

Underground Railway Theater: Unleashing the Engine of Delight & Social Change

The Underground Railway Theater (URT) is a revolutionary performing arts collective that uses the power of storytelling to entertain, educate, and inspire social change. With a rich history of productions that tackle pressing social issues, URT has firmly established itself as a driving force in the world of theater activism. Through its thought-provoking performances and community engagement initiatives, URT has become an engine of delight and a catalyst for transformative discussions within society.

Using Theater as a Vehicle for Change

The URT's mission goes far beyond entertainment. Using theater as a vehicle for change, the collective creates performances that provoke conversations, challenge norms, and shed light on important social justice issues. By blending artistry and activism, URT strives to create a space for open dialogue, empathy, and understanding.

The URT's commitment to addressing social inequalities is evident in their diverse productions. From powerful plays focusing on racial discrimination to thought-provoking musicals exploring gender identity, the collective fearlessly confronts society's most pressing problems. Their performances act as a mirror that reflects our shared experiences and ignites a deep sense of empathy within audiences.

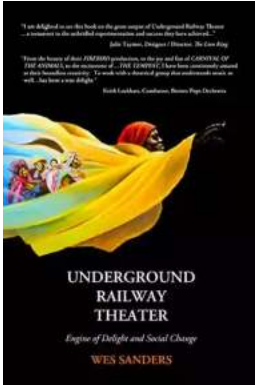
Underground Railway Theater, Engine of Delight & Social Change by Wes Sanders(Kindle Edition)

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

Language : English

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Text-to-Speech : Enabled



Enhanced typesetting : Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 536 pages
Lending : Enabled
Screen Reader : Supported



Delighting Audiences and Sparking Conversations

Delivering compelling performances that engage audiences emotionally is at the heart of URT's approach. By captivating viewers through their exceptional storytelling, URT creates a powerful connection between the stage and the audience's hearts and minds.

The collective's commitment to excellence in theater is further highlighted by their use of innovative techniques and technologies. URT seamlessly blends traditional theater with cutting-edge visuals and audio elements to create immersive experiences that leave a lasting impact. From their stunning set designs to their extraordinary use of lighting and sound, URT captures the essence of each production in a way that resonates deeply with the audience.

One notable example of URT's ability to delight and spark conversations is their acclaimed production "Voices of a Dream." This stunning play explores the stories of individuals from marginalized communities and showcases their resilience and determination. Through a powerful combination of music, dance, and monologues, the production not only entertains but also serves as a catalyst for discussions on systemic oppression and the need for social change.

Community Engagement and Education

URT is dedicated to engaging with communities and fostering dialogue outside the theater as well. Through various community outreach programs, the collective works to empower individuals and spark transformative change.

One such initiative is the "Act UP" program, where URT partners with local schools to provide theater education workshops. These workshops aim to enhance students' creativity, confidence, and critical thinking skills while encouraging them to engage with social issues through performance art.

URT also hosts post-show discussions and talkbacks, facilitating conversations between the cast, crew, and the audience. These discussions serve as a platform for individuals to share their perspectives, ask questions, and deepen their understanding of the performance's underlying themes.

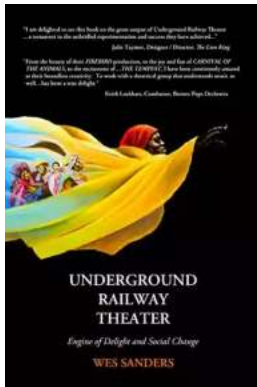
Riding the Underground Railroad of Social Change

URT's contribution to social change extends beyond the realm of theater. Inspired by the Underground Railroad—a network of secret routes and safe houses used by enslaved individuals to escape to freedom—the collective embraces the spirit of liberation and resistance.

Just like the Underground Railroad provided hope and freedom for those who sought it, URT uses theater to create a safe and inclusive space for marginalized communities to have their voices heard. By giving a platform to underrepresented groups, URT helps break down barriers and dismantle oppressive systems.

The Underground Railway Theater continues to be a major catalyst for social change through their commitment to delivering exceptional performances, fostering dialogue, and empowering individuals. Through the power of

storytelling, URT serves as an engine of delight, enlightening audiences and inspiring a better and more inclusive future.



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This INTERACTIVE, MULTIMEDIA EBOOK is a vivid, amusing, thought-provoking chronicle of Underground Railway Theater's (URT) touring years (1978-2001) by its Founding Artistic Director, Wes Sanders and Co-founding current Artistic Director, Debra Wise. 13 VIDEOS OF EXCERPTS FROM PERFORMANCES ARE ACCESSIBLE TO READERS THRU HYPERLINKS TO VIMEO. JULIE TAYMOR, DESIGNER/DIRECTOR OF "THE LION KING" says, "I was an early collaborator of theirs...this book is a testament to the unbridled experimentation and success they have achieved." KEITH LOCKHART, CONDUCTOR, BOSTON POPS, says: "To work with a theatrical group that understands music so well, in projects that define and enhance — rather than obscure — the musical experience, has been a true delight."

The book traces the company's origins to the U.S. experimental theater scene of the 1970s--parachuting the reader into the middle of a rehearsal with

collaborators Julie Taymor, BILL IRWIN and HERBERT BLAU. Going into detail about URT's innovative combinations of puppetry, acting and music during the troupe's first 25 years, the authors use a "SASSY" NARRATIVE STYLE (David Chandler). Examples are taken from all 3 tines of the company's pitchfork: (1) devised, wholly original cabarets and plays for adults on such issues as the nuclear arms race, the Sanctuary Movement, homelessness and environmental racism/justice; (2) puppet-pantomimes choreographed to such orchestral classics as Stravinsky's "Firebird" ballet and Strauss' "Till Eulenspiegel's Merry Pranks," as performed by such ensembles as The Boston Pops & Cleveland Orchestra ; (3) original puppet-actor-and-music plays for family/school audiences on subjects like Harriet Tubman's adventures on the Underground Railroad and Christopher Columbus' invasion of Turtle Island.

The authors describe the PROCESS BY WHICH THE THEATER DEvised ITS PLAYS, the challenges it has faced as an interracial ensemble, and BOTH THE VICTORIES AND THE PRATFALLS it has met (to make sure the book serves a useful guide for those who are foolish enough to consider starting their own theater-companies). The text is illustrated with OVER 100 PHOTOS of rehearsals, performances, puppets, posters and sketches . SIDEBARS are frequent, providing colorful, often humorous, commentary from the perspectives of URT's artistic collaborators. Bill Fleming, for example, URT's multi-year producer in Atlanta, says in his sidebar,

" What I find remarkable about the group is that they seem equally in their element performing on city streets, in school lunchrooms, before church congregations, in humble "black box" theatres, as well as for well-heeled concert-goers at major symphony halls. This sense of place and awareness by the company of performing within a community—as distinct from just playing to an audience—is uniquely characteristic of URT, in my experience."

And here is a sample from Cathy Cevoli's sidebar:

"There were moments, or weeks, when the show ["The Christopher Columbus

Follies, an Eco-Cabaret"] seemed like a hopeless grab bag with too many ideas. Still, I was so proud of the final result that I arranged for two (very off Broadway) performances in New York. Kirkpatrick Sale came the first night and we got to show him how we had reduced his book ["Conquest of Paradise"] to little songs that rhymed. I worked with URT again on shows about environmental injustice, Vietnam vets, and nuclear war. More sure-fire musical ideas!"

The co-founders of URT feature, along the way, COMPELLING STORIES such as the 1988 artist-exchange between American and Soviet teenagers in Tblisi, Georgia, when the Berlin Wall was about to be torn down; the Artistic Director's research trip for a new play on the Sanctuary Movement of the 1980s, in which he joined a civil-disobedience group driving a caravan of Central American refugees from Arizona to Vermont.



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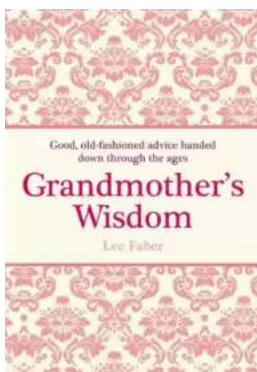
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