

The Guide

A Theatergoer's Resource

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Until The Flood

By Dael Orlandersmith

Cast and Creative Team

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The World of the Play

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Timeline of Events

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Plot Summary

Pulitzer Prize finalist and celebrated performer Dael Orlandersmith (*Forever*) explores the social uprising in Ferguson, Missouri following the shooting of teenager Michael Brown. Pulling from her extensive interviews with Missouri residents, Orlandersmith crafts a stunning theatrical experience that must be seen. The *Chicago Tribune* called it “palpably compassionate” and raved that it “achieves a great beauty by bringing us together rather than driving us apart.”



THE ARMORY

Theater Etiquette

Please share the following points with your group of students. Encourage the students to practice these points throughout the workshop. Going to see a play is very different from going to the movies. During live theatre, the audience is as important a part of the experience as the actors.

- **Live response is good!** If you're telling a story to a friend, and they really respond or listen, it makes you want to tell the story better—to keep telling the story. So, the better that an audience listens, laughs and responds, the more the actors want to tell the story. In this way, the audience (as well as the actors) can make a performance great.
- **The actors can hear you talking.** If an audience member is not paying attention, the actors know it. Have you ever had a conversation with someone and felt that they'd rather be someplace else? This is the EXACT feeling actors get when people in the audience are talking

- **The actors can see you.** . Even though actors are pretending to be other characters, it is their job to “check in” with the audience in order to tell the story better. This is another way in which theatre greatly differs from the movies. Film actors can do a take over and over to try to get it right. Theatre actors have one chance with an audience and want to make sure they are communicating clearly. Imagine trying to tell a group of fellow students something only to see them slouching, pretending to be bored, or sitting with their eyes closed in attempt to seem disinterested and “too cool” for what you had to say. Think about it...

- **Cell phones, beepers, candy wrappers, loud gum smacking.** Please turn off all cell phones and do not eat or chew gum inside the theater. These things disturb the people around you as well as the actors. As much as you might be tempted to text a friend how cool the play you're watching is, please wait until after it is over to send any texts.

Thank you to Montana Shakespeare in the Parks for these excellent etiquette suggestions.

Education Programs: Stage Door

Portland Center Stage's Stage Door Program seeks to provide all young people with opportunities to experience and directly participate in the art of high-quality, professional theater in a context that supports their education. The following pages contain activities to help students explore themes found in our production of *Until The Flood*. We encourage you to choose the most appropriate activities for your group and adapt as needed.

GOALS:

- To encourage personal connections between the students and the major themes of the play.
- To excite students about the story and introduce the theatrical elements of the production.
- To engage students using the actors' tools (body, voice, imagination).

Activity #1:

Walk in Their Shoes

The goal of this activity is to observe individuals and how they move around the “world”, copying their mannerisms and movements as they overcome obstacles.

HOW IT WORKS:

- Divide into groups of 3-5.
- Have the teams form lines in different spots throughout the room.
- The person at the head of the line is the first leader.
- Have the teams start walking throughout the room. The goal for the team members is to exactly follow the walking of the person in front of them, with the leader as the head of the chain of command.
- As they walk, throw out obstacles that would affect their course or way of walking.
 - Walking through mud
 - Going under a wired fence
 - Pushing against strong wind
- Remind students of the importance of observing and following the actions of those in front of them.
- After a couple of obstacles, have the teams stop, send the leader to the end of the line, and let the new leader begin their walking journey. Repeat as necessary

REFLECTION/DISCUSSION:

Was it difficult to follow the actions of those in front of you? As you walked, were there ever moments in which you thought about how you would have done something differently than the leader? How does this relate to real life obstacles that individuals face?

As the leader, how aware were you about everyone behind you who was observing and following your steps? Did you feel like being observed had any effect on the choices you made?

Activity #2:

Let Me Speak

This activity focuses on letting individuals freely speak while their team members listen and observe the storytelling, which is reminiscent of Dael Orlandersmith's interview process.

HOW IT WORKS:

- Organize the groups throughout the room and have them sit in circles.
- Have the first leaders from Activity 1 stand up.
- The students will have 1.5 minutes to tell a story based on a prompt about their childhood.
- The rest of the team will listen and observe
- Give them a topic/question about their childhood to tell a story about:
 - What was your favorite toy as a child?
 - What was a memorable field trip from your childhood?
 - What is a place you visited and loved as a child?
- Let them know that they just need to keep talking for the full time, and to not worry if their story takes them away from the original question.
- Once time is up, continue clockwise to the next team member, have them stand and give a new prompt to these students. Continue until all the students have shared a story with their group.

REFLECTION/DISCUSSION:

What was the most difficult thing about being a storyteller? Did you find it easier or harder to talk towards the end of your time? How did being the storyteller compare to being the leader in Activity 1?

As a listener, did you find yourself distracted at any moment? Did you feel your attention was focused differently based on if you had told your story yet? As a listener were there any mannerisms in the storytellers that you found interesting (hand movements, feet placement, facial expressions)?



Left: Dael Orlandersmith in *Until The Flood*.
Photo by Patrick Weishampel/blankeye.tv

Activity #3: Share My Rhythm

This activity allows the whole group to come together and work as a whole to pass and receive sounds and actions.

HOW IT WORKS:

- Have all the groups come together and circle up.
- Explain how we will be passing and receiving movements and names around the group.
- The first person to start chooses someone to pass their action to. They say the name of the individual to make it known where the action is traveling to, and perform a random movement.
- The person receiving the movement, repeats their own name and the action passed to them.
- They then choose a new action, say the name of the person and act out their new movement.
- The new person again says their own name while repeating the action, and we keep going.
- Once the team has a strong understanding of what is happening, have them speed up the process every couple of passes.
- Remind them about the importance of properly copying the movement passed to them and being in control of the movement they themselves pass on.

REFLECTION/DISCUSSION:

What were some challenges you faced during this activity? What drew you to some of the movements you chose? Did being in a bigger group have any impact on your choices?

Activity #4: Let Me Introduce You To...

The final activity allows the students to create a character through a one-word story, this allows them to again bring together the elements of storytelling and movement from the previous activities.

HOW IT WORKS:

- Maintain the full group circle from Activity 3.
- We will be creating a character together as a group. The group is a new person that I am meeting for the first time and they are introducing themselves to me.
- One word at a time the group will create this introduction and character.
- They will also use movement to help create the character. Make choices as a group as to how this character stands, speaks, and moves.
- Let the story go around at least one whole time to make sure everyone has a chance to add to the story.

REFLECTION/DISCUSSION:

What are some of your reactions to the character you created? Where there moments you wished the introduction had gone a different way? Did you feel like you were leaning towards a realistic representation of someone? Would any of your choices have been different if you were asked to be someone you knew?

Tie the discussion back into Dael Orlandersmith's representation of real individuals on stage and her need to really know them before telling their story.



Right: Dael Orlandersmith in *Until The Flood*.
Photo by Patrick Weishampel/blankeye.tv