

CONTENTS

- The Play
- Meet the Playwrights
- Historical Context: The Civil War
- What is a Monologue?
- Who Fought the Civil War?
- Historical Figures in *Our War*
- National Civil War Project
- Arena Backstage: Meet the Director
- Three Big Questions
- Additional Resources

THE PLAY

North vs. South. Union vs. Confederacy. Blue against gray. Brother against brother. Plantations, slavery, President Abraham Lincoln, General Robert E. Lee, the first shots at Fort Sumter, the turning point at the Battle of Gettysburg, the South's surrender at Appomattox Courthouse: you think you know about the Civil War, but do you?

The American Civil War shaped our nation in a multitude of ways, and continues to impact Americans' daily lives, in ways we may not always recognize. *Our War* investigates the war's impact on life—for those who lived through it, and those of us who carry the nation forward today. Though it happened 150 years ago, it is our war.

Join these voices as they share their perspectives on war, race, family, inheritance, loss and memory. As we remember the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, these voices ask themselves and the nation, "What were we hoping to learn?" ●

"I can only hope that mistakes we make here, and the mistakes our progeny will make in the future, will not come to define us or them. We seek not to create a paradise; we seek only to move forward. And moving forward is all that I can promise you."—Gary Barton, *Our War*



WRITTEN BY

MARIA AGUI CARTER, LYDIA DIAMOND, AMY FREED, DIANE GLANCY, JOY HARJO, SAMUEL D. HUNTER, NAOMI IIZUKA, ADITI KAPIL, DAN LEFRANC, DAVID LINDSAY-ABAIRE, KEN LUDWIG, TAYLOR MAC, KEN NARASAKI, LYNN NOTTAGE, ROBERT O'HARA, HEATHER RAFFO, CHARLES RANDOLPH-WRIGHT, TANYA SARACHO, BETTY SHAMIEH, JOHN STRAND, TAZEWEEL THOMPSON, WILLIAM S. YELLOW ROBE, JR. AND KAREN ZACARÍAS WITH NICHOLAS ONG AND ZINHLE ESSAMUAH
DIRECTED BY ANITA MAYNARD-LOSH

Now playing in the Arlene and Robert Kogod Cradle
October 21-November 9, 2014

MEET THE PLAYWRIGHTS

It is 2013. You are a writer living in Washington, or New York, or California. You receive an email from Arena Stage inviting you to contribute a 3-5 minute monologue for a new play. The monologue should address or react to the Civil War and its repercussions. Where do you find inspiration? Whose story do you tell? What can you say about this important time?

Perhaps you know that your family tree stems from a plantation in South Carolina, like Charles Randolph Wright, and you pen a piece in honor of that history.

Or maybe you, as David Lindsay-Abaire did, adopt the voice of a mother waiting for her son to come home from the war.

Maybe you are more compelled to write in the voice of the present—a 10-year old girl giving a report, or a woman at Starbucks contemplating today's racial divide.

All of these voices and many more are present in *Our War*. Twenty-five playwrights took their impressions of the Civil War and crafted monologues exploring those themes.

The group of playwrights is just as diverse as their chosen topics. Of the 25 contributors, more than half are female, many are writers of color, and three are Native American. In addition, many have strong ties to both Arena Stage and the D.C. theater community.

Find out more about each of the 25 playwrights of *Our War*

HERE! ▼



HISTORICAL CONTEXT: THE CIVIL WAR, 1861-1865

In the 1800s, there was a sharp division between the United States. States in the Southern part of the nation relied heavily on slave labor to work their plantations. Many Americans living in the industrialized North believed that slavery was wrong and were working to abolish, or get rid of, the practice all together. Those people were called abolitionists.

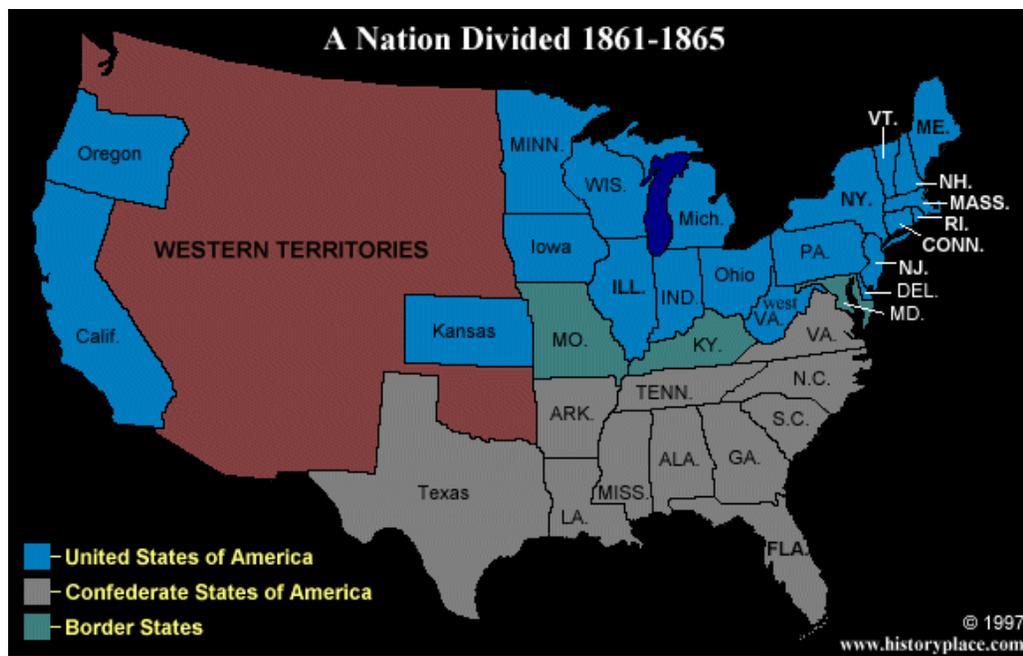
Politicians were split across the same regional lines. Southern politicians wanted states to decide how to govern themselves, while those in the North felt it would be better for the federal government to control major policy. Abraham Lincoln, an abolitionist, was part of the second group. When Lincoln was elected president, many Southern states were outraged that he wanted to take away states' rights, and decided to **secede** from the United States.

In 1861, those states formed a new nation: The Confederate States of America.

In April of 1861, Confederate soldiers attacked Fort Sumter in South Carolina, forcing the fort to lower the American flag as a form of surrender to the Confederacy. This attack set off a chain of events that rapidly became an all-out war between the two halves of our nation.

From 1861 until 1865, the nation was at war with itself. By the time Union forces captured the Confederate President Jefferson Davis in May 1865, more than 750,000 lives had been lost in battle, more than any other war in the history of the United States. ●

secede- to give up membership in a nation and become an independent governing unit



The Civil War was fought from 1861-1865. At that time, the US was made up of only 34 states—those along the East Coast and as far West as Iowa and Nebraska.

WHAT IS A MONOLOGUE?

Our War is a play comprised of 25 short pieces called monologues. A monologue is a speech in a play that is performed by one character. In a monologue, a character might tell a friend or family member a secret, discover something new about themselves, or give the audience information that illuminates the plot. Monologues can be directed at the audience or at another character on stage, whether the audience can see that character or not.

When monologues are performed directly to the audience, they are called “direct address.” In this type of monologue, the character might be using the audience as another character in the story, or they might be “breaking the fourth wall” and using their monologue as a chance to comment on the action of the play to the audience.

A monologue that is performed by one character on an empty stage is called a “soliloquy.” ●

KEY CIVIL WAR EVENTS

November 6, 1860:

Lincoln elected president

December 1860-February 1861:

Seven states secede from the Union

February 9, 1861:

Confederate States of America is formed

April 12, 1861:

Fort Sumter attacked, Civil War begins

July 21, 1861:

Union Army suffers defeat at the first battle of Bull Run

August 29 & 30, 1862:

Second Bull Run. Union is again defeated and retreats to Washington

September 17, 1862:

Bloodiest battle in human history at Antietam forces Confederate retreat

January 1, 1863:

Lincoln issues final Emancipation Proclamation. Slaves are freed and encouraged to enlist in the Union Army.

July 1-3, 1863:

Union Army defeats the Confederacy at Gettysburg

September 2, 1864:

General Sherman takes control of Atlanta for the Union

January 31, 1865:

The Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution is adopted, abolishing slavery completely

April 9, 1865:

General Robert E. Lee surrenders to General Ulysses S. Grant.



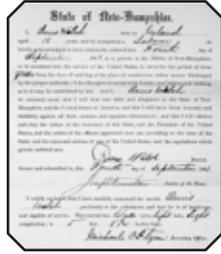
ACTIVITY

Much of the Civil War was fought on battlefields in and around Maryland, Virginia and D.C.

Research the major battles of the Civil War and find which one happened nearest to your home or school.

WHO FOUGHT IN THE CIVIL WAR?

Enlistment Fact Sheet:



Any male over 18 was eligible to enlist in the army. The first soldiers to enlist were given 3-month contracts. When those contracts began to run out and the war was far from over, terms of enlistment lengthened to

three years. In this standard enlistment form, you can see where 'months' was changed to 'years' to ensure that the armies on both sides would remain well-equipped on the battlefield.

Join Us Brothers



Originally, African Americans were barred from enlisting in either the North or South. Many slave owners in the South, however, would send their

slaves to fight in their place. Near the end of the war, both sides realized they were running

low on eligible men to fight, and began actively recruiting African-American men into "colored regiments," most commanded by white officers, to help in the war effort.

Ely S. Parker



Native American men also fought in the Civil War. Roughly 3,600 Native Americans fought for the Union alone. Some served with their tribes to protect their land, while others served in colored regiments alongside African Americans. One particular Native American, Ely S. Parker, became a Captain of Engineers in Ulysses S. Grant's army and, later, his Commissioner of Indian Affairs. The end of the Civil War was only the beginning of many hardships for Native American tribes, however. Many people on the East Coast moved West after the war in hopes of starting a new life. They settled on land that belonged to the native peoples. Clashes at Little Big Horn, Beecher's Island, and Wounded Knee led the nation into a new, ongoing struggle over land ownership that continues to this day. ●

HISTORICAL FIGURES FEATURED IN OUR WAR

While many of the voices you will hear in *Our War* are those of fictional people, some of the figures portrayed in the piece really lived. The words they speak in the play are not direct quotations, but their circumstances and histories are important to understand. Here are a few of the historical figures you will hear from.

John Wilkes Booth



John Wilkes Booth, best known as the man who would assassinate Abraham Lincoln, was born in Maryland in 1838, and raised on his family's plantation. He started acting at an early age.

In 1865, Booth set out to kidnap Lincoln as ransom for kidnapped Confederate soldiers.

When that failed, Booth set out a plan to assassinate the president, which he executed successfully on April 14, 1865.

S. Emma Edmonds



Sarah Emma Edmonds was born in Canada in 1841. In 1861, she decided she wanted to tie herself to the war efforts in the U.S., so she disguised herself as a man—Frank Thompson—and enlisted in the Union army. While enlisted, Edmonds acted as a mail carrier for the Union, and may have been a spy as well. After she contracted malaria, she deserted the army for fear of being discovered, dropped her disguise, and worked as an army nurse. ●

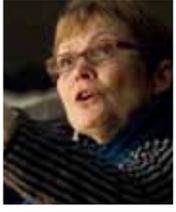
LIZ LERMAN AND THE NATIONAL CIVIL WAR PROJECT



This season's production of *Our War* is part of an ongoing, multi-city reflection on the 150 years that have passed since the American Civil War. At Arena Stage and elsewhere, artistic and educational organizations are exploring the ways in which the Civil War and its repercussions have changed our nation.

Baltimore choreographer Liz Lerman founded the Civil War Project in 2013 as a way to commemorate and

question what many call the decisive moment in our nation's history. She hopes that taking the time to do so "might make us more compassionate to what is happening around the world or open to the possibility to understand it in a different way." She asks us to consider the Civil War in the context of our own lives, and to openly ask, "What does it still mean? What is the aftermath? Where is the damage? How is it absorbed? Who does the absorbing?" ●



ARENA BACKSTAGE: MEET THE DIRECTOR

Anita Maynard-Losh is the Director of Community Engagement at Arena Stage. She is also the director of *Our War*. We sat down with her to find out more about the process and goals of the production.

What are you excited about going into this unique process?

AML: I'm excited about getting a chance to explore the questions, "who controls historic narrative? Who decides what our image of a historic event is?" These 25 playwrights give us points of view that we don't usually have about the Civil War. History is messy and complex and vast. We like to reduce it and simplify it to an image that we can comprehend. So who decides the content of that image? We can think of the Civil War as a big rock that has been dropped into a pond, and we always have seen it from a certain side of the pond, a certain vantage point. This play gives us the opportunity to look at the ripples that that rock has made from different sides of the pond.

In *Our War*, six actors are tasked with performing 25 different monologues. What did you look for while casting those actors?

AML: I was looking for actors who were transformational, and who represented America, and represented several different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Many of these monologues are written for a very specific age, specific gender, and in many cases a specific ethnic or racial background. I wanted a cast who could represent that in as honest a way as possible and yet who could transform and not be limited by the requirements of

the piece or their own personal stories. I was interested in people who were good ensemble members. All of the actors will be onstage throughout the show, so the ensemble will help create the environment of each individual piece. I wanted to find actors who were generous, supportive, playful and responsive to the group.

What do you hope the audiences will discover about the Civil War through this piece?

AML: I'd love them to recognize that sometimes we can confuse point of view with truth. If we could consider that what we think of as truth might just be opinion—that believing something is true doesn't make it irrefutably so, even if a large majority of people share your belief. Life is so much more complicated than that. I don't know if it is about the Civil War really, or if the Civil War is actually a method by which to come to a greater understanding of humanity's crazy complications and thoughts and beliefs. I think the Civil War may be the way in.

a! ACTIVITY One of the characters in *Our War* reminds us that, "right now is history, too." What do you think will be remembered from your lifetime? What do you hope future generations remember about 2014?

- THREE BIG QUESTIONS**
1. Who controls the historical narrative?
 2. Why do we go to war, and how do we decide a war is worth fighting?
 3. How has the Civil War impacted the world you live in today?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

ON THE WEB

- Music of the Civil War: http://www.folkways.si.edu/radio/civil_war_playlist/index.html
- National Civil War Project: <http://www.civilwarproject.org/>
- Civil War Trust: <http://www.civilwar.org/>

BOOKS

- *The Red Badge of Courage* by Stephen Crane

FILMS

- *The Civil War*: Ken Burns, 1990.

MUSEUMS

- National Portrait Gallery, *Civil War 150 Exhibition*: <http://npg.si.edu/exhibit/cw/npgcivilwar.html>

Helpful Hints for Theater Audiences

As an audience member at the theater, YOU are part of the show! Just as you see and hear the actors onstage, they can see and hear you in the audience. To help the performers do their best, please remember the following:

- Arrive at least 30 minutes early.
 - Visit the restroom before the show starts.
 - Before the show begins, turn off your cell phone, watch alarms, pagers and other electronic devices. If anything rings by accident, shut it off immediately.
 - Save food and drinks for the lobby. There is no eating or drinking inside the theater.
 - Walk to and from your seat - no running in the theater!
 - Do not talk, whisper, sing or hum.
 - Do not use cell phones for calls, text messages, pictures or games.
 - Keep your feet on the floor, not on the seat in front of you.
 - Avoid getting up during a show because it distracts your neighbors and the performers. If you must leave, wait for a scene change, then exit quietly and quickly.
 - Performers appreciate enthusiastic applause rather than whistling or shouting.
 - Cameras and videotape are prohibited because they are distracting to the performers.
- Enjoy the show!**



the mead center
for american theater

1101 Sixth Street, SW
Washington, DC 20024
Phone: (202) 554-9066
Fax: (202) 488-4056

Written By Danielle Rodino
Edited by Rebecca Campana

Visit www.arenastage.org
for more information on
Arena Stage productions
and educational opportunities.