

Excerpt terms and conditions



This excerpt is available to assist you in the play selection process.

You may view, print and download any of our excerpts for perusal purposes.

Excerpts are not intended for performance, classroom or other academic use. In any of these cases you will need to purchase playbooks via our website or by phone, fax or mail.

A short excerpt is not always indicative of the entire work, and we strongly suggest reading the whole play before planning a production or ordering a cast quantity.

Dramatic Publishing

*The Underground Railroad
is not just a bit of dusty American history
it is still running—worldwide.*

Home on the Mornin' Train



Drama with songs
by
Kim Hines

Home on the Mornin' Train

Drama with songs. By Kim Hines.

Cast: 7m., 8w. The year is 1939, Germany. Hitler has called for the extermination of Jews. The year is 1839, Talledega, Ala., in America. Slavery is alive and doing quite well in the United States. Jewish children, Rifka and her little brother Aaron, are spirited away from their home by their parents. They are sent into hiding with the Westemeiers, a rural German family. Soon Rifka and Aaron are joined by other Jewish children, Baruch, David and Ledah. The plan is to move from hiding to a boat that will take them to Denmark where they will be safe. While in hiding the Jewish children read to pass the time. Rifka reads, from a book sent by relatives in America, a first-person account of a runaway teenage slave named Brave Mary. The Jewish children learn of the history of slavery in the United States and Brave Mary's story of escaping an Alabama plantation in the 1830s. Brave Mary is joined in her escape by Katie-Mae and a young boy named Kindred. All of the black children are lead by a young woman named Runaway Jessie, who has found the courage to go back to the deep South and lead other young people to freedom. The means of survival for both groups of children is the underground railroad. The Westemeier's son Karl helps his father smuggle the Jewish children out of Germany. In America, Adelaide, the daughter of an abolitionist banker, gives asylum to runaway slaves on their flight to freedom. Olivia, a slave, puts her own safety in jeopardy as she uses her slave owners' boat late at night to ferry blacks across the Ohio River. Trials and tribulations beset both groups of children. However, the Jewish children are inspired by the strength and courage of the Black children trying to find their way to Canada, as they make their own way to Denmark. This play has songs that reflect African-American and Jewish cultures, and small pieces of dialogue are spoken in German, Yiddish and Hebrew. *Area staging. Runs about 75 minutes. Code: H48*

Stepping Stone Theatre production: (l-r) Maya Tolbert and Maya Hastings.

Photo used by permission of Stepping Stone Theatre.

Cover design: Susan Carle.

ISBN: 978-0-87129-898-0



9 780871 298980 >

www.dramaticpublishing.com



Dramatic Publishing

311 Washington St.
Woodstock, IL 60098
ph: 800-448-7469



Printed on recycled paper

© The Dramatic Publishing Company

HOME ON THE MORNIN' TRAIN

by
KIM HINES



Dramatic Publishing

Woodstock, Illinois • London, England • Melbourne, Australia
© The Dramatic Publishing Company

*** NOTICE ***

The amateur and stock acting rights to this work are controlled exclusively by THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY without whose permission in writing no performance of it may be given. Royalty fees are given in our current catalog and are subject to change without notice. Royalty must be paid every time a play is performed whether or not it is presented for profit and whether or not admission is charged. A play is performed any time it is acted before an audience. All inquiries concerning amateur and stock rights should be addressed to:

DRAMATIC PUBLISHING
P. O. Box 129, Woodstock, Illinois 60098

COPYRIGHT LAW GIVES THE AUTHOR OR THE AUTHOR'S AGENT THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHT TO MAKE COPIES. This law provides authors with a fair return for their creative efforts. Authors earn their living from the royalties they receive from book sales and from the performance of their work. Conscientious observance of copyright law is not only ethical, it encourages authors to continue their creative work. This work is fully protected by copyright. No alterations, deletions or substitutions may be made in the work without the prior written consent of the publisher. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopy, recording, videotape, film, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher. It may not be performed either by professionals or amateurs without payment of royalty. All rights, including but not limited to the professional, motion picture, radio, television, videotape, foreign language, tabloid, recitation, lecturing, publication, and reading are reserved.

©MCMXCIX by
KIM HINES

Printed in the United States of America
All Rights Reserved
(HOME ON THE MORNIN' TRAIN)

ISBN 0-87129-898-8

© The Dramatic Publishing Company

IMPORTANT BILLING AND CREDIT REQUIREMENTS

All producers of the Play *must* give credit to the Author(s) of the Play in all programs distributed in connection with performances of the Play and in all instances in which the title of the Play appears for purposes of advertising, publicizing or otherwise exploiting the Play and/or a production. The name of the Author(s) *must* also appear on a separate line, on which no other name appears, immediately following the title, and *must* appear in size of type not less than fifty percent the size of the title type. *On all programs this notice should appear:*

“Produced by special arrangement with
THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY of Woodstock, Illinois”

All producers of HOME ON THE MORNIN’ TRAIN must include the following acknowledgment on the title page of all programs distributed in connection with performances of the play and on all advertising and promotional materials:

“Originally produced by SteppingStone Theatre for
Youth Development, St. Paul, Minn.”

© The Dramatic Publishing Company

HOME ON THE MORNIN' TRAIN was commissioned and originally produced by SteppingStone Theatre for Youth Development, Saint Paul, Mn., February 1994. The production was directed by Richard D. Thompson and included the following artists:

Olivia.....	TEISHA BROOMFIELD
Karl.....	BRIAN FLETCHER
Katie-Mae.....	SIMONE HARDEMAN
Brave Mary.....	MAYA HASTINGS
Kindred.....	SANFORD HATFIELD
Baruch.....	BEAU HAYES
Ledah.....	ARI HOPSTOCK
Rifka.....	MARCY LAUGHINGHOUSE
David.....	JOEL MASON
Adelaide.....	GRETCHEN NYMAN
Aaron.....	KARL OLSON
Runaway Jessie.....	MAYA TOLBERT

PRODUCTION STAFF

Production Stage Manager.....	ELIZABETH WOOD
Music Director.....	GARY RUE
Costume Designer.....	JAYNE WHITSON-LIND
Set Designer.....	ROBIN McINTYRE
Lighting Designer.....	PAMELA KILDAHL
Sound Designer.....	GARY RUE
Technical Director.....	CHRIS KELDERMAN
Directing Intern.....	GRETCHEN NYMAN
Landmark Center Technician.....	RANDY SEITZ

Artwork by PAM ELIAS

Study Guide by ELIZABETH GERAGHTY

Hebrew and Yiddish Consultants – CANTOR BARRY ABELSON

HOME ON THE MORNIN' TRAIN

A Play in Nine Scenes
For 7 Female, 6 Male, and Recorded Voices

CHARACTERS

BLACK:

RUNAWAY JESSIE (19-20 yrs. old)
BRAVE MARY (17-18 yrs. old)
KATIE-MAE (15-16 yrs. old)
KINDRED (14-15 yrs. old)
OLIVIA (17 yrs. old)

JEWISH:

RIFKA (16-17 yrs. old)
AARON (7-8 yrs. old)
BARUCH (14-15 yrs. old)
LEDAH (7-8 yrs. old)
DAVID (10-12 yrs. old)

GERMAN:

KARL (18-19 yrs. old)
YOUNG MAN (16-20 yrs. old)

SOUTHERN WHITE:

ADELAIDE (19-20 yrs. old)

VOICES 1, 2, 3 & 4

TIME and PLACE:

1939, Hamburg, Germany. 1839, Talledega, Alabama.

Running time: 1 hour, 15 minutes.

© The Dramatic Publishing Company

SONGS

“Steal Away” Voice
“Follow the Drinking Gourd” All
“You Are the Plowman and You Sow”	Rifka, Jewish Children
“Oh, Freedom” Runaway Jessie, Kindred
“Wade in the Water” All
“Shlof Mayn Kind” Baruch
“I’m Goin’ Home on the Mornin’ Train” All

All songs in this play are in the public domain. “I’m Goin’ Home on the Mornin’ Train” can be found at the back of this playbook. All other songs are widely available. The author suggests that you contact a Baptist or AME Black church and a synagogue for assistance with the music. This contact was made for the original production and proved to be invaluable to the production and in the community support for the show. Songs from Black culture include: “Steal Away,” “Follow the Drinking Gourd,” “Oh, Freedom,” “Wade in the Water” and “I’m Goin’ Home on the Mornin’ Train.” Songs from Jewish culture include: “You Are the Plowman and You Sow” and “Shlof Mayn Kind.”

HOME ON THE MORNIN' TRAIN

SCENE ONE

(The stage is black. A voice is heard singing in the darkness.)

VOICE *(singing)*.

Steal away—

Steal away—

Steal away ...to freedom.

Steal away.

Steal away home...

I ain't got long to stay here ...

(Singing segues into sound cue: barking dogs, men tracking a female runaway slave at night.)

VOICE-OVER #1

Over here! I think she's over here... Hold that lantern up higher so we can see something! Damn! Damn! I don't see nothing out there. I think we lost her!

JESSIE *(whispers)*

Lord—help me ...

(Lights fade up to a pool of light. JESSIE is running in slow motion as she frantically looks over her shoulder, trying to outrun the men and dogs. Lights slowly fade to black.)

VOICE-OVER #2. No—I think she went that way—I think I saw her.

VOICE-OVER #3. Well—just let the dogs loose and let *them* find her. These dogs are good at trackin' runaway slaves!

(Sound cue fades away and segues into the sound of wooden flute or clarinet playing a Jewish folk melody. The melody segues into sounds of "polizei" sirens. A pool of light fades up on BARUCH wearing a cloth yellow Star of David on his coat. He looks in both directions, flips up the collar of his coat, takes the star off of his coat and places it tentatively in his pocket and exits cautiously. Lights fade to black.)

SCENE TWO

(The stage fills with fog or mist of early morning and late evening. As lights slowly fade up we see a silhouette of RIFKA carrying a small suitcase.)

RIFKA. Mother woke us up real early that morning. June 10th... 1939. I will always remember this date. It was about four or five in the morning.

(BRAVE MARY enters opposite side of stage with small cloth bag slung over her shoulder.)

BRAVE MARY. I didn't know the exact date... because I didn't know my numbers and I didn't know how to read. I just knew that it was the summer of 1839.

RIFKA. It was still dark. Just before sunrise.

BRAVE MARY. It was just after dusk... almost dark... about that time of night when skeeters don't bite as much...

RIFKA. Mother told us to be very quiet... and to quickly pack a bag... we could only take *one* bag.

(JESSIE enters on one side of the stage and AARON enters with bag in hand on other side of stage.)

JESSIE. Just bring yourself.

BRAVE MARY. That's what Jessie said.

JESSIE. Don't need no bags to slow us down.

AARON *(puts his bag down, opens it and pulls out a small toy horse)*. Mommy said I could bring my horse... *(He looks through his bag and holds up a small wooden horse.)* But not my bear... she said it took up too much space. I packed some shirts...

RIFKA. Underclothes, of course...

AARON. Some socks...

BRAVE MARY. He said...

JESSIE. Bring only what can never be replaced...

RIFKA. One dress and two skirts...

AARON. Some pants, and my blue sweater. But I left lots of room for—

RIFKA. My diary, some pictures of my best friends from Jewish school, Ellie and Rachel... and I packed my books, one from school, and one from America. My cousin in America sent me a book. I couldn't leave it behind. I haven't read it yet. Oh, and of course my prayer book.

AARON (*takes dredel from his pocket and holds it up*).

And my lucky *dredel* from last Channuka. I won a lot of *geld* with this *dredel*.

JESSIE. And bring along what food that will keep on the road... and c'mon!

RIFKA. Mother and father took us to the edge of town.

KATIE-MAE. There was buzzing all over the plantation.

But real quiet—secret-like. Couldn't have Master finding out about us planning to leave, now, could we?

RIFKA. They took us to see a man named...

(BARUCH walks out of the fog with bag in hand.)

BARUCH. Herr Westemeier. I never knew his first name, only his last name—Westemeier. He was tall and blonde and dressed, well, not like he lived in the city. More like a farmer. I could tell by his hands. They were rough and his nails dirty.

AARON. He didn't bring his wife with him, only his son. His son named...

(LEDAH walks out of the fog with bag in hand.)

LEDAH. Karl. He is young like us. Only he is a German gentile and *we* are German Jews. We met in the woods on the edge of town. Karl said that his father had agreed to take five children this time.

KINDRED. When I heard that some young'uns like me was planning to escape to freedom—I knew I had to go, too.

LEDAH (*to RIFKA*). Rifka Rubin was there... and her little brother Aaron.

RIFKA. There was Baruch Fischer ...

DAVID. And Ledah Bergmann ...

AARON. And the Muller's son, David.

JESSIE. I could only take about four with me, this time.

(*To BRAVE MARY.*) What do they call you?

BRAVE MARY. Brave Mary.

KATIE-MAE. Katie-Mae.

KINDRED. Kindred. And I know what they call you ...

ALL/BLACK KIDS. Runaway Jessie.

JESSIE. Because I lead runaway slaves to freedom. (*JESSIE quiets the kids and motions for them to follow her. They exit.*)

BARUCH. My father said I was to listen to and obey the Westemeiers. My father said that not many gentiles were willing to help the Jews.

RIFKA. My mother said to be thankful.

LEDAH. Thankful that there were people courageous enough to help us.

(*DAVID walks out of the fog with bag in hand.*)

DAVID. Courageous enough to help us out of the city of Hamburg.

AARON. Out of Germany—

LEDAH. On to Denmark—

RIFKA. And finally to Sweden. We would be safe in Sweden.

BARUCH. It may take a while. Because we have to hide along the way. Herr Westemeier said he has many friends that will help us get to Sweden. They will help along the way.

DAVID. But we must be very careful. He told us...that we might even have to lie and change our names.

RIFKA. But we can get rid of these. (*She unpins the Star of David from her coat.*) I hate these yellow stars...they make us wear them, so that people will know that we are different ...

LEDAH. So people will know that we are Jews ...

ALL. So people will hate us ...

RIFKA. I will be glad to leave this country. I want to be somewhere safe. Maybe one day I will live in America.

AARON. I asked Mommy when she and Daddy would meet up with us. She only cried and said—

LEDAH. Soon—my parents said they would join us soon. When? When is soon? (*Lights fade to black.*)

SCENE THREE

(A small room in a barn on a small German farm. AARON plays with his dredel, DAVID naps, BARUCH is reading a book, LEDAH sits playing with a very small doll. RIFKA sits with her suitcase open beside her, writing in her diary.)

AARON (*tired of playing with his dredel moves over to his sister*). What are you doing?

RIFKA. I'm writing in my diary.

AARON (*sitting next to her*). What do you write about?

RIFKA. I write about what I experience...or what I'm thinking or what I'm feeling.

AARON. That sounds boring.

DAVID. It's what girls do. Girls always do boring things.

RIFKA. Girls are not the only ones who keep diaries,
David. My father keeps a diary ...

AARON. Daddy keeps a diary? How do you know?

RIFKA. Because Mama and Daddy gave me this one.
Daddy said that it's good to write down what happens in
your life. Then many years from now you will look back
and remember where you've been ...

LEDAH (*holding up her doll*). Rifka—will you tie this rib-
bon for me? (*RIFKA ties the ribbon in the doll's hair.*)

AARON. How long have we been here, Rifka?

RIFKA. Eleven days...

BARUCH (*looking up from his book*). Actually it's been
twelve days... I've beep keeping track.

LEDAH. How long will we be here? Twelve more days?

AARON. Twelve weeks?

LEDAH. Twelve months?

BARUCH (*barely looking up from his book*). Years?

RIFKA. Don't be silly.

DAVID. We're not going to stay here forever.

LEDAH (*crossing to DAVID*). How long *are* we going to
stay here?

DAVID. I don't know. Ask Rifka ...

RIFKA. Don't ask me ... I don't know. I'm just as much in
the dark as you are.

AARON (*looking through a small cloth bag*). Look!
You've got jewels ... you're rich, Rifka ... (*DAVID and
LEDAH move to RIFKA's suitcase and look at its con-
tents.*)

RIFKA. No, I'm not. Put those down, Aaron.

DAVID (*stroking the outside of the suitcase*). My mother
has a suitcase like this. She got it while on holiday in
Great Britain.

AARON (*grabbing a strand of pearls*). Do you think kings wear jewels? If I put these on, will I be a king?

RIFKA. Hardly ... here give them to me. (*She takes pearls from AARON and puts them with her other jewelry. LEDAH has now pulled out a skirt from RIFKA's suitcase and stands holding it up against her body.*)

LEDAH. Oh, Rifka ... what a beautiful skirt. Can I have this when you get too big for it?

RIFKA (*grabbing her skirt*). No! This is my favorite skirt. (*Holding it up and admiring it.*) I don't think I'll ever give it up ... even if I grow out of it.

DAVID (*paging through book*). Where did you get this book? It's not German ...

RIFKA. No ... it's not. It's a book from America. From my cousin, Greta. She lives in a place called Neu Braunfels. It's in Texas.

LEDAH. Where's that?

AARON (*smugly*). In the United States of America ...

DAVID. What's this book about?

RIFKA. I don't know. I haven't read it yet.

DAVID. When are you going to read it?

RIFKA. When I feel like it.

DAVID. Well, if you're not going to read it soon, can I read the book, now?

RIFKA (*taking the book and putting back in her suitcase*). No! I want to read it first. (*She goes back to writing in her diary.*)

DAVID. That may take centuries!

LEDAH (*picking up book and looking at it*). I don't think I can read this book, it looks too hard. Will you read it to me?

RIFKA. Ledah, please I'm trying to write ...

AARON. Why not? It will give us something to do.

DAVID. Yeah ... a good way to kill time.

RIFKA. Oh ... all right.

LEDAH. What's the name of the book, Rifka?

RIFKA (*reading title of the book*). "Following the Drinking Gourd: A Negro Slave Girl's Escape to Freedom." (*She sits and makes herself comfortable as she starts to read from the book.*) "Dear reader ... I want to stress that though this journey may seem treacherous and doubtful, it did indeed happen. Every word of this story is true. My name is Mary Cunningham. I was born a slave. I am now a free woman, but while I was a slave, people called me ...

(*BRAVE MARY appears in a pool of light.*)

BRAVE MARY. "Brave Mary"—because I spoke of freedom so often. Freedom was a fearful subject to speak or even think of. But since I spoke of freedom in spite of the threat of death ... people called me Brave Mary. I lived in ... Tus-ca-loosa, Alabama—

LEDAH. Where is that, Rifka?

RIFKA. It's someplace in America. I'm not sure where, but I know that it's in America. (*Reads.*) "The year is 1839."

BRAVE MARY. Master Herbert Cole's plantation stood surrounded by a deep, thick pine forest. The Cole plantation was known for its lumber and the making of turpentine.

RIFKA. Master Cole was a very rich white man and owned many things.

BRAVE MARY. He owned over 1000 acres of land.

RIFKA. Three homes, several stables of horses, and over two hundred slaves... (*Lights fade out on BRAVE MARY.*)

AARON. What are slaves, Rifka?

RIFKA. Slaves are people, who are owned by and made to work for other people for no pay. Many times slaves are treated very badly ...

AARON. Oh.

DAVID. We were once slaves ...

AARON. I've never been a slave!

DAVID. I'm talking about us ... Jews.

LEDAH. Jews were once slaves? Is that true, Rifka?

RIFKA. Yes, Ledah ...

AARON. When did this happen? I don't remember about us being slaves.

DAVID. It happened a long, long, long time ago, silly. What do you think Pesach is about? We were in Egypt. We were slaves to the Egyptians.

AARON. But this story ... (*Pointing to the book.*) Are these slaves owned by the Egyptians, too?

RIFKA. No, David. This story is about the blacks in America. They were slaves too. But not so long ago.

LEDAH. If I were treated badly I wouldn't stay. I don't understand. Why didn't the slaves just leave?

DAVID. They can't, Ledah. If they want to leave they have to run away ... in secret ...

RIFKA (*goes back to reading aloud*). It is late at night. The moon sits high in the sky. Stars twinkle against the dark sky.

(JESSIE, a slave, sits in the underbrush. A walking stick lays by her side. She also has a small bag slung across

her body. She dozes for a moment. The sound of a bird call breaks the silence. JESSIE awakens with a start. She quietly scrambles to her feet and makes the sound of a birdcall in response to the sound she just heard. There is silence and then the birdcall in response to JESSIE.)

BRAVE MARY (*softly calls from offstage at a distance*).

Jessie, Jessie—

JESSIE. Over here ... straight due north. (*She strains to see if she spots anything.*)

BRAVE MARY (*offstage*). C'mon, Katie-Mae, you gotta keep up now ...

(BRAVE MARY enters, followed by KINDRED. KATIE-MAE brings up the rear.)

KATIE-MAE. I'm coming ... I'm coming. Y'all walk so fast ...

BRAVE MARY. We ain't got no time to waste ...

KATIE-MAE (*mumbling*). It's hard to keep up ... like you going to a house a'fire or something ...

JESSIE. Shhhhhhh! Y'all better keep your voices down. Y'all don't know who's all up in this forest. They would've done found you out and next thing you know, they'd be dragging y'all back to the plantation.

KATIE-MAE. I ain't going back to that place.

BRAVE MARY. You're always fussing—

KATIE-MAE. I ain't going back there ever again, in this life.

JESSIE. Keep talking out loud like that, and you ain't gonna have a choice. (*To BRAVE MARY.*) Is this all that's coming this time, Brave Mary?