

INHERIT THE WIND

FEB 12 - MAR 2

Directed by KATIE LUPICA



CLARENCE
BROWN
THEATRE

AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

AUDIENCE
ENGAGEMENT
GUIDE

INHERIT THE WIND

By Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee

February 12 - March 2, 2025

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We recognize and value diversity in all forms, including age, ethnicity, family structure, gender identity, national origin, race, religion, spirituality, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, and veteran status.

We believe inclusivity and diversity in our workplace should reflect the increasing multicultural and global society in which we live. We seek to foster excellent creative research, scholarship, and professional practice by creating a welcoming environment, ethical recruitment practices, and a diverse student body who will have lives of awareness and understanding through their creative research, teaching, practicing, and advocating for others in a diverse world.

Detailed information on our access and engagement initiatives can be found here:

<https://theatre.utk.edu/access/>

FROM THE DIRECTOR



In 1925 – in the wake of a tumultuous decade that brought a world war, a global pandemic, social upheaval, and the dawn of the roaring twenties – the sleepy town of Dayton, Tennessee hosted what would become known as the “trial of the century.” Thirty years later, playwrights Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee researched these events extensively, then in Lawrence’s words, did what artists must: “threw it out and wrote a play.”

What emerged was not just a courtroom drama, but a deeply human story about love, faith, courage, and the exhilarating journey of discovering one’s own power to think. Through its rich tapestry of characters – battling lawyers, young lovers, concerned parents, spirited neighbors, and many more – *Inherit the Wind* reminds us that behind every great debate are real people wrestling with change in their own ways.

Today, we meet both the history and Lawrence & Lee’s masterful work from our own perspective, in our own era of uncertainty. The questions this play raises about how we navigate profound social change feel as urgent now as they did both at the trial in 1925 and at the play’s premiere in 1955. Rather than lecture us about right and wrong, the play suggests that enlightenment is not found in “either/or” but in “both, so then what?” It invites us to experience the complexity, humor, and heart of a community grappling with questions of how we live together and why we live at all.

Our production embraces this spirit of “factual fiction” – as the playwrights called it – by viewing the past through the lens of memory and poetry, rather than strict historical accuracy. Accordingly, our design looks beyond 1925 for inspiration, extending into the era between the events of the trial and the play’s premiere. These thirty years encompass a fascinating period of American art, which seemed to revel in the dissonance between literal and metaphorical truth. Our design takes inspiration from this full era, mingled with glimpses of our own time. We have endeavored to create a world that feels both nostalgic and timeless, challenging our expectations about the past and drawing us into this story that could be “not too long ago. It might have been yesterday. It could be tomorrow.”

As we bring this American classic to life, we invite you to join us in celebrating not only the gripping courtroom confrontations but also the messy human moments, the unexpected laughter, and the soaring spirit of a story that continues to move audiences nearly seventy years after its premiere. Certainty can seem like the answer in uncertain times, but it is through embracing uncertainty that both transcendence and humanity reveal themselves most fully and suggest a way forward, together. ❖

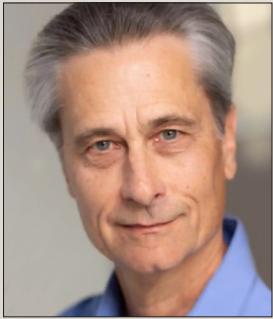
Katie Lupica

THANK YOU

to our most generous 'Inherit the Wind' sponsors



THE CHARACTERS



TERRY WEBER

MATTHEW HARRISON BRADY - A famous politician and speaker who has come to prosecute the case.



CLAY COOPER

BERT CATES - A 24-year-old high school science teacher.



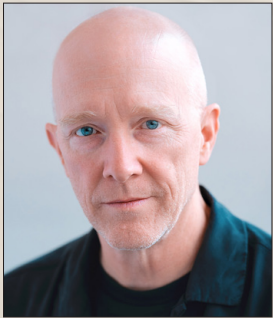
DOUG JAMES

MEEKER - The kind town bailiff.



DAVID CRAWFORD

MAYOR - The mayor of Hillsboro.



JED DIAMOND

HENRY DRUMMOND - A famous lawyer from Chicago who has come to defend Bert Cates.



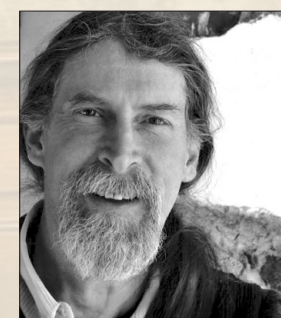
DEVELYN JAYAN

RACHEL BROWN - A 22-year-old second grade teacher in love with Bert.



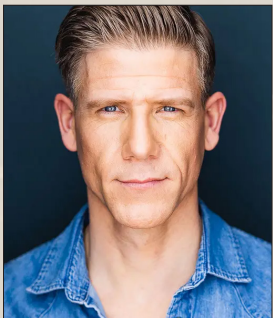
JENNI LAMM

MRS. BRADY - The wife of Matthew Harrison Brady.



KEVIN D. COLLINS, PhD.

JUDGE - The presiding judge in the case.



JEB BURRIS

E. K. HORNBECK - An acerbic writer from the Baltimore Herald.



BRIAN ROBINSON

REV. JEREMIAH BROWN - A fire-and-brimstone preacher and father of Rachel.



DENZEL DEJOURNETTE

TOM DAVENPORT - Assistant Attorney for the Prosecution.

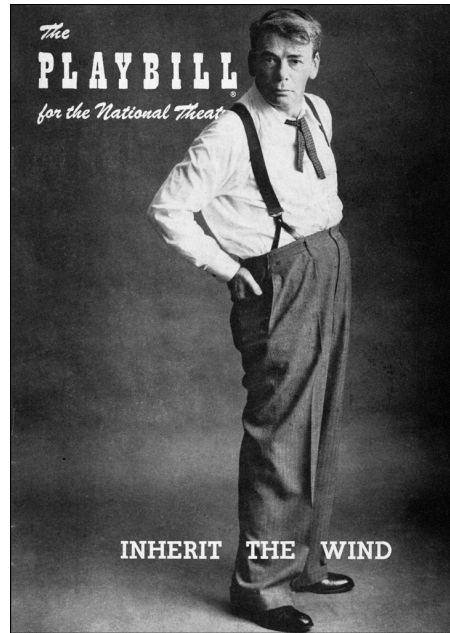
ABOUT THE PLAY

Based on the 1925 trial of John T. Scopes and written in response to McCarthy-era censorship, *Inherit the Wind* was completed in 1950 and opened on January 11, 1955, at Theatre '55 in Dallas in a production directed by Margo Jones. The playwrights Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee researched the trial transcripts, media coverage, and even interviewed those involved in the trial but from the outset they aimed to create a lasting piece of theatre rather than an historical reenactment.

The play presents a quiet but idealistic schoolteacher, Bertram Cates, accidentally thrust into the middle of a culture war and major legal event. Cates sometimes fades into the background as the more dramatic battle plays out between two great men: prosecutor Matthew Harrison Brady and defense attorney Henry Drummond. Lawrence and Lee based some of their characters on people associated with the historical trial, such as the politician William Jennings Bryan, the Chicago criminal attorney Clarence Darrow, the Baltimore writer H. L. Mencken, and, of course, teacher and football coach John T. Scopes. They also included characters who had no historical analogue, such as Rev. Jeremiah Brown and his daughter, Rachel, who are necessary to the dramatic conflict of the play.

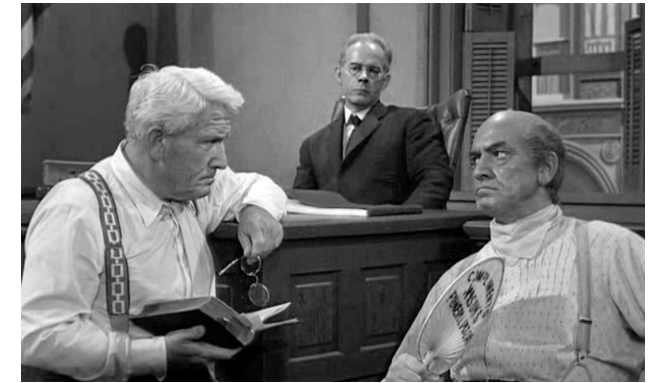
After its Dallas premiere, *Inherit the Wind* opened a few months later in New York at the National Theatre on April 21. The play ran for 806 performances and received three Tony awards in 1956. Two Broadway revivals occurred for short runs in 1996 and 1997, and a 2009 production occurred in London. Despite its initial – and continual – positive reception by audiences, the Broadway premiere was criticized by both theatre reviewers and cultural writers for its representation of the Scopes trial.

Stanley Kramer directed a film adaptation starring Spencer Tracy in 1960. Many slight changes to the play were made for the film, including the order of some lines. More notable changes include replacing the play's opening between the two children with a woman slowly singing "Old Time Religion." In the play, Cates is already in jail whereas in the film he is arrested from the front of his classroom while teaching about evolution. Cates' students are later represented as supporting him. In the play, the *Baltimore Herald*, Hornbeck's paper,



Original Playbill from 1955

secures bond for Cates at the end of the trial whereas in the movie John Stebbins (father of the deceased Tommy) offers to pay the bond for Drummond if the lawyer is held in contempt. The film also increased the town's vitriol against Cates as well as Rachel's conflict over her relationship with Cates.



Spencer Tracy as Henry Drummond, Harry Morgan as Judge Mel Coffey, and Fredric March as Matthew Harrison Brady in a trial scene in the 1960 motion picture *Inherit the Wind*

WHAT TO WATCH FOR

In the town of Hillsboro, religion is at the heart of the conflict. At the same time, religion is very important to the town. The play presents different facets of religious belief through its many characters. In some productions of *Inherit the Wind*, the religion of the townspeople is presented as one-dimensional, frightening, or flawed. In contrast, this production aimed to explore something different: beauty. On stage, beauty is shown through vibrant costume design and enthralling storytelling.

What elements of the play seemed especially – maybe even surprisingly – beautiful to you?

Cates is on trial for teaching evolution. Specifically, he has taught from a textbook that includes Darwin's theory of evolution and Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* is a featured prop on stage. Yet, Darwin's theory is not prominently featured or given explanation in the play. The most the townspeople and the audience hear about evolution emerges through the legal testimony of one of Cates' young students.

What parts of the theory of evolution are Bryan and the townspeople opposed to?

Beginning with the title of the play – a quote from Proverbs – the play frequently cites the Christian Bible. Not only do Matthew Harrison Brady and Rev. Jeremiah Brown reference and quote the Bible, but so do other characters. Henry Drummond uses the Bible as part of his legal strategy. At one point in the trial, Brady begins to recite all the books of the Old Testament and falters without completing it.

Which references to the Bible are most poetic in the play? Which ones are the most conflicted?

THE BUTLER ACT

House Bill No. 185

AN ACT prohibiting the teaching of the Evolution Theory in all the Universities, Normals and all other public schools of Tennessee, which are supported in whole or in part by the public school funds of the State, and to provide penalties for the violations thereof.

Section 1. *Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Tennessee,* That it shall be unlawful for any teacher in any of the Universities, Normals and all other public schools of the State which are supported in whole or in part by the public school funds of the State, to teach any theory that denies the story of the Divine Creation of man as taught in the Bible, and to teach instead that man has descended from a lower order of animals.

Section 2. *Be it further enacted,* That any teacher found guilty of the violation of this Act, Shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and upon conviction, shall be fined not less than One Hundred \$ (100.00) Dollars nor more than Five Hundred (\$ 500.00) Dollars for each offense.

Section 3. *Be it further enacted,* That this Act take effect from and after its passage, the public welfare requiring it.

Passed March 13, 1925

W. F. Barry, *Speaker of the House of Representatives*
L. D. Hill, *Speaker of the Senate*

Approved March 21, 1925

Austin Peay, *Governor*

Were you aware of The Butler Act prior to attending this play? What about your play companions? Do you find it comparable to any recent local, state, or federal legislation?



THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE CHARACTERS

Matthew Harrison Brady, Henry Drummond, H. L. Mencken, and Bert Cates are based on historical people associated with the Scopes trial.

WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN (1860-1925). Born in southern Illinois, Jennings underwent a conversion experience at a revival when he was 14. Often held outside under a tent, revivals were multi-day preaching, prayer, and healing events held by churches and missionaries. After college and law school, Bryan practiced law and entered politics in Lincoln, Nebraska. From 1890 onward, he worked in politics and ran for U.S. president in 1896, 1900, and 1908. After his defeat in 1900, Bryan began speaking and writing widely. He became a popular speaker on the Chautauqua circuit and published his own successful newspaper, *The Commoner*. He was an avid supporter of prohibition and women's suffrage. He resigned as Secretary of State due to the impending American involvement in World War I and he condemned the carnage of the war. By the 1920s, Bryan's concerns had turned towards the cause of anti-evolution. He died days after the Scopes verdict, and many blamed the stress of the trial on his death.



Clarence Darrow, left, and William Jennings Bryan have a conversation during a break from the trial. Courtesy of [Wikimedia Commons](#).

CLARENCE SEWARD DARROW (1857-1938). Born and raised in Ohio by an abolitionist father and feminist mother, Darrow attended both college and law school but graduated from neither. By 1889, he had moved to Chicago and worked as a lawyer for the railway before resigning to represent labor organizer Eugene V. Debs, leader of the Pullman Strike of 1894. He would represent Debs, again, in his 1918 sedition trial. The two cases for which Darrow is most remembered are the Leopold and Loeb case and Scopes. On May 21, 1924, Nathan Leopold, Jr. and Richard Loeb, two undergraduate students at the University of Chicago, kidnapped and murdered 14-year-old Robert Franks. Darrow knew they were guilty, but took on the case because he opposed the death penalty on moral grounds. After the Scopes trial, Darrow continued to take on difficult cases, especially those dealing with racial discrimination, censorship, and the death penalty.

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THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE CHARACTERS



H. L. Mencken at the Baltimore Sun.

especially, Mencken's satirical observations on society. Mencken covered the Scopes trial for *The Baltimore Sun*. During the Scopes trial, Mencken frequently disparaged Bryan, fundamentalism, and the parochialism of Dayton. His views, like many other journalists reporting on the trial, shaped our public memory of it.

HENRY L. MENCKEN (1880-1956) – Of all the characters based on historical people in *Inherit the Wind*, the cadence and sharpness of E. K. Hornbeck's lines come the closest to representing an actual historical person, at least in writing. H. L. Mencken was born and raised in Baltimore. He wrote for *The Baltimore Sun* for most of his life. In 1924, he and the drama critic George Nathan founded *The American Mercury*, a magazine that reviewed literature, culture, drama, and,



John T. Scopes

teacher. Scopes was recruited by local friends and businessmen to serve as a challenge to the Butler Act. After the trial and the appeal, he briefly attended graduate school at the University of Chicago. Eventually, he pursued a career working for United Gas Corporation (now Pennzoil). He married and had two sons. For the ACLU, the trial was about the 14th Amendment, but for Scopes the trial was about First Amendment principles. As he wrote in his 1967 memoir, *Center of the Storm: Memoirs of John T. Scopes*, "The trial itself was a test, and a defense of the fundamental freedom of religion. At stake was the principle of separation of church and state."

JOHN THOMAS SCOPES (1900-1970) – Born on a farm in Peducah, KY, John Scopes graduated from high school in southern Illinois. After receiving a bachelor's degree from the University of Kentucky, he began teaching and coaching at Rhea County High School in Dayton, TN. For the most part, he was unfamiliar with Darwin's theories, but did teach from Hunter's *Civic Biology*, which contained a section on evolution, when substituting for the main biology

STATE OF TENNESSEE V. SCOPES: THE TRIAL, AND THE APPEAL

According to the playwrights, *Inherit the Wind* is not about the trial of John T. Scopes – or the trial of Matthew Harrison Brady. Rather, they instruct, "Humanity is on trial. Anyone who would limit thought is on trial." Nonetheless, the contours of the play are drawn from the actual historical Scopes Monkey trial, as it came to be known. Both the Butler Act and the challenge to it were stage managed by major players both within Tennessee and beyond.

THE BUTLER ACT

After the failure of a 1922 Kentucky anti-evolution law, the Butler Act was enacted by the Tennessee state legislature on March 13, 1925. The law barred the teaching of evolution and was one of a number of laws passed across the country in 1925 that restricted teaching certain subjects or mandated prayer or Bible reading in public schools.



Joe Mendi at drugstore;
Tennessee State Library and Archives

THE ACLU

The American Civil Liberties Union, which had been looking for a state-level civil liberties case, placed ads in Tennessee newspapers saying it would offer legal defense to any teacher who violated the Butler Act. One of those ads appeared in a Chattanooga paper on May 4, 1925

THE PLAN

After seeing the ACLU ad, a meeting was arranged at Fred Robinson's Drugstore in Dayton, TN. George Rappleyea, manager of the Cumberland Coal and Iron company, other businessmen, and the brothers Herbert and Sue Hicks, who were attorneys for the town, recruited John T. Scopes as a defendant. After Scopes agreed, Rappleyea contacted the ACLU and Robinson contacted the media.

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THE ATTORNEYS

In addition to the local Hicks brothers, several other attorneys joined the prosecution: 18th Circuit district attorney Tom Stewart, Benjamin McKenzie, Gordon McKenzie, and the politician and orator William Jennings Bryan. ACLU Attorney Arthur Garfield Hays expected to defend the case and was joined by Clarence Darrow, a famous criminal lawyer from Chicago, former University of Tennessee Law School Professor John R. Neal, and sensational divorce attorney, Dudley Field Malone.

DAYTON

Even those opposed to the teaching of evolution supported the use of Dayton as a trial site to boost the local economy.

Extraordinary provisions were made to host tourists, visitors, and out-of-town participants in the trial. A defunct and abandoned mansion was converted into the Aqua Hotel to house visiting scientists who came to testify for the defense. At one point, the government considered providing tents and cots. Hunter's *Civic Biology*, which had been for sale in Robinson's Drugstore, sold out. Booksellers, monkeys, and other diversions were seen on the streets during the trial.



"Why Dayton of All Places" pamphlet; Tennessee State Library and Archives

TRIAL

The trial began on July 13 and delivered a guilty verdict on July 21. Scopes was fined \$100. The trial was so popular that it moved to the front lawn of the Rhea County Courthouse, for both practical and safety reasons. It was widely covered by the press, with daily updates available in papers across the country. The Scopes trial was the first live radio broadcast of any trial in U.S. history, with WGN Chicago placing microphones in the courtroom and the reporter Quinn Ryan offering live narration. Unfortunately, no record of the broadcast exists.

AFTERMATH

The following year, the Supreme Court of Tennessee heard the appeal, *John Thomas Scopes v. The State of Tennessee*. The original conviction was overturned on a technicality – at the time only a jury could sentence a fine in any amount over \$50 and Judge John Raulston had fined Scopes \$100. The Butler Act remained on the books until its repeal in 1967.

WANT TO DIG DEEPER? HERE ARE SOME OPEN-ACCESS RESOURCES:

AUDIO

"I am John Scopes" (2015)

Audio documentary with archival recordings and interviews by WKMS

<https://www.wkms.org/society/2015-07-20/audio-wkms-documentary-i-am-john-scopes>

Interview with Edward Larson about *Summer for the Gods* (2020)

Commonwealth Club of California

<https://www.commonwealthclub.org/events/archive/podcast/edward-larson-summer-gods>

"Monkey Business" (2021)

The Last Archive with Jill Lepore produced by Pushkin Industries

<https://www.thelastarchive.com/season-2/episode-1-monkey-business>

Interview with Brenda Wineapple about *Keeping the Faith* (2024)

C-Span Book Shelf

<https://podcasts.apple.com/ca/podcast/bn-brenda-wineapple-keeping-the-faith/id1691138219?i=1000673135208>

WEBSITES

Scopes Trial Centennial Celebration

Produced by the College of Arts & Sciences, University of Tennessee

<https://artsci.utk.edu/scopes-trial-centennial-celebration/>

Scopes Monkey Trial (1925), Famous Trials

Produced by Professor Douglas O. Linder, UMKC School of Law

<https://famous-trials.com/scopesmonkey/>

The Scopes "Monkey" Trial, Tennessee Virtual Archive

Produced by the Tennessee State Library & Archives

<https://teva.contentdm.oclc.org/customizations/global/pages/collections/scopes/scopes.html>

Scopes 100

Produced by Rhea County, Tennessee

<https://www.scopes100.com/>