothing* (The Public) directed by Kwame Kwei-Armah, *Basilica* (Rattlestick at the Cherry Lane) directed by Jerry Ruiz, *Ninth and Joanie* (LAByrnth Theater Company) directed by Mark Wing-Davey, *Dancing in My Cockroach Killers* (Pregones/PRTT) directed by Rosalba Rolón. Feature film: *The House That Jack Built*. TV: "Law and Order: SVU." She is a proud member of The LAByrnth Theater Company and Pregones Theater, Fiorello H. LaGuardia H.S. and SUNY Purchase College.



LIZA COLÓN-ZAYAS (*Church Lady*)

Liza Colón-Zayas has been a member of the LAByrnth Theater Company in New York City 1992 and the Sundance Theater Ensemble 2012. She appeared in the original productions of *In Arabia*, *We'd All Be Kings*, *Our Lady of 121st Street*, *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot*, and *The Little Flower of East Orange*, all directed by Philip Seymour Hoffman and written by Stephen Adly Guirgis. She originated the role of Odessa in the 2012 Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Water by the Spoonful* by Quiara Hudes, earning a 2012 Connecticut Critics Circle Nomination for Best Ensemble. She reprised the role at Second Stage New York. Liza toured Europe with director Peter Sellars in *Story of a Soldier*, and later in *Othello* as Emilia, opposite Philip Seymour Hoffman. She starred in Athol Fugard's latest play *Have You Seen Us?* opposite Sam Waterston, and received a Connecticut Critics Circle Nomination. She also received a Lucille Lortel nomination for her performance in the NYC premiere of *Living Out* at Second Stage. Her solo show *Sistah Supreme* had a summer long run at the First Hip-Hop Theater Festival, produced by world renowned performance artist Danny Hoch and directed/developed by playwright Stephen Adly Guirgis. Some screen credits include "Hung" (HBO), "Louie" (FX), "Dexter" (Showtime), "How to Make It in America" (HBO), "Nurse Jackie" (Showtime), "Taking Chance" (HBO), "House" (FOX), "Law and Order," "Law and Order: SVU" (NBC).

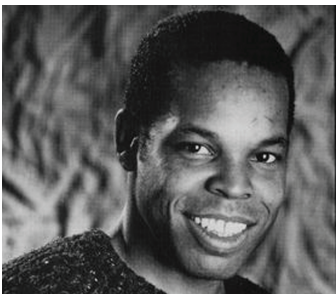
SECTION 2: CAST & CREATIVE

**STEPHEN MCKINLEY HENDERSON (*Pops*)**

Stephen McKinley Henderson was recently in the Tony winning revival of *A Raisin in the Sun*. In 2012 he received a Tony Nomination and the Richard Seff Award for his performance as Bono in August Wilson's *Fences*. Off-Broadway he was a member of Mr. Wilson's celebrated *Jitney* ensemble (2002 Olivier Award for Outstanding Drama). Last year he was Ruben Santiago Hudson's Associate Artistic Director for WNYC's audio recordings of Mr. Wilson's entire Century Cycle. Other theatre credits include *The Last Days of Judas Iscariot* (The Public Theater) and *Death of a Salesman* (Yale Rep). Film and TV credits include *Lincoln*, *Tower Heist*, *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, *Red Hook Summer* and HBO's "The Newsroom."

**MICHAEL RISPOLI (*Lieutenant Caro*)**

Selected film: *Rob the Mob* opposite Andy Garcia, Michael Bay's *Pain & Gain*, *The Rum Diary* with Johnny Depp, *The Taking of Pelham 123*, directed by Tony Scott, and *Kick-Ass*, produced by Brad Pitt's Plan B. He received a Best Actor Award at the Verona Film Festival for his work in Raymond DeFellitta's film *Two Family House*. Upcoming: *Friends and Romans* with Annabella Sciorra, (also co-writer and executive producer). Selected TV: Jackie Aprile in "The Sopranos," "Those Who Kill" (A&E), "Magic City" (STARZ), Jimmy Breslin in "The Bronx is Burning," "Person of Interest," "Blue Bloods," "CSI: Crime Scene Investigation," "Law and Order," "Law and Order: Criminal Intent," and "Law and Order: SVU." Theater: Circle Rep/Steppenwolf revival of *Balm in Gilead*, directed by John Malkovich, *Magic Hands Freddy*, *Macbeth*, *Tartuffe*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and O'Neill's *Sea Plays*. Co-founder of the Willow Cabin Theatre Company, which staged a production of *Wilder, Wilder, Wilder – Three* by Thornton that moved to off-Broadway and then to Broadway, earning a Tony nomination.

**RAY ANTHONY THOMAS (*Junior*)**

As a member of the Atlantic Theater Company: *Human Error*, *The Beginning of August*, *The Lights*, *Edmond*, and *Distant Fires*. Broadway: David Mamet's *Race*. Off-Broadway: *The Most Deserving* (The Women's Project), *Volunteer Man* (OBIE award, Rattlestick), *Kindness* (Playwrights Horizons), *The Exonerated*, *Saved or Destroyed*, *Black Eagles* (MTC), and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Public). Regional theater favorites include: the original company of *Water by the Spoonful* (2012 Pulitzer Prize and Connecticut Critics Circle Award for best ensemble) at Hartford Stage, *Glengarry Glen Ross* (La Jolla), 'Proctor' in *The Crucible* (Syracuse Stage), *Master Harold... and the Boys* (Westport), *Top Dog/Underdog* (Pittsburgh), *A. M. Sunday* (Louisville), *Fences* (Philadelphia-Barrymore nomination), *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Detroit Free Press Award, supporting actor). Ray has worked in seven of August Wilson's ten-play cycle and in *Fences* and *Jitney* for NPR's August Wilson's Century Cycle. TV and Film include: "Rescue Me," "The Sopranos," "Oz," "Law and Order," "I'll Fly Away" (Emmy Consideration), *Trouble with the Curve*, *Shutter Island*, *Pariah*, *Sleepwalk with Me*, *Manchurian Candidate*, and *Changing Lanes*.

SECTION 3: YOUR STUDENTS AS AUDIENCE

“Plays should tell simple, honest stories.”

- David Mamet, American playwright
& noted actor, William H. Macy,
founders of Atlantic Theater Company

The following activities will assist your students in understanding the intentions of the playwright in telling a simple story.

TEACHER OBJECTIVE

To introduce students to the characters, setting, and story of *Between Riverside and Crazy*.

STUDENT GOAL

To understand that actors, working together, will simply and truthfully create the story of the play.



Stephen McKinley Henderson & Rosal Colón
(Photo: Kevin Thomas Garcia)

THEATER VOCABULARY

TEACHER OBJECTIVE

To be able to discuss theater through a common, shared vocabulary.

STUDENT GOAL

To understand that the most effective way to discuss theater and new ideas is through a shared vocabulary.



Liza Colón-Zayas
(Photo: Kevin Thomas Garcia)

Action The events that move along the story of the play and which influence the characters within the play.

Characters Individuals the audience learns about from their actions and reactions.

Ensemble A group of performers working together to create a complete production.

Dialogue The exchange of speech between two characters which reveals the feelings of the character as well as the story of the play.

Monologue A speech by one actor on stage which is intended to reveal the inner thoughts of the character the actor plays.

Character Arc The change produced in a character by the events and other characters in the play.

Mood The overall feeling the play evokes.

Costume The clothes, boots, etc., worn by the actors based on their character.

Prop Objects used by an actor to enhance their character. For example, wine glasses at a bar for drinks.

Set The constructed environment of a play within which the action takes place.

Lighting The mood created by the way in which the lights on set are used.

Sound Noises and music used in the play.

WEBBING & DISCUSSION TRIGGERS

TEACHER OBJECTIVE

To develop critical thinking skills through examining the themes in *Between Riverside and Crazy*.

STUDENT GOAL

To understand that the story of the play relates to their own lives.

MATERIALS

Chalkboard, chalk, paper, pens, the webbing ideas and discussion triggers.

WEBBING IDEAS

Family relationships
Parenting
Loyalty
Personal vulnerability
Survival instinct

Environmental vulnerability
Financial vulnerability
Moral compass
Justice and fairness
Social demographics

DISCUSSION TRIGGER

Why do people make the choices they make, even if they know they are morally wrong?

"I am not the product of my circumstances. I am the product of my choices." - Stephen Covey

Using the above quote as a critical lens, write your personal definition of moral compass.

Step One

Write the Webbing Ideas on the chalkboard.

Step Two

Have each student add their impressions of the meaning of one of these concepts on the board, and how it relates to their own experiences.

Step Three

Use the students' responses to focus on how unique each student's perception is of these concepts. Why is this true?

Step Four

Ask the students to discuss how their moral compass plays out in their own lives. i.e. with their families, with their friends and peers, in their workplace or school.

RELATING THEMES TO OUR OWN LIVES

TEACHER OBJECTIVE

Warm-up students to develop their Critical Thinking skills as well as expand their ability to take ownership of their individual points of view.

STUDENT GOAL

To understand that an individual's personal opinion or point of view does not define them as a person. It is simply a window into understanding them as a free thinker.

SPATIAL ORGANIZATION

Clear open space. One side of the room is "Completely Agree" and the opposite side is "Completely Disagree."

Step One

Instructor indicates each side of the room to the students.

Step Two

Instructor will read statements to the students. These are some possible statements:

- I have seen a play.
- Plays always have happy endings.
- Plays are an accurate portrayal of real life.
- I believe violence is always wrong.
- People should follow all the laws, even if they disagree with them.
- People who have money have the right to do whatever they want.
- Personal security can justify any decision, even if it is morally wrong.
- People should do whatever it takes to feel secure.
- Security is more important than morals.

Step Three

When the instructor reads a statement, students move to either side of the spectrum or anywhere along it. Try to encourage students not to be 100% neutral.

Step Four

After each statement is read and the students move, the instructor should ask certain students to justify their position on the spectrum. The instructor can allow this to spark conversation, or can simply move on to the next statement.

Step Five

After the exercise, in reflection, the instructor can ask the students: "Based on the statements, what themes do you think this show may explore?"

SECTION 4: YOUR STUDENTS AS ACTORS

*“Actors should remain truthful to the story
and their character.”*

**- David Mamet, American playwright
& noted actor, William H. Macy,
founders of Atlantic Theater Company**

The following activities are designed to assist your students in understanding the actor’s “job.” Like every job, even acting has its “tools.”

The Practical Aesthetics acting technique was developed by David Mamet, William H. Macy and the founding members of the Atlantic Theater Company. This technique offers the actor a set of analytical tools to understand the playwright’s intentions and what the characters want. This process of script analysis additionally helps define the actor’s job on stage.



*Elizabeth Canavan & Michael Rispoli
(Photo: Kevin Thomas Garcia)*

WARM UP GAME: EMOTIONAL MUCH?

TEACHER OBJECTIVE

To demonstrate that manipulating a real life person's body language, gestures and attitude are tools for building acting techniques.

STUDENT GOAL

To understand that conveying a real life individual's body language, gesture and attitude leads to developing a nuanced archetypal onstage character.

MATERIALS

A small space for acting.

(For 4 to 6 actors [or more] 1 teacher as the facilitator, calling out the different emotions.)

Step One

Students should spread throughout the space. Find a spot for Emotion #1 (Sadness) and strike a pose — something that embodies the emotion. Hold for 10 seconds (or as long as teacher deems fit). Encourage students to let the emotion develop in them.

Step Two

Break away from spot and walk in space. Find a spot for Emotion #2 (Power) and strike pose. Hold for 10 seconds.

Step Three

Repeat steps with different emotions (i.e. Anger, Jealousy, Happiness) As the game continues, the time gap between each emotion should be shortened. Have students move from spot 1 to 2 and strike pose almost immediately.

Step Four

The teacher should then repeat the emotions (i.e. “Go to your sadness spot!”). Students should go back to the same spot for the same emotion.

Step Five

If exercise was emotionally taxing, have students lie down in space and have a cool-down. Have them close their eyes and imagine themselves in a place that makes them feel happy, doing something that comforts them (i.e. “Having ice-cream while laying on the sand.”). The teacher should observe and end cool-down when students are back to neutral. OR end with a positive emotion (i.e. Happiness) and skip cool-down.

READING A SCENE FOR UNDERSTANDING

TEACHER OBJECTIVE

To introduce the Practical Aesthetics “tools” for breaking down a scene. To understand the character and the story of the scene by relating the character’s actions to the student’s own life.

STUDENT GOAL

To understand that an important part of creating a simple, honest character involves knowing what that character “wants.”

MATERIALS

Pens, pencils, copies of the following scene from *Between Riverside and Crazy*, and copies of the Literal, Want, Action, As-If worksheet and/or Mini-Lesson.

PRACTICAL AESTHETICS EXERCISE

Step One

Divide the students in pairs. Ask the students to select which character they want to portray.

Step Two

Allow the students time to read the scene silently to themselves.

Step Three

Ask the students to read the Introduction to the Practical Aesthetic Acting Technique sheet. Have the students answer the four questions on the Scene Analysis Worksheet.

NOTE: The four questions and the students’ answers to them form the basis for the Practical Aesthetics scene analysis; and enables the actor to create a simple, honest character—they’re simply being honest to their own experiences!

Step Four

After the students have completed the question worksheet, ask each pair of actors to read the scene in the front of the class room for an “Audience.” The students should incorporate the ideas from the worksheet as they read the scene.



Stephen McKinley Henderson & Victor Almanzar
(Photo: Kevin Thomas Garcia)

READING A SCENE FOR UNDERSTANDING

A SCENE FROM *BETWEEN RIVERSIDE AND CRAZY*

Oswaldo enters, he is drunk

Oswaldo Hey, dad, I missed dinner -- but I brought you, where is that shit, I brought you -- yo, I think I left it on the bus --

Pops Is that you, Oswaldo?

Oswaldo Yeah, it's --

Oswaldo throws up on the living room floor.

Oh man. Sorry about that.

Pops You eat something bad, Oswaldo? Some bad fish maybe?

Oswaldo I saw my father tonight, my real father. In the Bronx. I told you that before, right? He told me I was no good. He told me I was a arrogant, petty fuck. He told me I was a bad fuckin' person. He told me I was a weak addict just circling the drain, then he told me get the fuck out and don't ever come back -- can you believe that, Dad? He hit me in my face -- see? He told me I was a first class Piece of Shit of the Highest Order. I don't think that was right -- do you, Dad?

Pops Nah, Oswaldo -- that ain't right at all.

Oswaldo Then he took my Black Rhino Claw Hammer with the ergonomics and shit that I gave him -- I mean, I don't even know -- I just fuckin ran -- you know?

Pops Oswaldo? Oswaldo -- are you drunk, Oswaldo?

Oswaldo

Anyway. I'm thinking about calling an escort service, Dad -- whatchu think about that?

Pops Oswaldo, sit your ass down --

Oswaldo They got these services now, you can get rock AND a woman, one stop shopping. I just need a few hundred bucks -- I could borrow that from you, right?

Pops Oswaldo, what's got into you?!

Oswaldo Lemme just hold your credit card for a minute.

Pops Hey! Now you Sit your ass down.

Oswaldo Your credit card. Lemme get it.

Pops Hey now! I ain't gonna tell you again --

Oswaldo pushes Pop down

Oswaldo Don't be like my real dad, Dad --

Pops Oswaldo --

Oswaldo Nah man -- just gimme your fuckin credit card!

Pops But it's me, Oswaldo --

Oswaldo Credit Card, Dad! Credit card! Credit card! Credit card! Credit -- or Debit!

PRACTICAL AESTHETICS INTRODUCTION

ANALYSIS

SCRIPT ANALYSIS is the process of breaking down a beat within a scene. We ask four questions in order to do this.

1. What is the character LITERALLY doing?
2. What does the character WANT?
3. What is the essential ACTION?
4. What is that action like to me? It is AS-IF...

Literal

In this step, the actor determines what the character he or she is playing is literally doing according to the text.

PURPOSE: An actor has to travel far—think of this preparation as the road map.

Want

In this step, the actor identifies the goal of the character in the scene, specifically what the character wants from the other character/s in the scene. The given circumstances of the story inform the WANT.

PURPOSE: To focus the actor on the characters' interaction.

Action

Playing an ACTION is the physical pursuit of a goal. Defining the ACTION of the scene allows the actor to determine what result or CAP he or she is looking for from the other actor/s in the scene.

EXAMPLES:

- Put someone in their place.
- Beg someone for forgiveness.
- Get a favor.
- Get someone to let me off the hook.
- Force someone to face the facts.
- Inspire someone to greatness.
- Get someone to see the light.

PURPOSE: Using an action gives the actor a task and a specific point of view. The Atlantic Theater Company teaches that the Action creates character.



Ray Anthony Thomas & Liza Colón-Zayas
(Photo: Kevin Thomas Garcia)

As-If

In this step, the actor personalizes the action by finding a real-life situation in which they would behave according to the action they have chosen for the scene.

EXAMPLE: Get a favor.

It's AS-IF I forgot to do my science homework and I'm asking my teacher for an extra day to hand it in.

PURPOSE: To gain personal insight and urgency to the scene or beat.

Tactics & Tools

Different ways an actor goes about getting his action.

EXAMPLE: Plead, flirt, demand, inspire, challenge, level, threaten.

Living In The Moment

Reacting impulsively to what the other actor in the scene is doing, from the point of view of the chosen action.

SCENE ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

IF YOU'RE PLAYING POPS

Here are your “tools” for understanding your character:

What is my character literally doing?

As an example you might say, Pops is literally talking to Oswaldo about Oswaldo’s current physical and mental condition.

Now can you think of another idea of what Pops is literally doing?

What does my character want?

As an example you might say, Pops wants Oswaldo to realize he is not thinking with a clear head.

What is the action I’m going to play?

As an example you might say, “To get someone to see an obvious truth.”

The As-if

Now can you remember a time in your own life when you needed to get someone to do see an obvious truth? For example: “It’s as if I needed my best friend to realize that the person they want to go to the prom with has no interest in them.”

IF YOU'RE PLAYING OSWALDO

Here are your “tools” for understanding your character:

What is my character literally doing?

As an example you might say, Oswaldo is literally talking to Pops about what the order of events in this night.

Now can you think of another idea of what Oswaldo is literally doing?

What does my character want?

As an example you might say, Oswaldo wants Pops to understand he needs money from him to make everything better.

What is the action I’m going to play?

As an example you might say, “To get someone to put their faith in me.”

The As-if

Now can you remember a time in your own life when you needed to get someone to believe in you? For example: “It’s as if I was transferring to a new school and wanted my BFF to know it would not change the closeness of our friendship.”

MINI-LESSON VOCABULARY

KEY VOCABULARY

Literal

The process of accessing the basic story-line of the characters in a particular scene or beat.

Want

The process of identifying the goal of the character in a scene or beat.

Action

The actor's physical pursuit of a specific goal.

As-If

A way to determine what this action means to me.

HANDY TOOL KIT FOR THE ACTOR

Acting Tactics & Tools

To Use In The As-If Step

- Laughing to get what you want
- Teasing to get what you want
- Testing to get what you want
- Threatening to get what you want
- Pleading to get what you want
- Flirting to get what you want
- Bartering to get what you want
- Bribing to get what you want
- Begging to get what you want
- Crying to get what you want
- Demanding to get what you want
- Leveling to get what you want
- Inspiring to get what you want
- Challenging to get what you want

SECTION 5: YOUR STUDENTS AS ARTISTS

“Create your own work.”

**- David Mamet, American playwright
& noted actor, William H. Macy,
founders of Atlantic Theater Company**

The following activities will assist your students in understanding themselves as artists creating original work that connects with their own experiences and world.



*Stephen McKinley Henderson
(Photo: Kevin Thomas Garcia)*

CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL CONTEXT ACTIVITY

TEACHER OBJECTIVE

To develop Critical Thinking skills through examining the context of *Between Riverside and Crazy* and how to relate that research to the play.

STUDENT GOAL

To understand this historical context of *Between Riverside and Crazy* and how it informs the truths and messages of the play.

To research different aspects of the given circumstances of this play and the playwright.

Step One

Split students up so they each research only one of the following areas:

- Effects of homelessness in New York City
- Rehabilitation for young men and women, aged 16-23
- Stephen Adly Guirgis as social gentrification commentator

Step Two

Students research each topic individually. Research is due in a tangible visual/interactive format. It does not have to be too extensive.

Step Three

Bring all the students on each topic into groups and give them 20-30 minutes to set up an “exhibit,” like in a museum, of their combined research. Give them objects to encourage creativity, such as tape, string, scissors, tin foil, giant paper, markers, etc.



Stephen McKinley Henderson, Elizabeth Canavan, Michael Rispoli, Rosal Colón & Ray Anthony Thomas (Photo: Kevin Thomas Garcia)

CREATE YOUR OWN WORK - FOLLOW UP

MUSEUM

Once all the exhibits are in place, students can walk around and learn from the different exhibits. If it's possible to leave exhibits in place, you can leave them up for the rest of the study on *Between Riverside and Crazy* and add to/continually discuss what students learned from their museum.

DISCUSSION

- How might the context inform *Between Riverside and Crazy*?
- Why do you think Guirgis wrote *Between Riverside and Crazy*?

DRAMATURGICAL DISCUSSION

- What do you think the dramaturg's job is?
- How would you separate the responsibilities of creating a production between the dramaturg, director and playwright?

MAKE YOUR OWN PLAY

Step One

Separate students into groups of 3. One student within each group should be dramaturg, director, or playwright.

Step Two

Brainstorm locations and time periods, and then randomly assign one of each to each group. It is then up to the dramaturg to find out a few prominent facts about that time and place, and report it back to the playwright and director.

Step Three

The playwright should then write just a one page play within that setting with two characters.

Step Four

The director then has control of the play, and the dramaturges/playwrights should act in a different director's play. The director should stage & lead discussion with his/her two actors.

Step Five

Each group should present to the class. This can be a process over one or two lessons, or one or two weeks, depending on how extensive and final the performances are expected to be.

POST-THEATER DISCUSSION

TEACHER OBJECTIVE

To develop critical thinking skills and emotional literacy through examining the characters in *Between Riverside and Crazy* and how they relate to a student's own experiences.

STUDENT GOAL

To understand connecting the vivid details of an artistic experience to one's own point of view stimulates individual imagination and confidence.

MATERIALS

Pencils, pens, writing paper, chalkboard.

TEACHER OBJECTIVE

To develop critical thinking skills by challenging the plot of *Between Riverside and Crazy*.

STUDENT GOAL

To understand that examining a story backwards, you can see that each event was caused by something that happened prior, but by examining it forwards, there is no way of knowing what can happen.

MATERIALS

Pencils, pens, writing paper.

Step One

Write the names of all the characters on the board and go through them with the students so they remember who is who.

Step Two

Instruct students to write a letter as if they are one of the characters. They should take on the persona of another character (i.e Pops explains why he wants the engagement ring).

Step Three

Encourage students to ask questions, to offer advice, to share their true feelings about that character's choices, etc. Really allow students to think freely.

Option One

Each student writes their own alternate ending, starting from right before the coronation.

Option Two

In groups of 3 or 4, students improvise an alternate ending, starting from right before the coronation. Students should pick which characters they are playing before jumping into the scene.

COMMON CORE & DOE THEATER BLUEPRINT

ENDURING UNDERSTANDING

Theater conveys a moral compass for its audience.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

Of the characters in *Between Riverside and Crazy*, who best illustrates a positive moral compass & why?

Does the direction & staging reinforce the moral compass or lack thereof of each character. Provide 2 examples.

Do you accept the morality assigned to each character by the playwright and/or director?

STRAND BENCHMARKS

Theater Making: Acting

BENCHMARK: Students increase their ability as imaginative actors while continuing to participate as collaborative ensemble members. Students demonstrate the ability to reflect on and think critically about their own work.

Theater Making: Playwriting/Play Making

BENCHMARK: Students refine their ability as playwrights to express point of view and personal vision.

Developing Theater Literacy

BENCHMARK: Students develop skills as critics by analyzing the critical writings of others.

Making Connections Through Theater

BENCHMARK: Students demonstrate a capacity for deep personal connection to theater and a realization of the meaning and messages of theater.

Working with Community and Cultural Resources

BENCHMARK: Students invigorate and broaden their understanding of theater through collaborative partnerships with theater professionals.

SECTION 6: THE ATLANTIC LEGACY

ATLANTIC THEATER COMPANY & ATLANTIC ACTING SCHOOL

76 Ninth Avenue, Suite 537, New York, NY, 10011
Phone: 212-691-5919

atlantictheater.org
atlanticactingschool.org

LINDA GROSS THEATER

336 West 20th Street, New York, NY, 10011

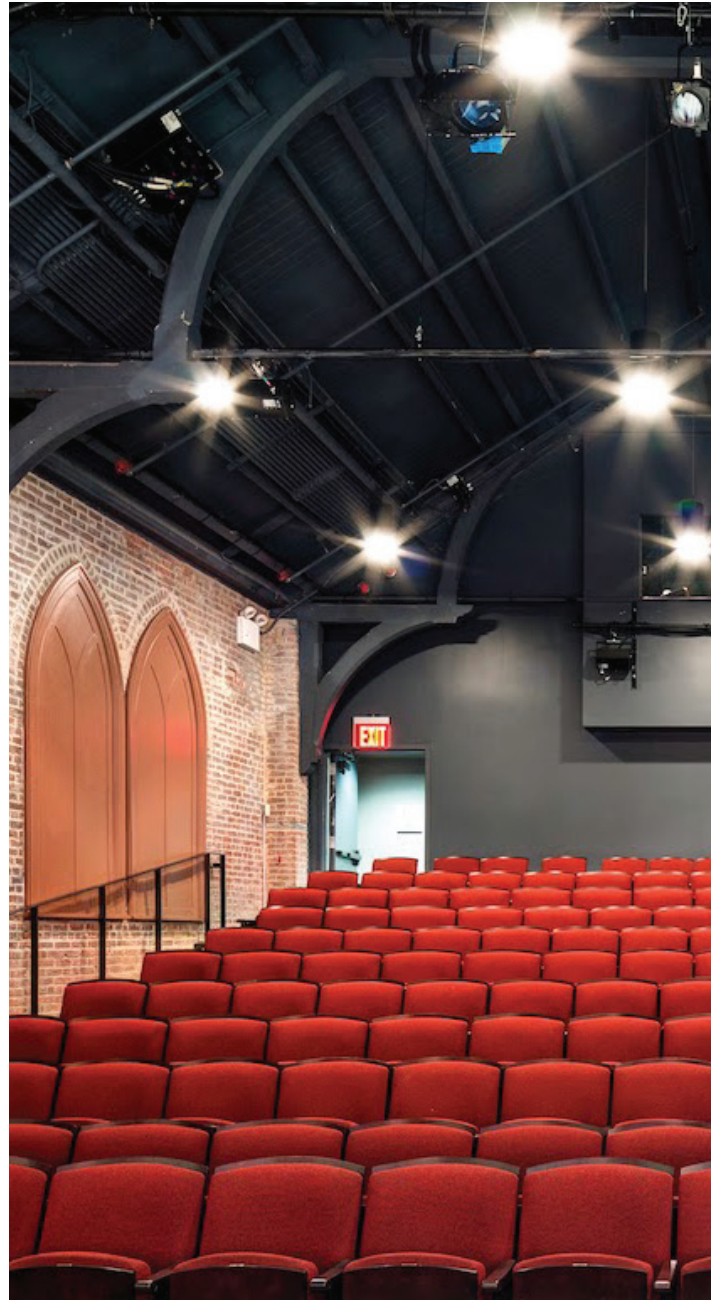
ATLANTIC STAGE 2

330 West 16th Street, New York, NY, 10011

Inspired by the Group Theater, Stanislavsky, and a passion for ensemble acting, David Mamet and William H. Macy formed the Atlantic Theater Company with a select group of New York University Undergraduate drama students. Since its inception in 1985, Atlantic has produced more than 100 plays and garnered numerous awards, including: 12 Tony Awards, 11 Lucille Lortel Awards, 15 OBIE Awards, five Outer Critics Circle Awards, seven Drama Desk Awards, and three Drama League Awards. Noted productions include: *Spring Awakening*, *Port Authority*, *The Lieutenant of Inishmore*, *The Beauty Queen of Leenane*, *Boy's Life*, and *American Buffalo*.

The Atlantic Theater Company's mission is to produce plays simply and truthfully, utilizing an artistic ensemble. Atlantic believes that the story of the play and the intent of its playwright are at the core of a successful theatrical production.

The Atlantic Acting School fosters new generations of actors by passing on the tools learned from Mamet and Macy and by preparing students for all aspects of a career in film, television and theater. The Atlantic offers studies through New York University, a full time conservatory program, part-time programs and summer workshops. Atlantic for Kids offers acting classes in an after school setting as well as summer programs for children ages 4 to 18.



Interior of the Linda Gross Theater