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Dramatic Publishing

Shame the Devil! An Audience With Fanny Kemble

Looking for Roberto Clemente

Black Elk Speaks

The Face of Emmett Till

Radium Girls

columbinus

The Rememberer

On the Line

Jackie & Me

Stand and Deliver

Phillis: A Life of Phillis Wheatley

Keeping Mr. Lincoln

Indian Captive

Freedom Is My Middle Name

Across the Plains: The Journey of the Palace Wagon Family

Amelia Lives

A Midnight Cry: The Underground Railroad to Freedom

Walking Toward America

Ev'ry Time I Feel the Spirit

Free Man of Color

Looking Over the President's Shoulder

The Radiance of a Thousand Suns: The Hiroshima Project

The Love Song of J. Robert Oppenheimer

Sounds of Silents (The Essay Years)

In the Garden of Live Flowers: A Fantasia on the Life and Work of Rachel Carson

American Heartbeat: True Stories Told in Scenes and Monologues

Compiled and edited
by Sandra Fenichel Asher

American Heartbeat:

True Stories Told in Scenes and Monologues

American history is rich and varied, and playwrights have long mined its treasures to create inspired and inspiring pieces for the stage. This anthology brings together 32 monologues, duets and trios culled from outstanding Dramatic Publishing scripts and perfect for auditions, scene work, full-evening presentations and drama-across-the-curriculum projects of all kinds.

Written by Sandra Fenichel Asher, David Barr III, Robert Bella, Joyce Simmons Cheeka, Charlotte P. Chorpenning, Lynne Conner, James DeVita, Steven Dietz, Atilio Favorini, Werdna Phillips Finley, D.W. Gregory, Dan Gutman, Lee Hunkins, Stephen Karam, Carol Korty, Carson Kreitzer, Anne Ludlum, Anne V. McGravie, Ramón Menéndez, Tom Musca, John Neihardt, Martha Hill Newell, Dwight Okita, PJ Paparelli, Nicholas A. Patricca, Paul Peditto, Christopher Sergel, Laura Annawyn Shamas, Charles Smith, James Still, Mamie Till-Mobley, Ilga Katais-Paelis Vise, Deborah Wicks La Puma, Karen Zacarías and David Zak. Compiled and edited by Sandra Fenichel Asher.

Here, pioneers cross the plains under dire circumstances, Native Americans struggle to maintain their culture as their homelands disappear, a Shakespearean actress defies her slave-holding husband, stars rise in the fledgling film industry, factory workers fight for their rights, a woman flies solo across the Atlantic, the atom bomb takes its toll on the world and on its inventors, athletes break records and break down barriers, an ailing author battles corporate censorship to warn of a “silent spring,” a grieving mother seeks justice for her murdered son, one high-school teacher makes a desperate call to a 911 dispatcher and another leads his students to excellence beyond all expectations. And there’s more! Important in their own times, these American stories brought to life by award-winning playwrights resonate in today’s world and provide unlimited opportunities for exploration, discussion and performance. *Code: AL2.*

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Carol Korty	Deborah Wicks La Puma
Carson Kreitzer	Karen Zacarías
Anne Ludlum	David Zak
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Sandra Fenichel Asher



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To Harvey Asher,
with love and gratitude for our shared history

American Heartbeat: True Stories Told in Scenes and Monologues

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Foreword

This anthology is aptly titled *American Heartbeat*. Collectively, it embodies the beating heart of the American individual rather than the public face of the national persona. America is a land of contrast and conflict; in short, it's a place where drama happens.

Historical drama gives a face to a name, a voice to a people, and a memorial to the honored dead. The scenes and monologues in this collection allow young people to see history through the eyes of those who lived it and to share that insight with their peers. By bringing these historical figures to life through reading and performance, these pieces can make the past immediate and compelling for students.

The scenes and monologues that Sandra Fenichel Asher has selected for *American Heartbeat* demonstrate a wide variety of subjects and an excellent balance of themes, periods and cultures. The anthology serves as a window not only to the extensive repertoire of historical plays published by Dramatic Publishing but also to the possibilities of exploring the richness of history through theatre and drama.

In Steven Dietz's award-winning dramatization of Dan Gutman's novel *Jackie & Me*, for instance, a young Caucasian sports fan is able to travel through time and space by holding the baseball card of the player he wants to encounter. Joey Stoshack decides to meet Jackie Robinson so he can write his required essay about a famous African American. However, when Joey works the magic, he gets more than he bargained for, as he finds himself living inside the life of a black bat-boy. From this vantage point, he not only witnesses the first African American player joining Major League Baseball but also experiences first-hand the discrimination that Robinson confronted.

By playing or reading a role in a play, students can likewise empathize with individuals from American history and experience the world through their eyes. History engages young people when they develop a kinship with a person who lived it, and reading, performing and watching historical scenes can help them to forge such links.

Staged Readings

While middle- or high-school drama students can be expected to memorize lines and physicalize their characterization, students in a social studies or history class might be better served by presenting staged readings of scenes in this collection.

To present staged readings, students would need to familiarize themselves with the lines and practice reading them aloud, but they wouldn't need to memorize them. Students could hold their scripts, or if they could rest them on a desk or music stand, they would be free to physicalize their characters with their postures and gestures, as well as facial expressions.

In a scene with multiple characters, readers could either look at one another, or look straight forward toward the audience, but say their lines as if speaking to the other actor(s) in the scene. In this manner, the audience can clearly see the expressive faces of the readers. All readers could stand, or they could use chairs or a table to align themselves in an appropriate stage picture. Consider having the readers create a tableau of the scene before they begin so the student audiences can better imagine what the action would look like on stage. Period costumes are not necessary for staged readings. Neutral-colored street clothes and binders containing the script may give the presentation a more polished look.

Student Research

The pieces in *American Heartbeat* feature a few historical individuals whose names would be familiar to almost every secondary school student, such as Abraham Lincoln and Jackie Robinson. Other historical characters were famous figures in their own day, such as poet Phillis Wheatley, actress Fannie Kemble and singer Marian Anderson, but are less well known today. However, the majority of historical characters in the collection will be introduced to readers and audience members through the plays themselves.

These lesser-known characters from American history can provide students with a personal connection that will motivate them to do their own research to discover more about these characters and the periods in which they lived. In *Jackie & Me*, Joey Stoshack has little interest, at first, in writing a report on a famous African American until he finds someone on the list of individuals suggested by his teacher who shared his passion for baseball. Likewise, other students who might have an interest in Native American history or the history of aviation might well be stimulated to read the role of Santee chief Little Crow or aviatrix Amelia Earhart and research that individual's life with interest and fervor.

The historical characters revealed in these plays are based on the playwrights' research of actual persons, rather than being fictional creations or composite characters that the playwrights have placed in authentic settings. Because of this, in order to enrich their presentations, students could research the historical individuals and find out more about them before they present their scenes and monologues in class.

While the events are historical and most of the characters are based on actual people, it is important for students to understand that playwrights present them in a way that is engaging for their audience. Just as William Shakespeare condensed events in his history plays to make the stories more compelling, some of the playwrights who have contributed to this

collection have abridged, condensed, combined and intensified events in American history in order to make the stories more stage-worthy. It might be stimulating to have students write essays that compare and contrast how an event is portrayed in the drama with how it is rendered in historical accounts and other renditions of the event.

The scenes could also help students to appreciate the different sources from which historical representations are drawn. For example, one scene was reproduced from the actual transcription of a conversation between a 911 dispatcher and a teacher. For several of the plays, the playwrights interviewed people who appear as characters in the plays, and the scripts closely follow the content of the interviews. Other dramas in the collection are based upon journals written by participants in or witnesses of the dramatized events. In some cases, when the record of the historical event being portrayed was less complete, the playwright took liberties in filling out the details. These differences can help students understand how history is researched and composed in history books and how the historical event is adapted to reach live audiences.

Cross-Curricular Collaboration

As a high-school drama teacher, I often connected my school's social studies classes with my in-class projects and productions. For example, we presented a staged reading of *Black Elk Speaks* for an American history class when they were studying Western expansion. We had an insightful post-reading discussion involving myself, my drama students, the social studies students and their teacher about the differences between the portrayal of Native American tribes in their history text and the portrayal they had witnessed in the theatrical reading.

The cross-curricular experience can also enrich student participation when historical plays receive full production support. Nathan Criman, who teaches drama at Mountain View High School in Orem, Utah, has used his theatre productions to reinforce themes explored in other academic classes in order to make learning more relevant for the students. His drama students present scenes in social studies and language arts classes to build student interest in attending the full performances. He also involves drama and history students in researching the visual record of the pertinent period and in selecting and compiling images that are projected behind and around the set during those productions.

When Alicia Sanders taught theatre at Oakwood High School in Morgan Hill, Calif., and staged plays of historical and social significance, she engaged in a hybrid learning experience with her social studies colleagues in order for their students to fully understand the significance

of the events in the play. Half of her drama students' preparation time was spent blocking and rehearsing, and half their time was spent learning about the historical context that inspired the playwright to write the play. In their social studies classes, these same students watched selected videos and read texts about the time period.

Further Uses of the Anthology

Mr. Criman says that his drama students learn better when they can identify with the characters from the eras that they study. "A book like *American Heartbeat*," he said, "will help bring history alive for the social studies instructor, assist language arts teachers in demonstrating biographical writing, and aid drama teachers in reaching students who wish to act realistically. This text could be used as a school-wide, multi-subject sourcebook that would encourage cross-curricular collaboration while costing much less than other academic materials."

Ms. Sanders endorses the book as a source of monologues, noting "we are always hunting for unique pieces that help our students understand a variety of characters." Her school also holds a "freedom festival" and she envisions using some of the pieces in the book as part of that presentation.

Ms. Sanders also notes that the collection would be helpful for both drama and social studies teachers as they implement new state and national standards. "In this modern era, education is putting a greater emphasis on the understanding and inclusion of nonfiction. Dramatic texts that pull from historical sources are extremely powerful and can be beneficial in a social studies classroom as well as in a drama classroom. The variety of perspectives represented in this text is compelling, and as a theatre teacher I am instantly drawn to these pieces. They offer fresh and unique approaches to understanding deeply rooted societal truths and historical moments, and I am enthusiastic about using them in my classroom."

Themed Presentations

There are a number of other themes and motifs that recur in the pieces in this collection around which presentations could be centered. Several of the pieces in the collection put a face on labor issues, others explore the underground railroad and the Civil Rights era. Some examine the pursuit of the "American Dream," while a few provide glimpses of American presidents in more private moments. Some of the plays highlight chapters in American history that deserve student scrutiny, such as the creation and detonation of the atom bomb and the suppression of Native American culture in the conquest of the American West.

It should be noted that, while these dramatic excerpts present excellent acting opportunities for adolescents, some of the plays represented in this volume were originally written for adult actors to perform for adult audiences. A few of the plays contain graphic descriptions of violent events in history that might disturb young readers and actors. I would therefore encourage teachers to read the full scripts themselves, when practical, so they can help to contextualize the events for their students and discuss their treatment in the dramas.

As a high-school teacher, I found that my drama students had limited interest in history until they performed dramas set in historical periods. Doing so made the past seem present and their ancestors seem intriguing. Acting historical scenes and playing historical characters let my students see that young people in the past faced many of the same challenges as they face now, and some that young people no longer have to encounter. Enacting history helps students see themselves as players in the ongoing drama of American life and to experience history as if they were there.

John Dilworth Newman, Ph.D.
Utah Valley University

**American Heartbeat:
True Stories Told in Scenes and Monologues**

Monologues: Female

Shame the Devil!

An Audience With Fanny Kemble

By Anne Ludlum

In this one-woman play based on a true story, famed Shakespearean actress Fanny Kemble tells the audience about her marriage to a man who, much to her surprise and dismay, turned out to be a slave-owner. Here, she describes an experience on his plantation on the Sea Islands of Georgia in the 1830s.

FANNY. There are four “camps” on the island, each consisting of a dozen or so cabins and a cook’s shop where the daily rations are boiled in a huge cauldron.

(FANNY “enters a cabin” from UR.)

I called at one of the cabins. It was a mere wooden frame, pinned to the earth by a brick chimney. I entered the single room. It was about twelve by fifteen feet, with two tiny cupboards for sleeping. Two families—two large families, one of seven people and one of ten people—resided in it. There were no chairs nor table, no furniture of any kind. Rags, shavings, chickens, filth littered the floor.

A group of half-naked children, all with babies on their backs, cowered around two or three cinders. When the mothers are in the field, the older children act as “little nursies.” They watch over the babies and carry them to the mothers to be nourished.

I bade these “little nursies” tend the fire and sweep the floor. Then I set myself to expelling the poultry.

(FANNY “shoos” with her skirt.)

Shoo-chick! Shoo-chick! Shoo-chick! Chick-chick-chick-chick! Shoo-shoo-shoo!

The children burst into laughter at me, but then they fell to imitating me.

(FANNY crosses to DC.)

I proclaimed to all the “little nursies” that I would give one cent to every child whose baby’s face should be clean and one cent more to every individual with clean face—and hands—of his or her own. My

appeal was fully comprehended by the majority. Subsequently, when ever I emerged from my front door, I was surrounded by swarms of children—their little charges on their backs—all with shining, and in many cases still wet, faces and hands. Thus did I ingeniously introduce hygiene onto the island.

(FANNY starts to cross to bookcase; stops.)

As well as bribery and corruption.

A Midnight Cry: The Underground Railroad to Freedom

By James DeVita

Musical selections and arrangements by Josh Schmidt

Additional selections and arrangements by Sheri Williams Panell

Lida Anderson is a determined and courageous 17-year-old who escapes slavery through the Underground Railroad. Secretly taught to read by her Uncle Eli, she recalls the joy of recognizing a written word for the first time.

LIDA (*shift*). I 'members the first time I read a word. So scared my fingers barely hold the book 'cause the mastah always be tellin' us learnin' jus' 'bout the worst sin in the world. The first word, jus' a tiny word, but the fear in me was a yellin' that if I go 'n say it out loud the ground jus' might open up 'n swallow me whole; or the lightnin' goin' to strike me down and dere be nuthin' left o' po' little Lida Anderson but a itty-bitty spot o' ash. But, I tell you, my mind run further away by saying that one word then my body ever did. (*Sounding out the word.*) "The." (*Sounding out letters.*) T-H-E. "The." Tha's right. Tha's all it was. Be better if it was a bit mo' interestin' word. Like the first word I ever read was *freedom*, o' *faith*, o' *hope*. That make fo' some fine readin' maybe. But I didn't read those words. I read "the." But I read it. I read it ma'self. 'N the ground didn't swallow me up, 'n lightin' didn't stike, 'n those three little do-nuthin' letters had more hope, faith, 'n freedom in 'em than anythin' I ever known. They teach me that things jus' been kept *away* from me. And once a body learn that there's things that belong to *everyone*, but only some peoples have 'em and some don't—why, then the world ain't never be the same fo' you. Freedom like that. Freedom a thing some peoples have and some don't, but it belong to everyone. It like the air. Ain't nobody own the air. A thing can't be mo' wrong than that.

Amelia Lives

By Laura Annawyn Shamas

Aviation pioneer Amelia Earhart tells her own story in this one-woman play set during her last flight in July of 1937. In this excerpt, she describes the evening she received the National Geographic Society's Special Gold Medal for her extraordinary accomplishments.

AMELIA. I found a very formal gown, the kind I had always wanted to wear, at least once, for the fun of it. Long, white, a low-cut neckline . . . It is a new me. It's an Amelia that I like, an Amelia who can do what she wants, an Amelia who can succeed. I received the National Geographic Society's Special Gold Medal. In the speech before the presentation, it is mentioned that not only am I the first woman to cross the Atlantic by air, I am the first to cross it alone, the only person in the world to cross it twice, and the first woman to receive the Society's Gold Medal. Thunderous applause rang through Constitution Hall. Is it for me that these people are cheering? Is it because of me that they received 10,000 requests to attend this presentation? When President Hoover praised a woman who "has made all mankind her debtor by her demonstration of new possibilities of the human spirit and the human will," was he talking about me? During the applause, I hear cries of "Earhart! Earhart!" so I know that this dream is real . . . They beckon me to the podium.

(She motions for the applause to end. She smiles graciously.)

"Thank you. Thank you very much."

(She takes box from prop box and holds it, showing a gold medal.)

"This is wonderful."

(She motions to all of them.)

"This is wonderful. But this honor is too great for my feat because my flight has added nothing to the science of aviation. Indeed, my adventure just proved how far this science has already progressed. My flight has received a great deal of recognition, and there have been many stories told about it. If you had paid attention to all of the rumors, I'm sure you would not have awarded me this medal. But for the record, and I must add, against the advice of my husband, I would like to quickly clear

up a few of the misconceptions that have been brought to my attention about the solo flight. First of all, I did not land within six feet of a hedge of trees. Moreover, I hope everyone here realizes that I did not damage that kind Irishman's roof—I landed in his pasture. And there was no dead cow involved, unless one died of fright upon seeing me for the first time. But I saw no dead cow and that kind farmer never mentioned it to me. Finally, I did have considerably more than one gallon of gasoline left in my tank. There's even proof of that. Ask the Irish government—they made me pay taxes on 100 gallons.”

(She pauses, showing a serious transition.)

“Seriously, I must pay considerable tribute to Bernt Balchem, my advisor on this flight. In my opinion, any expedition owes sixty percent of its success to the preparation beforehand. Flying by instruments is a great step forward for aviation, and I hope that the flight has meant something to women in aviation. If it has, I shall feel justified; but I can't claim anything else ... Thank you.”

(She stops, changes her position, making it clear that the speech is over. She holds up the medal in the light before putting it away.)

My very own gold medal.

Walking Toward America

By Sandra Fenichel Asher

Adapted from the memoirs of Ilga Katais-Paeglis Vise.

Driven from their Latvian homeland during World War II, Ilga and her parents walk 500 miles across Germany to safety. In this play, one actor portrays Ilga from child to grandparent, plus all the other characters in her story. Here, Ilga recreates her family's arrival in America in 1952.

ILGA. Slowly, we steam into New York Bay, toward Manhattan. The skyline looms before us. Even in daytime, there are lights everywhere—in windows, around the harbor, across the bridges. No blackout here! *(Beat.)* The ship docks. Noise and commotion. Passport checks. *(Mimes picking up her bundle and suitcase.)* Baggage collection. Custom controls. Another line. Another booth. Then ... \$5 awarded to each of us! *(Beat. Puts down her bundle and suitcase, paces anxiously.)* Someone from Church World Service will meet us. This is what I waited for, longed for, in refugee camp. Yes, we were safe and warm and dry. Yes, we were fed every day. But years passed while Papa went on believing Latvia would be free of Russians and we could go home. The Lacis family went to America. My friends from the camp school went to America. We wrote letters to one another! *(Beat, then confidentially.)* One day, while Mama and Papa were away, working in their rented garden plot, an American representative came by. I signed us up. *(Beat, then impatiently.)* Still, another year passed before a sponsor was found. Then examinations and inoculations and papers and more waiting—

CHURCH WORLD SERVICE LADY *(reading loudly from a list, searching for a response)*. MR. AND MRS. KATAIS ... ? MR. AND MRS. KRAUKLIS ... ?

(Beat. ILGA looks about, then spots the CHURCH WORLD SERVICE LADY.)

ILGA. At last! The Church World Service lady!

CHURCH WORLD SERVICE LADY *(loudly and slowly, over-enunciating each word in her earnest desire to be understood)*. YOU WILL TAKE THE FERRY TO THE JERSEY SIDE, THEN A TRAIN TO CHICAGO.

JANIS. Chicago? The gangster city? Al Capone?

CHURCH WORLD SERVICE LADY. YOUR SPONSOR IS NEAR CHICAGO.

JANIS. Not New York? I would rather go back to Germany.

ZENTA. Jani! I am not getting on that ship again!

CHURCH WORLD SERVICE LADY. NOT CHICAGO, NEAR CHICAGO. OAK ... LAWN ... ILL ... IN ... OY.

JANIS (*with difficulty, he's speaking English now, but also with a hint of mischievous mimicking*). Ill ... in ... oy? Ilga! What ... did they ... teach you ... in refugee camp ... about Ill ... in ... noy?

ILGA. They grow corn ... and hogs.

JANIS (*thoughtfully*). Hogs?

ILGA. Papa has little English. He is catching only the last word of things. Chicago! Illinois! Hogs! But "hogs" seems to calm him. We know hogs. (*Beat.*) It is already night when we follow the Church World Service lady to the ferry and cross the Hudson River. Its dark waters reflect the lights of Manhattan. What a wonder it all is!

CHURCH WORLD SERVICE LADY. IN TWO HOURS, YOU TAKE THE TRAIN TO CHICAGO. WELCOME TO AMERICA!

ILGA. She hands over the tickets, and then leaves. (*Puts down her bundle and suitcase.*) We are alone in the vast train station ... the "K families" ... Katais and Krauklis ... alone ... except for the hundreds of people rushing past. (*Beat, sniffs the air.*) A delicious aroma drifts toward us from a market stand with colorful light bulbs strung all around. (*Edging closer to read.*) Hot. Dogs. Twenty-five cents.

ZENTA. They do not eat dogs here ... do they?

ILGA. We watch people rush up to the counter and speak to the burly man wearing a white apron and a little white sailor hat. Tongs in hand, he grabs a steaming item from a pot, tosses it into something he holds in his other hand, then wraps and delivers it to the customer. (*Watches a customer pass by.*) A sausage!

JANIS (*frowns at the strange bills in his hand*). We have this ... money ...

(*Beat. JANIS is confused as to how to proceed, then he urges ILGA to take the bills.*)

JANIS (*cont'd*). You speak better English, Ilga. You can order.

ILGA (*takes charge, sensing a reversal in their roles*). It is all right, Papa. I can do it. (*Gathers the money and steps up to the hot dog stand. Then, with excitement and bravado.*) Twelve!

HOT DOG VENDOR. For you?

ILGA. Yes!

HOT DOG VENDOR. Mustard? Catsup? Pickle relish?

ILGA. He points to spigots dripping red and yellow. He picks up a ladle brimming with something green. I have never seen such bright colors!
(To HOT DOG VENDOR, vigorously shaking her head.) NO!

(Beat. Then she hands over the money, takes change, examines it for a moment with curiosity, pockets it and passes out hot dogs to her group. She takes a bite, and smiles broadly, nodding at the others in approval.)

ILGA *(cont'd)*. Standing in a circle together, we beam at one another as we munch down each tasty morsel. *(Beat. Finishes her hot dog and wipes her mouth.)* Our first real American food.

The Face of Emmett Till

By Mamie Till-Mobley and David Barr III

August, 1955. Emmett Louis Till, a black teenager from Chicago, is abducted, tortured and murdered while visiting relatives in Money, Mississippi. His mother's courage in seeking justice makes this "the hate crime that changed America." This monologue captures her love, grief and determination.

MAMIE. Emmett screams, then his screams go away. But the nightmare always comes back. The very next night. Sometimes, that same night. *(Beat.)* Mama, I feel like I'm going crazy.

[ALMA. It's a wonder we all ain't lost our minds over this thing.]

The thing is, I get up every morning. I brush my teeth, wash my face. I fix my hair and dress. And then ... I could just kill myself for not protecting him better. For not ... being the kind of mother who would always keep her child safe. *(Beat.)* When I found out I was pregnant ... I dreamed of graduations, a wedding, someone to take care of me when I got old. Even grandchildren. Now ... *(Brief pause.)* I keep thinking about all the things he'll miss. All the things ... I'll miss. *(Beat.)* He'll never graduate from high school. *(Beat.)* He'll never drive a car ... or go to prom. *(Beat.)* He'll never fall in love ... or get his heart broken. *(Beat.)* My little boy ... will never have children. To raise in his image. *(Beat.)* I heard one time ... that when a child dies ... he disappears into the blank pages of his potential. All they could have become. Everything they might have accomplished.

[ALMA. I just...can't believe he's gone.]

The other day, I saw an ad in the newspaper talking about this new movie ... I can't remember the name of it right now. Something with Humphrey Bogart in it, I think. And ... the first thing I thought was ... I've got to make sure I tell Emmett about this movie. He always loved *Bogie*. *(Long pause.)* I suppose, when you lose a child ... everything stirs up old memories. *(Beat.)* I'm just thirty-three years old, Mama. And I'm coming to the realization ... that this is something ... I'll have to live with for the rest of my life. *(Beat.)* Emmett ... is not coming back to me. I realize that ... *right now*. Tomorrow, I might have a harder time accepting it. But his death ... and the *way that he died* ... it's ...

oh ... how can I explain it ... *(Pause.) It's mine now.* It's ... a part of me. *It's inside ... of me. (Pause. Fighting back tears.)* I miss me, Mama. *I miss me.* I miss the way I was ... the way *we were.* *(Beat.)* Everyone keeps tellin' me that it's going to be all right. But ... I'm just not whole anymore. I am not ... *Mamie* anymore. And sometimes ... sometimes, Mama ... I just miss *me.* *(Long pause.)* I'm going to the trial.

Ev'ry Time I Feel the Spirit

By David Barr III

World-renowned contralto Marian Anderson wants to be recognized for her artistry, and she is, but her struggles and accomplishments as a black woman throughout her long career hold great social significance as well. In this scene, she and a companion are passing through Virginia on a southbound train in 1929.

YOUNGER MARIAN. The first time I toured the South, I took my mother with me. We got off the train in Montgomery and ... this very smartly dressed white lady rushed over to meet us. She told the man who was with us ... who just so happened to be white ... that his room was ready and waiting at the hotel. Then she turned to us and said, "Marian, you're going to stay with the Robinsons. They have a nice clean house. You'll just love it there."

[BILLY (an empathetic chuckle to himself). Oh yes.]

Well ... she wanted to leave my manager at the hotel but he insisted on seeing our accommodations. When we drove through the Negro section of town the white lady saw me leaning forward and looking around at the crowded, depressed surroundings: houses that badly needed repair and paint, old women sitting on their wooden stoops ... children playing in the front yards ... that were just dust really. And I'll never forget ... she said, "Marian, your people just love it here. They're so much happier down here than anywhere else." Now, my manager was sitting beside her ... in the front seat. So she turns to him and starts to explain that ... "I was just telling Marian how much better off the Nigras are down here, where we love them and take care of them." (BILLY, laughing, shaking his head, again chuckling to himself. Still drinking his Chivas. They both laugh. Pause.) The greatest thrill in my life was to make enough money to call my mother's store manager one morning and say ... "I'm sorry, Miss Hennessy, but my mother won't be coming to work today ... or any other day."