WEDDING BAND

By Alice Childress
Directed by Sam White

GRADE RECOMMENDATION
8+

CONTENT ADVISORY
Please see the show page for a detailed audience advisory.

SYNOPSIS

The American South in 1918 is a dangerous place for an interracial relationship, but Julia, a fiercely independent Black seamstress, will not give in to law or convention. Her white fiancé Herman hatches a plan for the couple to emigrate to New York City, where they can be legally married, but when he is stricken by the influenza virus, the couple’s love will be tested like never before. A profound meditation on injustice and intolerance, Wedding Band resonates more than ever in this time of racial reckoning and a virulent pandemic.

Celebrated Black playwright Alice Childress wrote Wedding Band in the early 1960s, as the Civil Rights era was giving way to a wave of political radicalism and identity politics. The play’s setting offered Childress fertile ground for considering the social and political upheavals of her own time. Wedding Band opens near the end of the First World War, when labour unionists and suffragettes across the globe were demanding equal rights and pay for women and the working classes. In America, the New Negro Movement, a precursor to the Civil Rights Movement, was finding revolutionary artistic expression in the Harlem Renaissance. The Jim Crow period depicted in the play also bore many cruel resemblances to Childress’s own time. Although mixed marriages were no longer technically illegal, interracial couples paid a high price for daring to love outside the lines laid down by a racist society.

The themes of Wedding Band remain compelling to contemporary audiences. Racism is alive, its full reckoning long overdue, and marginalization remains a daily reality for people across identities. The love story at the heart of the play, and Julia’s inspiring struggle for full personhood, offer a powerful rebuttal to the powers that keep all unjust structures in place.

CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

• Global Competencies:
  • Collaboration, Communication, Critical Thinking, Creativity, Metacognition, Self-Awareness
• Grade 8
  • The Arts (Dance, Drama, Music, Visual Arts)
  • Language
  • Social Studies
• Grades 9-12
  • The Arts (Dance, Drama, Music, Visual Arts)
  • English
• Grades 11-12
  • Social Science and Humanities

THEMES

• Belonging
• Bias, Discrimination, Prejudice, Stereotyping and Stigma
• Feminism
• Identity
• Interracial Love and Relationships
• Intersectionality
• Love Over Hate
• Patriotism
• Racism, Racial Tensions and Internalized Racism
• Responsibility, Integrity and Perspective
• Social Attitudes and Inequity
• War & Epidemics
• White Supremacy and White Privilege
PRE-SHOW QUESTIONS

- Alice Childress wrote this play in the early 1960s, but like her other work, there was resistance to producing it. Why do you think her work is now seeing a resurgence?
- We all hold multiple identities including age, gender, religious or spiritual affiliation, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Think about which identities you hold. How does this affect the way in which you interact with others and exist in the world?
- In your opinion, what has changed in terms of racism, privilege and power between 1918, when the play is set, and 2023? What has not changed? Why do you think this is the case?
- What might stories set during wartime or epidemics have in common?

STUDY GUIDES

2023 Shorts and Study Guides and those from previous seasons are available free of charge online at https://www.stratfordfestival.ca/Learn/Teachers/ResourcesPD

BOOKING INFORMATION: TICKETS, WORKSHOPS & CHATS

STUDENT MATINÉES

You may book any available date, but selected student matinée performances for this show are at 2 p.m. on the following dates:
- Tuesday, June 20th
- Tuesday, June 27th
- Thursday, September 7th
- Wednesday, September 13th
- Thursday, September 14th
- Thursday, September 21st
- Thursday, September 28th

WORKSHOPS & CHATS

Pre or Post-Show Workshops and Post-Show Chats (virtual, onsite or at your school/centre) can be booked by calling the Box Office at 1.800.567.1600.

SOCIAL MEDIA

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