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The Guide
A Theatergoer’s Resource

Forever
By Dael Orlandersmith

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PCS’s 2015–16 Education & Community Programs are generously supported by:

PCS’s education programs are supported in part by a grant from the Oregon Arts Commission and the National Endowment for the Arts.

with additional support from
Craig & Y. Lynne Johnston
Holzman Foundation
Mentor Graphics Foundation
Autzen Foundation
and other generous donors.
Bio: Dael Orlandersmith

Playwright Dael Orlandersmith belongs to a daring new generation of African-American women writing for the stage and winning establishment recognition for their work. Orlandersmith often acts in her plays as well, delivering critically acclaimed portrayals of lives torn apart by poverty, racism, or substance abuse. Commenting on the sometimes desolate emotional territory that her stories traverse, the New York-based writer reflected in an interview with Stuart Miller for American Theatre that “there is humanity within a bleak story. We find that humanity by exposing the darkness. I use language as a tool. Just the fact that the story itself is told—and hopefully well—is cause for hope.”

Orlandersmith was born in 1959 and grew up in public housing in New York’s rough East Harlem neighborhood. Her father died when she was young, and her mother sent her to a Roman Catholic parochial school, despite the hardship the expense brought on the household. In late 1960s and early 1970s, East Harlem was a dangerous place, as was the South Bronx neighborhood where her best friend lived. “Heroin was at its height then,” Orlandersmith told Miller. “I remember people would carry an extra $5, in case a junkie came up to them, so they wouldn’t lose their life.” She admitted to being somewhat of an aggressive youth herself, but was focused on learning as well, she said in an interview with the Edinburgh Scotsman. “I have always been work-oriented, even when I was a child,” Orlandersmith told journalist Jackie Mc-Glone. “At ten, I was writing a journal, reading voraciously, listening to music.”

Awards

• 1995 Obie Award for Beauty’s Daughter

• 2003 Susan Smith Blackburn Prize

• 2005 PEN/Laura Pels International Foundation for Theater Award for a playwright in mid-career

• 2008 Whiting Award

Nominations

• 2002 Pulitzer Prize for Drama Finalist for Yellowman

• 2003 Drama Desk Award nomination - Outstanding Play, Yellowman

Left: Dael Orlandersmith in Forever. Photo by Patrick Weishampel/blankeye.tv.
“Still, despite her unconventional plays and personal topics, Orlandersmith emphasizes the basics. ‘Theatre works by storytelling and character,’ she says, recalling the time she sat in the audience for Death of a Salesman with Brian Dennehy and noticed a Hasidic Jew and a Sikh sitting next to each other. ‘They didn’t know each other, but after the show both were weeping and saying, ‘That was my father.’ That’s what I’m talking about.”

The World of the Play: from Harlem to Paris

“In Forever, Père Lachaise serves as a source of inspiration, a contemplative space, and a community of painters, playwrights, actors, poets, singers, and philosophers who form her artistic family.”

http://www.pere-lachaise.com/

“The world’s most visited cemetery, Père Lachaise, opened in 1804. Its 70,000 ornate, even ostentatious, tombs of the rich and/or famous form a verdant, 44-hectare sculpture garden. The most visited are those of 1960s rock star Jim Morrison (division 6) and Oscar Wilde (division 89). Pick up cemetery maps at the conservation office near the main bd de Ménilmontant entrance.

Other notables buried here are composer Chopin; playwright Molière; poet Apollinaire; writers Balzac, Proust, Gertrude Stein and Colette; actors Sarah Bernhardt and Yves Montand; painters Pissarro, Seurat, Modigliani and Delacroix; chanteuse Édith Piaf; and dancer Isadora Duncan.

Also of interest, more for the tale than tomb, is the Mur des Fédérés (Wall of the Federalists). On 27 May 1871, the last of the Communard insurgents, cornered by government forces, fought a hopeless, all-night battle among the tombstones. In the morning, the 147 survivors were lined up against this completely ordinary, plain brick wall, shot, and buried where they fell in a mass grave. Commemorative memorials to those who died during almost every other war in modern history lie opposite to form an emotive alleyway – it is impossible not to be moved.”

HARLEM Neighborhoods: Then and Now

http://briefnytw.tumblr.com/post/115785260652/neighborhoods-then-and-now
Dael’s Artistic Family

**Dael’s Playlist:** http://briefnytw.tumblr.com/post/115787931927/daels-mixtape-forever-at-new-york-theatre

**Jim Morrison:** Born on December 8, 1943, in Melbourne, Florida, Jim Morrison was an American rock singer and songwriter. He studied film at UCLA, where he met the members of what would become the Doors. Known for his drinking and drug use and outrageous stage behavior, in 1971 Morrison left the Doors to write poetry and moved to Paris, where he died of heart failure. **The Doors,** one of the most influential and controversial rock bands of the 1960s, were formed in Los Angeles in 1965 by UCLA film students Ray Manzarek, keyboards, and Jim Morrison, vocals; with drummer John Densmore and guitarist Robby Krieger. The group never added a bass player, and their sound was dominated by Manzarek’s electric organ work and Morrison’s deep, sonorous voice, with which he sang and intoned his highly poetic lyrics. The group signed to Elektra Records in 1966 and released its first album, The Doors, featuring the hit “Light My Fire,” in 1967.

http://www.allmusic.com/album/the-doors-mw0000650088

**Chopin:** Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=liTSRH4fix4  http://www.biography.com/people/frederic-chopin-9247162

**Edith Piaf:** https://search.yahoo.com/search?p=edith+piaf+&fr=yfp-t-467&fr2=p%3Afp%2Cm%3Asb

http://www.biography.com/people/edith-piaf-9439893

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**Light My Fire**

You know that it would be untrue
You know that I would be a liar
If I was to say to you
Girl, we couldn’t get much higher

Come on baby, light my fire
Come on baby, light my fire
Try to set the night on fire

The time to hesitate is through
No time to wallow in the mire
Try now we can only lose
And our love become a funeral pyre

Come on baby, light my fire
Come on baby, light my fire
Try to set the night on fire, yeah

You know that it would be untrue
You know that I would be a liar
If I was to say to you
Girl, we couldn’t get much higher

Come on baby, light my fire
Come on baby, light my fire
Try to set the night on fire
Try to set the night on fire
Try to set the night on fire
Try to set the night on fire

**The End by The Doors**

This is the end, beautiful friend
This is the end, my only friend, the end
Of our elaborate plans, the end
Of everything that stands, the end
No safety or surprise, the end
I’ll never look into your eyes, again

Can you picture what will be, so limitless and free
Desperately in need, of some, stranger’s hand
In a, desperate land
Dael’s Literary Family


CBGB was the infamous rock club of the Lower East Side and the place where Dael first heard Patti Smith. To many music buffs around the world, CBGB was more than a venue – it defined and housed the Punk scene of the 70s. In 2006, the club was shut down; many saw its closure as symbolic of New York City’s final departure from the culture of the East Village that Dael lived and breathed in the 70s and 80s. [Click here](#) to take a virtual tour of CBGB before its closing.

**Our Lady of Flowers by Jean Genet** – The 1943 debut novel of the French writer follows the journey of a male prostitute through the Parisian underworld. Originally written while in prison, Genet had to rewrite the novel after the first draft was discovered and destroyed by prison guards. Considered his masterpiece, the piece is remembered for its poetic and lyrical style.

**The Bluest Eyes by Toni Morrison** - This book depicts racism in the American Midwest through the story of a young black girl named Pecola Breedlove. Morrison wrote the novel while she was teaching at Howard University in 1970.

**Arthur Rimbaud’s Poetry** - This French poet’s work has influenced many 20th century artists, from Picasso to Kerouac, despite only writing poetry from the ages of 17-20. Born in 1854, Rimbauld traveled extensively before dying from cancer in 1891 at the age of 37. Rimbauld’s desire to develop new styles of poetry led to lyrical and abstract images in his work, which later influenced Symbolists, Dadaists, and Surrealists. To read more, [click here](#).

**Black Boy by Richard Wright** - Wright’s 1945 memoir chronicles his childhood in the South and his young adult life in Chicago. Originally published as two separate novels, both parts were finally published posthumously as a single book in 1991 under the title Black Boy (American Hunger).

**Crime and Punishment by Fyodor Dostoyevsky** - Originally published in twelve installments in 1866, the Russian novel follows an impoverished ex-student who plans to kill a pawnbroker and use the victim’s money to perform good deeds. The character is plagued internally as he attempts to understand his dilemma: can something as terrible as murder be justified if it is for a greater good?

**Another Country by James Baldwin** - Published in 1962, Baldwin’s novel weaves together the narratives of several individuals in New York City’s Greenwich Village, all tied together by jazz musician Rufus Scott. The novel explores bisexuality, interracial relationships, and extramarital affairs, among many topics.
Long Day's Journey into Night by Eugene O'Neill - Though written in 1941, the play was published only after O'Neill's death and posthumously earned the playwright a 1957 Pulitzer Prize. The drama covers a single day of the Tyrones at their seaside Connecticut home. Parallel's between the play's family and the playwright’s own autobiography are often drawn. The play has spawned many international productions and several film adaptations; the most famous being the 1962 adaptation starring Katharine Hepburn, Ralph Richardson, Jason Robards, and Dean Stockwell.

East of Eden by John Steinbeck - The novel was originally published in September 1952, and focuses on the lives of two families, the Trasks and the Hamiltons, in the Salinas Valley, California. Steinbeck considered it his magnum opus, his great work.

Oscar Wilde's Body of Work - This Irish author, playwright, and poet is best known for The Picture of Dorian Gray and The Importance of Being Earnest. His only novel Dorian Gray follows the title character as he sells his soul to retain his physical beauty and later suffers the consequences of his misdeeds. Earnest, considered Wilde's most popular play, satirizes Victorian life. His witty humor, flamboyant personality, and public criticism of Victorian culture brought him both an adoring public and persecution by the British law.

Richard Wright: http://www.biography.com/people/richard-wright-9537751

Oscar Wilde: http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/wilde_oscar.shtml


'DREAMS' Paul Laurence Dunbar

“What dreams we have
And how they fly
Like rosy clouds across the sky
Of wealth, of fame, of sure success,
Of love that comes to cheer and bless
And how they wither, how they fade
The waving wealth, the jilting jade
The fame that for a moment gleams
Then flies forever -Dreams- Ah dreams”

O burning doubt and long regret
O tears with which our eyes are wet,
Heart-throbs, heart-aches, the glut of pain,
The somber cloud, the bitter rain,
You were not of those dreams — ah! well,
Your full fruition who can tell?
Wealth, fame, and love, ah! love that beams
Upon our souls, all dreams — ah! dreams.