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Dramatic Publishing



“A house divided against itself cannot stand.”

—Abraham Lincoln

A Heart Divided

Drama by Cherie Bennett and Jeff Gottesfeld

A Heart Divided

"True patriotism sometimes requires of men to act exactly contrary, at one period, to that which it does at another, and the motive that impels them—the desire to do right—is precisely the same." —Robert E. Lee

Drama. By Cherie Bennett and Jeff Gottesfeld. Adapted from their novel. Cast: 2m., 4w. (May be expanded to 5m., 10w., 17 either gender.) The Confederate flag: A historical icon or a racist symbol? This thought-provoking and gripping play sheds new light on a controversy that continues to divide our national heart. When Kate's liberal-minded family moves from New York City's suburbs to a small town outside of Nashville, Kate is convinced her life is over. Redford, Tennessee, is as Southern as it gets—the local diner serves grits and sweet tea, country music rules the airwaves and the Confederate battle flag waves proudly over the courthouse square. Then she meets the handsome and talented Jackson Redford III, scion of the town and embodiment of everything Dixie. Jack shows her the beauty of his Southern roots and Kate begins to appreciate her new home. But a petition to replace the school's Confederate flag insignia gains Kate's support, and soon Kate and Jack—and their families—find themselves pitted against one another in a bitter controversy not just about the flag, but about what it means to be an American. Commissioned by the Youth Theatre at the U (of Utah). *Flexible staging. DVD of projections available. Approximate running time: 90 minutes. Code: H89.*

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A Heart Divided

A HEART DIVIDED

A Play

by

CHERIE BENNETT and JEFF GOTTESFELD

Commissioned by the Youth Theatre at the University of Utah, Amy Oakeson, artistic director; based on the authors' novel *A Heart Divided*.



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(A HEART DIVIDED)

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— Abraham Lincoln

True patriotism sometimes requires of men to act exactly contrary, at one period, to that which it does at another, and the motive that impels them—the desire to do right—is precisely the same.

— Robert E. Lee

Everybody's got a hungry heart.

— Bruce Springsteen

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A HEART DIVIDED was commissioned by and workshopped at the Youth Theater at the U (of Utah), Salt Lake City, Utah, Amy Oakeson artistic director. The workshop in the summer of 2003 was under the direction of Margo Andrews.

The world premiere was at the Youth Theater at the U, Babcock Theatre, University of Utah, from July 9-19, 2004, and again for the national conference of the American Alliance of Theatre and Education, meeting in Salt Lake City, Rose Wagner Theatre, Salt Lake City, on July 31, 2004. The director was Moses Goldberg and the company was as follows:

PRODUCTIONSTAFF

Artistic Director AMY OAKESON
Executive Director PENELOPE MARANTZ
Scenic Designer (& designer of photo graphic montages)
ROBIN WATSON
Technical Designer JEFF DROWN
Lighting Designer LIZ ZERNECHEL
Costume Designer ALISON JENSEN
Sound Designer. MICHAEL CAVANAUGH

CAST

Kate Pride. OLIVIA DUSTMAN
Kim, Madison Chesney, Krissy. VALERIE LARSEN
Dawn, Nikki Roberts, Tanya KARLI MARTIN
Mia, Sara Fife, Amy. CASSIE CROCKETT
Marcus Alvarez, Luke Roberts, Caller. FREDERICK JACKSON
Jensen Pride, Anne Augustus PAULA CROCKETT
Pete Pride, Paul McSorley, Bo Alford. GREG PETERS
Portia Pride. MAREN RITTER
Birdie McKinley, Chris Sullivan, Sally Redford. SU SAN DOLAN
Jackson Redford III CHRIS ECCLES
Chaz Martin, Alex PATRICK COATS
Rev. Lucas Roberts, Dr. Anthony Blasi, Dr. Forrest Thomas
BRIEN JONES
Scott, Jared Boose, Dan, Caller. CHRIS JOHNSTON

PLAYWRIGHTS' NOTES

Unless otherwise indicated, characters use direct address to the audience. Even in moments where, at the director's discretion, they interact, they are aware they are being watched. The audience plays a tacit role as a jury, with each character advocating his or her best case to the audience.

Brisk pacing and cue pickups, with a present tense sense of immediacy and sometimes urgency, is key to the flow of action.

The cast might remain onstage throughout, in which case "enters" refers to entering a moment of action.

All singing is *a capella*.

Photographic projections on a rear scrim or screen can be used to good effect at the discretion of the director. A photo DVD is available from Dramatic Publishing.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Although I was not involved in earlier workshop productions of this play, I was privileged to direct the first full production by the Youth Theatre at the University of Utah, which commissioned the script. Collaborating with Cherie Bennett and Jeff Gottesfeld on a new work is always a dynamic exercise which cannot fail to stretch one's aesthetic sensibilities and performing muscles. From the beginning of this process, we were determined to evolve a performance style that would best serve the material, and we conceptualized it almost like a jury trial, where the audience would be the jury, and the performers would act as lawyer/advocates for the various points of view held by the characters.

We studied similar stylistic models, and must acknowledge debts to the Moisés Kaufman/Tectonic *Laramie Project*, Emily Mann's *Execution of Justice*, and my own recent experience seeing Naomi Iisuka's *At the Vanishing Point* at the Humana Festi-

val in Louisville. But what we eventually came up with was a unique style or, more exactly, a unique cluster of related styles because, like most plays, this one is not exclusively one thing or another.

The dominant approach we called “collective direct address,” by which we attempted to describe a format in which characters were speaking in the first person, and speaking directly to the audience, but in which they were also very aware of the other characters, who were also trying to make their own, often contrary, arguments. The primary energy of the actors was directed towards convincing the jury, but they still retained some level of awareness of the actions of their rivals. In rehearsal, we sometimes found it useful to actually choreograph the moments when an actor would steal a glance at his opponent, before returning his focus to persuading the audience. The opposing advocate, of course, is free to look directly at the speaker but they, too, must be continually gauging the jury’s response to what is being said. Obviously, eye contact with the jury is critical to a lawyer, and we actually did the first two previews with the houselights up, so the actors could see the audience. This ended up making the audiences somewhat nervous, so we took the houselights down, but the actors were still able to play directly to the audience by using their memory of those first previews, and pretending they could still see the individual members of the audience.

Portions of the script we judged to be in different, but closely related, styles. Many of Kate’s speeches we determined to be more like regular Direct Address (talking to the audience in 1st person, but ignoring the other actors) or Narration (in 3rd person, introducing or commenting on another character). Portia also has a few of those type speeches. And several characters occasionally dip into Story Theatre, where they set up, in first person, a conversation they have had, and then actually perform lines from that conversation directly to one of the other characters. In the script, nearly all examples of this latter style include text in quotation marks.

To support this direct approach to the audience, we chose to stage the play almost in a straight line across the front of the acting area. Some variety was achieved by suggesting a part of the stadium bleachers a little further upstage, so that a few moments could be in a secondary line. Many of my staging decisions were based on an analysis of which characters had to “hear” each other’s arguments to the jury; and the final tableau of the play, when Kate is surrounded by the various voices that most affected her journey, determined largely how the thirteen actors would be doubled in their roles.

The lawyer-jury model was also a major factor in how the characters were interpreted. No lawyer wants to appear negatively to the assembly that will decide his or her case. The incentive was therefore strong to make sure each actor believed in the truth of his or her position, and presented it to the jury with as attractive a sense of conviction as possible. Since we treated the audience as if they were the actors’ scene partners and—once the houselights were turned out—the actors could not really see their scene partner, the actors’ memory of eye contact became a key aspect of the fabric of beliefs that they needed to project into their roles. Fortunately, the excellent cast of this first production was up to the challenge.

Future directors of this piece will find it challenging and worthwhile. Our audiences were engaged and almost universally drawn into the debate, frequently commenting afterwards how they had had their perceptions altered, enabling them to see the argument with more balance than they had previously felt. For me it was a very satisfying project, and I hope it will be so for you as well.

— Moses Goldberg

A HEART DIVIDED

A Full-length Play
For 2m., 4w. minimum.

May be expanded to 5m., 10w., 17 either gender.

CHARACTERS (in order of appearance)

Note: All actors, with the exception of Kate, play multiple roles at the discretion of the director. A minimum cast of eight actors is recommended, though six is achievable with minor line changes at the discretion of the director.

KATE PRIDE	16, student
KIM	16, student
DAWN	16, student
MIA	16, student
MARCUS ALVAREZ	mid-20s, playwright
JENSEN PRIDE	40s, Kate's mom
PETE PRIDE	40s, Kate's dad
PORTIA PRIDE	12, Kate's sister
BIRDIE MCKINLEY	50s, proprietor of The Pink Teacup
MADISON CHESNEY	12, student
ANNE AUGUSTUS	82, librarian, Redford Public Library
JACKSON REDFORD III	17, student
SARA FIFE	17, student
NIKKI ROBERTS	17, student
CHAZ MARTIN	17, student/quarterback
PAUL MCSORLEY	50s, principal, Redford High School
REV. LUCAS ROBERTS	early 60s, dad to Nikki and Luke, preacher
LUKE ROBERTS	18, student
TANYA	16, student
SCOTT	16, student
ALEX	16, student
AMY	16, student
DR. ANTHONY BLASI	40s, sociologist
CHRIS SULLIVAN	40s, magazine editor
JARED BOOSE	18, student

BO ALFORD 50s, historian
 SALLY REDFORD 40s, mother of Jack
 KRISSEY 16, student
 DAN 17, student
 CALLER #1
 CALLER #2
 DR. FORREST THOMAS 30s, trauma surgeon

DOUBLING SCHEMES

a) For professional theaters where the number of adult actors is a budgetary consideration but not the number of teen actors, the play may be performed with four adult actors doubling as follows, plus a coterie of additional teen actors. One male actor to be African-American:

Adult Male #1: Pete Pride, McSorley, Bo Alford
 Adult Male #2: Rev. Roberts, Blasi, Dr. Thomas
 Adult Female #1: Sally, Sullivan, Birdie
 Adult Female #2: Jensen, Mrs. Augustus

b) The following is a different doubling scheme that will allow the script to be accomplished with a total of *eight* actors. Female Actor #4 and Male Actor #4 will be African-American:

Female Actress #1: Kate
 Female Actress #2: Mia, Jensen, Sara
 Female Actress #3: Kim, Portia, Madison, Amy, Vocalist,
 Sally Redford, Krissy
 Female Actress #4: Dawn, Nikki, Tanya, Vocalist

Male Actor #1: Student, Pete, Chaz, McSorley, Sullivan,
 Alford
 Male Actor #2: Student, Jack, Scott, Blasi
 Male Actor #3: Student, Birdie, Mrs. (NOW MR.)
 Augustus, Jared, Alex, Dan, Caller #1
 Male Actor #4: Marcus, Rev. Roberts, Luke Roberts,
 Caller #2, Dr. Thomas

TIME: The present.

PLACE: New York City; Englecliff, N.J.; Redford, Tenn.

A HEART DIVIDED

The pre-show beginning at half hour could be a series of honky-tonking country songs.

AT RISE: The cast arrives as members of a New York City playwriting workshop as the pre-show music fades. Some carry to-go coffee cups or water bottles. They ad-lib to establish set and setting; greet, flirt and/or dis each other, establishing relationships. KATE PRIDE catches up to THREE GIRLS carrying scripts and speaks over the ad-libs.

KATE. Hey, what's up? You guys having any questions about my script?

(The GIRLS ad-lib questions to KATE about character or text, which she answers. Their teacher, MARCUS ALVAREZ, enters. A STUDENT asks him a question. He answers, checks his watch and then singles out KATE.)

MARCUS. Kate? Ready?

KATE. Yep.

(KATE and the TWO GIRLS she's cast in her play open their scripts, as the STUDENTS take seats around the stage to watch. The GIRLS are center, KATE left. She is

both excited and nervous about having her play read to the class. CLASS MEMBERS react during the play, each with his or her own point of view. KATE reads in stage directions, watching her work unfold with pride. The ACTORS read the lines as if they are in a sitcom.)

KATE. *Played.* A short play by me, Kate Pride, age sixteen, Englecliff, New Jersey. The scene: A ladies room at a hipper-than-thou downtown club. Kim and Dawn, both high school juniors, rush in, breathless. They're clad in the latest everything, all the trappings of beauty without achieving it.

KIM. Oh my G—

DAWN. I saw him and I'm like, "whoa—"

KIM. He never brought me here. And he brings her. Was I okay?

DAWN. Totally. You were all like (*blasé:*) "Oh, hi, Kevin."

KIM. Like (*equally blasé:*) "Oh, I see you're with your new girl friend, Mia."

DAWN. Right, you're all like, "Kevin who?"

KATE. They crack up and fist-bump each other, then primp in the mirror, speaking to each other's reflections. Kim checks out her rear view.

KIM. I am a total cow.

DAWN. Shut up! You are so hot.

KIM. Hotter than—?

DAWN. Totally! Did you check out those thighs? Every time she takes a step, they like, suffocate each other.

KIM. And that uni!

DAWN. I should have been all like, "Oh, cute outfit. My mother has it."

KATE. They trade another fist-bump. (*KIM and DAWN fist-bump.*)

DAWN. I know people at her old school. The girl is played.

KIM. Really?

DAWN. Seriously mattress tested.

KIM. Well, if that's what Kevin wanted, then whatever. Because I am so over—

(*MIA enters.*)

KATE. They're interrupted when Mia, the girl they're dissing enters. Effortlessly beautiful, she joins them at the mirror to adjust makeup that needs no adjusting.

MIA (*so cool*). Oh, hi. Having fun?

KIM. Not really. This club is so played. There are twelve-year-olds here with fake ID.

MIA. Really? Kevin and I are so into each other, we didn't notice. (*Doesn't mean it.*) So we should hang sometime. I'll call you.

KIM (*sarcastic*). I'll hold my breath.

MIA (*scrutinizing KIM's outfit, snarky*). Cute outfit. My mother has it.

KATE. Mia exits, triumphant, as the lights fade. Curtain.

(*The COMPANY applauds. MARCUS addresses the class.*)

MARCUS. So, people, what did you think of Kate's play?

(The COMPANY reacts: some favorably, some not. KATE begins to address the audience directly, and will address it directly for the rest of the play.)

KATE. Marcus Alvarez, hot young playwright. He taught my lab at The Public Theater in New York City. *(KATE anticipates kudos on her work.)*

MARCUS. Some of you may find it funny. *(Some STUDENTS agree.)* Some of you may find it trite. *(Other STUDENTS agree.)* I find it...sad.

KATE. *Sad?*

MARCUS. It's superficial pap. If you really want to be a playwright, do the hard, scary work. Anything less, no matter how amusing, is just sound and fury, and it doesn't signify jack. *(MARCUS and the COMPANY exit. KATE crosses downstage.)*

KATE. What Marcus said pretty much killed me. I mean, playwriting was all I cared about.

(JENSEN PRIDE enters.)

JENSEN. The purpose of life is a life of purpose.

KATE. My mother, Jensen Pride.

JENSEN. I really believe that.

KATE. When she was pregnant with my little sister Portia, she embroidered it for me on a pillow.

JENSEN. I knew the articles I was freelancing for *Glamour* and *Cosmo* weren't exactly fulfilling mine. Pete and I try to raise our daughters with a sense of how important it is to find their purpose. As a kid, Kate could be... unfocused. But I was sure that if we just exposed her to

enough different things, her inner Woman of Purpose would awaken. We tried singing lessons.

KATE. Tone deaf.

JENSEN. Ballet.

KATE. A klutz.

JENSEN. Computer camp, astronaut camp, children-of-all-nations world peace camp.

KATE. All strikeouts.

JENSEN. Nothing took, until her twelfth birthday, when Pete and I brought her to Manhattan to see her first real play.

KATE. *The Crucible*, by Arthur Miller. Seeing it changed my life. I mean, it had everything: Great characters. Big emotions. Life. Death. Sex. As I watched that play, the fuse of my inner Woman of Purpose was finally lit. I knew what I wanted to do. I wanted to tell stories like that. I wanted to be...a playwright.

JENSEN. Of course I immediately enrolled her in a writing workshop at The Public Theater.

(PETE PRIDE enters and crosses to his wife.)

PETE. And we started going to plays every weekend. It was hell on my golf game, but wonderful to see Kate—and my wife—so excited.

KATE. My dad, Pete Pride.

PETE. You hear our family name—Pride—you'd think we came over on the Mayflower. *(He chuckles.)* My grandfather Vito Pardini arrived in America from Sicily and they changed his name at Ellis Island. *(JENSEN nudges him to move it along.)* I met Jensen junior year at Rutgers. I was just...bowled over. Jensen O'Hara—

beautiful, smart, artistic, and hip in a way that, let's face it, I will never be—picked me. I've felt like the luckiest guy on the planet ever since. It's because of her that our daughters are so outstanding. She pushed me in my career, too. Even sent my resume to the headhunter, who came back at me with an amazing job offer in—

(PORTIA PRIDE enters and crosses to her parents.)

PORTIA. Nashville! The one in Tennessee!

KATE. My sister Portia dropped the bombshell when I got home from lab.

PORTIA *(serious, intense)*. The thing is, I'm The Weird Girl. When I was little, I didn't have any friends so I invented this invisible friend who was so funny, she made me laugh out loud but I'd forget that she was invisible which meant I looked like I was laughing at nothing which is how I got named The Weird Girl in the first place. That's when I decided I was actually from another planet where my behavior was perfectly normal, which led to my detailed survey of how many people had been abducted by aliens. But Kate was the only one who would take the survey so I can't say it was statistically significant. When my dad said we were moving I figured I could start over and escape being The Weird Girl without even leaving Planet Earth. Plus my mom said I could get one of those Victoria's Secret push-up bras that make it look like you have—

JENSEN *(correcting the record)*. No. I didn't.

KATE *(sympathetic)*. It was worth a shot. *(A beat.)* For me, moving was the worst possible news. I had everything in Englecliff, including—hel-lo—A Life of Purpose. Play-

writing. How could my parents just rip it away from me?

JENSEN. My daughter can be quite the drama queen. But she wasn't the only one in our family with a dream. The new job was her dad's dream.

(PETE, JENSEN and PORTIA exit. MARCUS enters.)

MARCUS. Before Kate left, I asked about her goals and suggested she think about going to USC—the University of Southern California. She wrote hip, funny, glib—perfect for TV. She could be running her own sitcom before she was thirty.

KATE. That was like telling a girl who longed to become Rembrandt that she was a nice little cartoonist.

MARCUS. Then she had to stop writing cartoons, and ask herself the tough questions: What hurt her to the bone? What made her so passionate she couldn't even breathe?

KATE *(embarrassed)*. I was only sixteen!

MARCUS. Which was the truth. But it was also an excuse. So I gave her a challenge: Write a play while you're in Tennessee. A real play. I'd be waiting to read it. And, Kate. Always remember:

MARCUS & KATE. You can't write what you don't know.

(MARCUS exits. The CAST—except KATE—sings a rousing up-tempo chorus of “Rocky Top.” They might be scattered around the theater. Begin Projection #1.)

CAST.

WISH THAT I WAS ON OLE ROCKY TOP,

**DOWN IN THE TENNESSEE HILLS.
AIN'T NO SMOGGY SMOKE ON ROCKY TOP,
AIN'T NO TELEPHONE BILLS.
ROCKY TOP, YOU'LL ALWAYS BE
HOME SWEET HOME TO ME.
GOOD OLE ROCKY TOP,
ROCKY TOP TENNESSEE, ROCKY TOP
TENNESSEE.**

(The CAST whoops, exits.)

KATE *(deadpan)*. Yee-haw. *(End Projection #1.)* Sixty days later, we were in our new home: Redford, Tennessee, fifteen miles south of Nashville, population 18,561.

(BIRDIE MCKINLEY enters.)

BIRDIE. Actually, 18,582. The sign's a little out of date.

KATE. RobertaMcKinley.

BIRDIE. Call me Birdie. People say Redford looks like an old movie set. Courthouse square, red-brick sidewalks, old-fashioned barbershop, five-and-dime and what-all. And Jimmy Mack's—been here forever—it's a meat and three.

KATE. Yankee translation: You choose a meat or chicken and three side dishes.

BIRDIE. Now if you want dessert so good it'll make you want to slap your momma, you come to my establishment, The Pink Teacup. It was opened in 1928 by my granny Florence Lawson—everyone called her Florrie. Granny was an unmarried woman back then, and she hired a black man as her baker. Mr. Samuel Brewster, his name was. Everyone thought they were keeping

company. It was quite a scandal. He taught Granny to make the butterscotch chip cookies I still make to this day.

(MADISON CHESNEY enters.)

MADISON *(sarcastic)*. Well, we're all *real* stoked about that.

KATE. Madison Chesney, fashion arbiter of Redford West Middle School.

MADISON. My parents say I should be proud of Redford, because my family goes back five generations here. Please. Proud of what? Everyone in this town knows everyone else's business. I kissed a boy at a party—on the *cheek*—and by the time I got home his daddy had already called my daddy. Plus, there's nothing to do. Thank God we just got a Starbucks. I'm sorry, but Birdie's never even heard of a frappuccino, okay?

(BIRDIE and MADISON exit. KATE crosses to JENSEN, PETE and PORTIA. The girls are bored. Begin Projection #2.)

PETE. We drove through town that first day, saw it all. I'd been reading about the history of Redford. The municipal golf course—it's a beauty—was the site of the Battle of Redford—one of the bloodiest of the Civil War. Major General Redford died a hero in that battle. They named the town for him. And in the middle of the courthouse square— *(The girls' interest is captured as the family focuses on the monument.)*

KATE. There it was. This massive stone gray *thing*. And flanking that monument, flying high and proud, were two flags.

PETE. One American.

JENSEN (*disgusted*). And one Confederate. It might as well have been a swastika. (*JENSEN, PETE and PORTIA exit. End Projection #2.*)

KATE. It wasn't until later that I found out what was etched into the granite—the names of three thousand Confederate and eighteen hundred Union soldiers who had all died in the Battle of Redford, December 16, 1863.

(*MRS. ANNE AUGUSTUS enters.*)

MRS. AUGUSTUS. The moment I saw her, I knew she wasn't a Redford girl. I've lived here all my eighty-two years. I know everyone.

KATE. Mrs. Anne Augustus, head librarian of the Redford Public Library. I wanted to see what a library was like in a town that flew a racist flag.

MRS. AUGUSTUS. She came in asking for plays.

KATE. Modern plays.

MRS. AUGUSTUS. I sent her upstairs to Patricia Farrow's bedroom.

KATE. It was cramped, and hot, with one wooden table, ancient chairs, and a dusty bookshelf. I found *The Crucible*, sat at the table, and started to read.

(*JACKSON REDFORD enters.*)