

Performance Connects Racial, Social Issues Across Cultures

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"History repeats itself," the saying goes; and learning from the past can help solve problems in the future.

"'Master Harold' ... and the boys," a historic play surrounding racial issues and Clarence Brown Theatre's first production of the spring semester, will open Friday at the Ula Love Doughty Carousel Theatre.

The play, directed by UT alumna Jayne Morgan, follows white South African teen Hally, played by Eric Sorrels, a senior in theater, who has grown up and developed close relationships with two black waiters, Willie and Sam. When Hally discovers his alcoholic and racist father will soon leave the hospital to return home, he realizes how his life will change for the worst. Unleashing his pent up anger and frustrations toward his father, Hally's emotions could change the dynamic of his relationships with Willie and Sam.

The play seeks to show how racism and hatred are not natural born qualities, but rather, are learned from being taught or influenced by someone.

"This play shows how badly we are capable of treating people and how we are also capable of reaching for being better," Morgan said.

This reality, and seeing a production that addresses these social issues, relates to current political issues, making the play an event Morgan believes everyone should experience.

"People should see this play because we are in a hard time to talk about subjects like race and use of power," Morgan said.

While "'Master Harold' ... and the boys' speaks to current issues, the play takes place in South Africa in the apartheid era, which caused some challenges for the cast. They had to learn how to speak the accent and still make sure they could be understood by its East Tennessee audience.

Another challenge for the cast and director was learning to ballroom dance including the quick step, fox trot and the waltz while making it appear natural with the assistance of choreographer Kody Row.

Sorrels sees these new experiences and challenges as the most rewarding part of taking on this multi-faceted role.

"It's quite a journey because the highs are super high and the lows are very low," Sorrels said.

The show previews Thursday, Feb. 5 and opens Friday, Feb. 6 and runs until Sunday, Feb. 22 beginning at 7:30 p.m. each night. Preview tickets are free for students and all other performances are \$5 and can be purchased at knoxvilletickets.com.



• Photo Courtesy of Clarence Brown Theatre

(From left to right) Bryant Louis Bentley, Rico Bruce Wade and Eric Sorrels will star in the Clarence Brown Theatre's production of "'Master Harold' ... and the boys."

