

# Curriculum Guide

for

# PARADE

*A co-production by the University of Montevallo and Magic  
City Actors Theatre of Birmingham*

**A musical by Jason Robert Brown and Alfred Uhry**

**Directed by David Callaghan**

**Choreographed by Carl Dean**

**November 6, 7, 12, 13, 14 (7:30 p.m.)**

**Matinee- November 8, 15 (2:30 p.m.)**

**Virginia Samford Theatre, Birmingham**

**VST Box Office: 205-251-1206**

## **Parade**

PARADE, based on the true story of the trial and lynching of a man wrongly accused of murder, is brought to emotional and theatrical life by acclaimed playwright Alfred Uhry (*Driving Miss Daisy*) and Jason Robert Brown, one of Broadway's most important young composers (*Songs For A New World, The Last Five Years, Thirteen, etc.*).

### **Plot Synopsis:**

In 1913 Leo Frank, a Brooklyn-born Jew living in Atlanta, Georgia, is put on trial for the murder of 13-year old Mary Phagan, a factory worker under his employ at the National Pencil Factory. The case is quickly sensationalized in a media circus that fuels public outrage and racial tensions in Atlanta. Leo's wife, Lucille, a Jewish southerner, joins him in an emotional journey to expose the truth and clear his name. PARADE is a powerful story about injustice, love, courage, and community amidst the formation of 20<sup>th</sup> century America.

### **Possible Curriculum Connections:**

PARADE touches on facts, concepts and themes found in history, political science, sociology, literature, journalism, and of course, the performing arts. Educators in the liberal arts setting understand that deeper learning occurs when students are able to make curriculum connections within and among disciplines. PARADE can become an extended learning experience for UM students as we intentionally link ideas from one subject area to those in another area as well as to the musical theater production itself.

The concepts and ideas listed below are grouped according to discipline. While certainly not exhaustive, each list provides instructors with possible course linkages to the viewing of PARADE.

#### **History**

1914-1916

Lingering remnants of the Civil War in the south; the role of collective memory in history

Murder of a young farm girl turned factory worker (Mary Phagan, age 13)

Urbanization of the United States; tensions between the myth of the "Old South" and modernization; "Old South" versus "New South" embodied by Atlanta

Trial of NY-born Jewish factory worker, Leo Frank, accused of raping and murdering Mary

Frank's sentence is finally commuted from death by hanging to life imprisonment due to possible problems with the trial

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Smashing Jewish store owners' windows in Atlanta

Angry lynch mob kidnaps him from prison b/c they are determined that the court's guilty verdict should be carried out

Frank is taken to Mary's hometown of Marietta, GA where he is hanged

Anti-Defamation League was formed, in part, due to the trial and lynching of Leo Frank

Relationship between the revival of the Klu Klux Klan and the Knights of Mary Phagan

1986 Frank was issued a pardon by the GA pardons and paroles board — without actually clearing him of the crime; *Who writes our history?*

### **Political Science**

American justice system in early 20<sup>th</sup> century

Courtroom trials

Miscarriage of justice

False evidence and coached testimonies

Career-advancing prosecuting attorney; "good ol' Boy" defense attorney

An individual's crusade for justice (Lucille) on behalf of the accused (Leo); what does it mean to be a political activist?

Similarities and differences between laws, ethics, morals

Street politics in WWI era and rise of mass/totalitarian movements

### **Sociology**

Differences between northerners and southerners during the time period

Differences between black versus white

Differences between Jew versus Gentile

Roots of anti-Semitism, particularly in the south

Religious intolerance; disenfranchisement of people groups

Racial tensions

Bigotry

Mob mentality/hysteria

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Street politics in WWI era and rise of mass/totalitarian movements

Roles of southern born women in early 20<sup>th</sup> century

Similarities and differences between laws, ethics, morals

### **Mass Communication/Journalism**

Sensationalism in the media; Hearst Corporate influence

Opportunistic and unscrupulous reporting

Media and journalism ethics

Northern press vs. southern press

### **American Literature**

Author, Alfred Uhry

Uhry's Atlanta trilogy

Tony Award winner

Use of literary devices such as flashbacks

### **Music/Theater**

Music and Theater

Symbolic meaning of the title—why "Parade?"

Implications of orchestration & vocal decisions

Patriotic marches, blues, fox trots, ballads, gospel, and vaudeville numbers

Repeated phrases and melodic riffs

Evoking emotions with music (i.e. tone, tempo)

What does it mean to create a socially relevant musical? Implications for selling tickets

Differences between non-profit/commercial/educational theatre companies

Responsibility of authors/artists in dramatizing a "real life" story for the stage and a musical

How historically accurate is it, or should it be?

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## Dance

Implications of choreography decisions

Evoking emotions with movement

## Lighting

Implications of lighting design decisions

Evoking emotions with lighting and visual effects

## Stage/Set/Costumes

Implications of stage and set design decisions

Implications of period costume design decisions