



INDIANA REPERTORY THEATRE

# THE WHIPPING MAN

BY MATTHEW LOPEZ

March 5 - 24, 2013 on the IRT's OneAmerica Stage

## STUDY GUIDE

edited by Richard J Roberts & Milicent Wright

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Indiana Repertory Theatre

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## ***The Whipping Man***

**by Matthew Lopez**

Passover, 1865. The Civil War has just ended as Jewish homes observe this annual celebration of freedom from bondage. One of these homes, belonging to the DeLeons of Virginia, sits in ruins. Confederate officer Caleb DeLeon returns from the war to find his family missing and the plantation occupied by two former slaves raised in the household as Jews. Caleb is badly wounded, and the two men, Simon and John, are forced to care for him. As the three men await the family's return, they wrestle with their shared past as Jews and as master and slave, uncovering a tangle of secrets that could cost each man his freedom. A moving and provocative look at a pivotal moment in American history, the play asks us to look at the surprising ways we are connected to each other.

*This play will help meet Common Core Standards in English, American History, and Theatre Arts. Appropriate for students in grades 11 & 12*

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## Perspectives

by Janet Allen,  
Artistic Director

"How is this night different from all other nights?" While this is a central question with a proscribed answer in the Passover Seder service, there could be many other answers to it in Matthew Lopez's startling Civil War play, *The Whipping Man*.

For one, the play begins on April 13, 1865, the night after Lee disbanded the Army of Northern

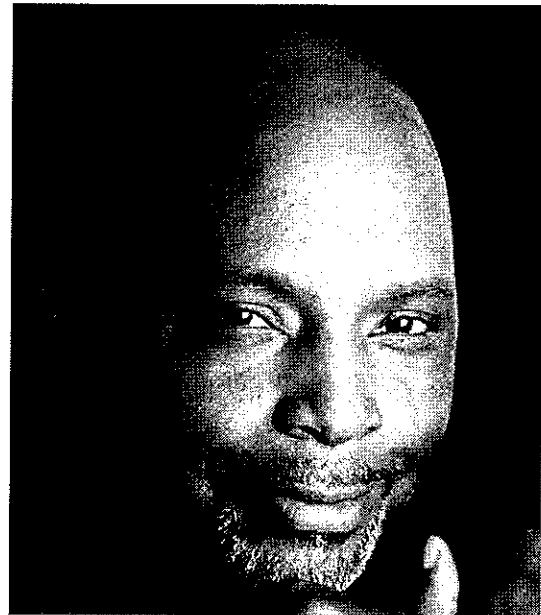
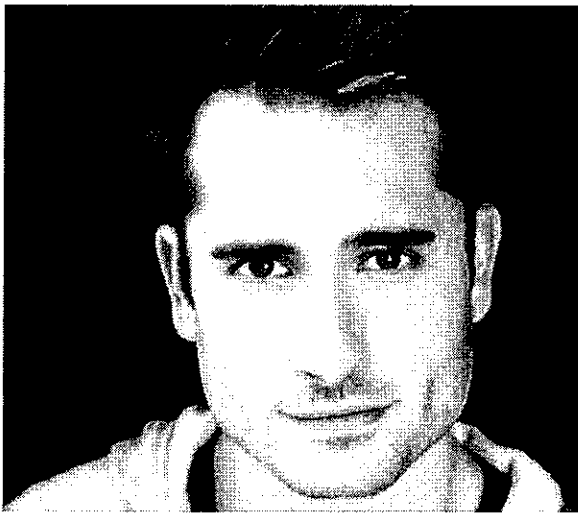
Virginia. And it ends two days later, on April 15, 1865, the day that Lincoln died of wounds he sustained the evening before at Ford's Theatre. The private events of the play exist against this larger political and historic background that makes these nights very different from every other night in the history of our country, before and since.

Passover bridged these events in 1865, beginning its eight-day ritual observance on April 10, the day after Lee signed the surrender documents at Appomattox. As Jews gathered in homes and temples to observe the celebration of their exodus from slavery in Egypt (the core of the Passover remembrance), they instead found themselves mourning (or perhaps, with some Southerners, celebrating) the death of America's own defeater of slavery. The ironies presenting themselves in this historic juxtaposition are what fueled Matthew Lopez to write this play.

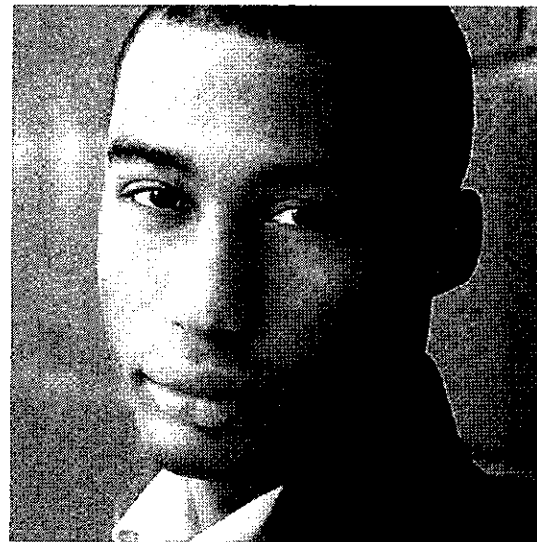
*The Whipping Man* is, on the surface, a fairly simple play. A young man, the scion of a prominent Richmond family, returns home badly wounded, at the end of the Civil War. He is greeted by one of the family's elder slaves, a man who has observed the entire life of the young man he welcomes home. The third man, a young black man, also returns, and his homecoming elicits an entirely different set of questions. What has he been doing? What does he expect to find? Whose side is he on? How will all their lives change as a result of these two days in their country and their personal histories?



The simplicity of the play ends there. The emotional terrain and the thematic base of the play are as deep and conflicted as the history of the United States itself, with its roiling conflicts over race, religion, and ethical hypocrisy. But perhaps most compelling to us as theatre artists, the play presents towering opportunities for actor performance, given the depth of the material from which it draws.



(above) David Alan Anderson  
(left) Andrew C. Ahrens  
(below) Tyler Jacob Rollinson



The three men you will see tonight onstage are all veterans of other IRT plays, and their willingness to take on the searing material of this play speaks to their fearless desire to bring meaning to these events and to expand our thinking and feeling about perhaps the darkest stain on our country's history—a time when we very nearly lost the right to be called the United States.

No matter which side of this war you grew up on, I think you will learn new perspective from this play, and it will heighten your awareness of the turbulent emotional landscape our forefathers and mothers survived. In a season of Spielberg's *Lincoln* and Tarantino's *Django Unchained*, we are pleased to bring to you our own exploration of the War between the States—in the microcosm of three men in a ruined mansion over three emotionally charged days.

## Playwright Matthew Lopez

*Matthew Lopez's play The Whipping Man is currently one of the most-produced plays in America, with productions planned in some 15 U.S. cities in the 2012-13 season. The play premiered at Luna Stage in 2006 and was produced and developed at Penumbra Theatre Company and the Old Globe before its Off-Broadway debut in*



*2011 at Manhattan Theatre Club, where it won the John Gassner Playwriting Award. Lopez's play Somewhere premiered at the Old Globe and was recently produced at TheatreWorks. Other works include Reverberation, The Legend of Georgia McBride, Zoey's Perfect Wedding, and The Sentinels, which premiered in London. Lopez is a New York Theatre Workshop Usual Suspect, a New Voices Fellow at Hartford Stage, a past member of the Ars Nova Play Group, and a recent artist-in-residence at the Old Globe. He is a staff writer on the HBO series The Newsroom.*

Matthew Lopez grew up in the Florida Panhandle, the son of a Puerto Rican father and a Polish-Russian mother. His parents were Civil War re-enactors, and their interest sparked his own interest in that era. "I've always thought of the Civil War as this wonderfully low-hanging fruit for great dramatic exploration." His father gave him a copy of *The Jewish Confederates* by Robert N. Rosen, a history of Judaism in the antebellum South, and Lopez was struck by the idea of a people who had once been slaves, now owning slaves themselves. When he happened across the fact that Lee's surrender at Appomattox occurred the day before the first day of Passover—the Jewish celebration of liberation from slavery in Egypt—he felt he had found a play.

"I've always been fascinated with the quiet that comes right after those big, grand moments, and I was looking to do something with that around the Civil War. How you go from being a slave to being free? I mean, one day you were a slave, one day you weren't ... legally at least. How do you make that change emotionally, psychologically? It must have been quite daunting for everyone, but most particularly for the recently freed slaves. It's like waking up and the whole world has changed. So, I wanted to explore that notion of the quiet after the storm, when the real work actually starts being done.

"I would never ever pretend to be an authoritative voice on the African American experience. I had quite a bit of trepidation as to whether or not I *could* pull it off, and also *should* pull it off, whether or not I was the right person to do this. We are very sensitive about our own identities, we're very sensitive about how they are portrayed.

There is something to be said for owning the property so to speak ... but there is also something to be said for simply having the sensitivity and the intelligence to tell a story compassionately and intelligently. If you understand human nature, you stand a good chance of getting it right on the page, regardless of whether you are Puerto Rican, which I am, or black, or whatever.

"It did worry me that the play would be met with resistance, that I would be told either explicitly or implicitly that I didn't have the right to tell this story. But in the process of developing it at Luna Stage, it was never an issue. It was an issue for *me*, certainly, but it wasn't an issue for the audiences. No one was mentioning it, no one was saying it. So, looking for trouble, I brought it up at one of the talkbacks. I said, 'Does it bother you that I'm not African American?' And it was like, 'No. No, you told the story well.' So, it took me a while to get over that, but once I got over it I got *completely* over it and I owned the right to do it.

"Someone asked me about this play, 'Why did you tell this story?' I think it is the artist's responsibility, when they find dirt on the floor, to point out the dirty floor and not sweep it under the rug. Slavery is a national embarrassment, and Americans don't like to be reminded of their embarrassments. But one of the reasons that I wrote the play, one of the reasons that I'm



drawn to the kinds of stories I'm drawn to is because we can't, as Americans, be afraid to face our collective shame. This is, in some ways, what I try to deal with in the play.

"I have always said that the play, for me, is in many ways about the beginning of the journey that African Americans have been on since Emancipation. It is that first painful step in a very long journey that certainly didn't end, but started a new chapter with President Obama's inauguration. I hope, especially given this current moment in our nation's history, that people will look at the events of the election and our new president, and when they see the play they will make a parallel between where we are and where we've been. I hope that audiences will see the play as dramatizing that first step that has landed us, most recently, with our first African American president. I'm very proud that this play is going on at this time, and I hope that it might capture this moment."

*Quotations from a 2009 interview with playwright Matthew Lopez, courtesy of the Penumbra Theatre Company, St. Paul, Minnesota.*

## Conversations

by Tim Ocel, Director

*The Whipping Man* is a relatively new play; and *good* new plays, like this one, crackle with our current conversations. They discuss unresolved and necessary things. They are immediate and confrontational. They speak of both the everyday and the extraordinary *us*.

All men are created equal. But when race, religion, gender, class structure, and other differences—all common indicators of our individual cultures, practices, and upbringings—become points of contention, we wonder if equality is possible. We wonder even, since we are all so different, what equality means. And we stammer in our conversation, because we don't know how to rejoice in our points of intersection, or how to shake hands on our points of departure. We are so afraid of looking stupid or giving unintended offense that we avoid the exchange of thoughts and truncate our curiosity ... which is unfortunate, because it's the actual act of exchange that will bring about a common understanding.

There is no "same"; there is only "other." What can be equal is our understanding. The question isn't: How can we learn to live together? The question is: *How* are we together? *What* are we together? Are we strong? Will we survive with suffering or with love? Will we figure it out? And can we figure it out in a concrete enough way to pass that knowledge on to our children? Or will the sins of the parents once again infect the young?

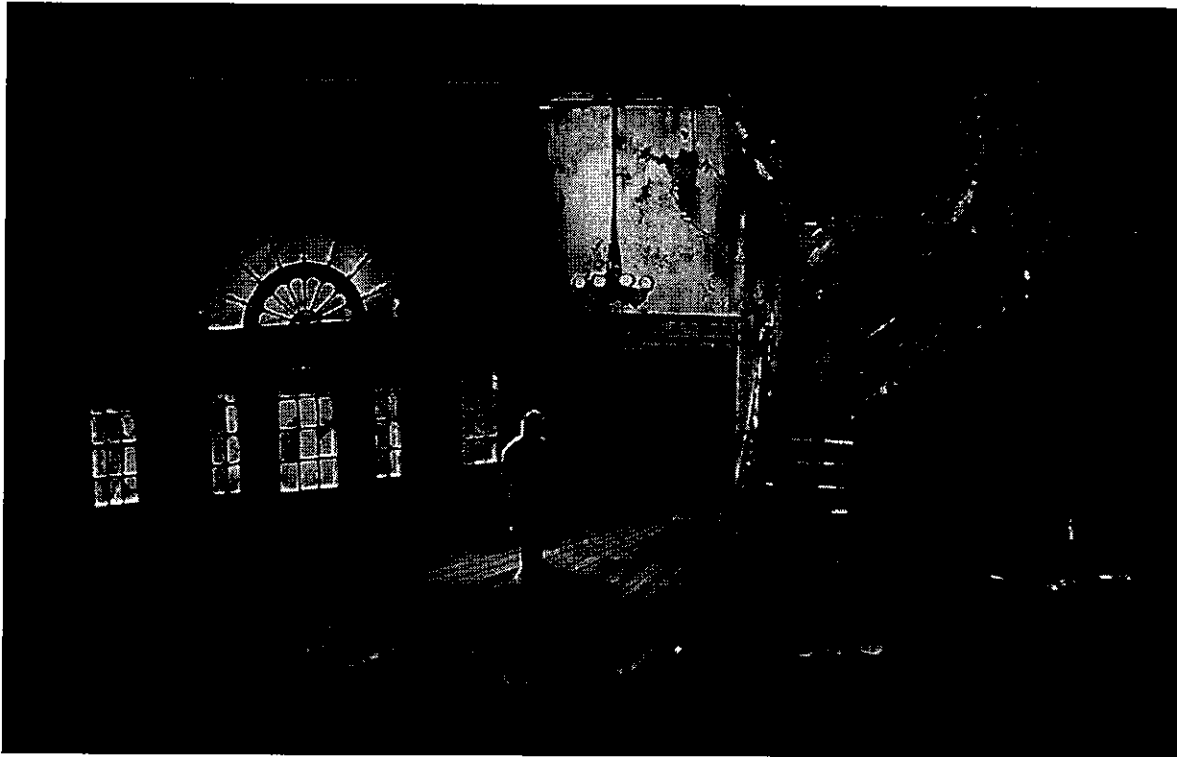
I hope the conversation that Matthew Lopez has started in *The Whipping Man* will inspire you to carry on that conversation at home and out in the world.



## Revelation and Destruction

### **Erhard Rom** Scenic Designer

Using the background of the Civil War, Matthew Lopez has created a suspenseful and moving play that peels the skin off our notions of race, religion, freedom, and honor. He describes the setting in great detail and is very clear that there must be something almost haunted about the space. The environment is "realistic," with rain dripping down the exterior walls of a rather severely damaged large colonial home in Richmond, Virginia. In this setting, the surrounding catastrophe of the war remains powerfully in view throughout. The action takes place in the entryway of the home, with a clear view of the outside world. There is a staircase to the upper floors. Since we have followed the reality of a typical ground plan of the period, we think the audience will easily be able to fill in the rest of the house in their imaginations.



*Scenic model by designer Erhard Rom.*

### **Kendall Smith** Lighting Designer

This play, though contained within the foyer of an old mansion, expands beyond the walls and exposes all the flaws and traits of a country at war. It portrays epic moments of revelation and destruction, yet deals with these men and their situation in minute detail. Most of the piece takes place at night, where slivers of worn-out candlelight try to pierce the darkness and expose the lies and bitterness that have been laid upon this family. Rain falls, the air continues to thicken, but slowly some clarity enters their lives for a brief moment.





**Dorothy Marshall Englis** Costume Designer  
*The Whipping Man* presents what appears to be a relatively simple project in designing costumes, but, as with the story within, it becomes more complicated than the first reading would suggest. Research topics necessitate explorations of the Civil War, uniforms, Richmond, Virginia, Jewish traditions, and the slave culture of the times. In addition, there are practical problems involving surgery of the period. In many respects, the costumes involve a process of deconstruction. We will be pulling, finding, purchasing, and building period costume pieces, and then over-dyeing and distressing them, almost as though they are altogether our raw canvas, to create the dark, worn, and desperate world of Simon, Caleb, and John.



Renderings  
by costume  
designer  
Dorothy  
Marshall  
Englis for  
Simon  
(above),  
Caleb (right),  
and John  
(left).



**Gregg Coffin** Composer

After director Tim Ocel and I discussed the play and the ideas of *love, home, spirit, danger, and flight*, I set about to create musical images of these ideas that would help to support the work of the actors and the playwright. I wrote melodic statements that worked for the two of us, and then we looked for evocative ways to voice them using familiar sounds that would place our ears in the Civil War South. You'll hear bugles and drums, parlor pianos, vocal humming, twin fiddles, and other stringed instruments. If we've done our work well, you'll hear all of these sounds in support of the real music of the play: the actors' voices amidst one mighty, soul-drenching storm.

## The Civil War

The American Civil War (1861–1865) was fought between the United States of America (the "Union") and the Southern slave states of the newly-formed Confederate States of America under Jefferson Davis. The Union included all of the free states and the five slaveholding border states and was led by Abraham Lincoln and the Republican Party. Republicans opposed the expansion of slavery into territories owned by the United States, and their victory in the presidential election of 1860 resulted in seven Southern states declaring their secession from the Union even before Lincoln took office.

The Union rejected secession, regarding it as rebellion. Hostilities began in April 1861, when Confederate forces attacked a U.S. military installation at Fort Sumter in South Carolina. In September 1862, Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation made ending slavery in the South a war goal, which complicated the Confederacy's manpower shortages. Confederate resistance collapsed in April 1865.

The war, the deadliest in American history, caused 620,000 soldier deaths and an undetermined number of civilian casualties, ended slavery in the United States, restored the Union by settling the issues of nullification and secession, and strengthened the role of the Federal government. However, issues affected by the war's unresolved social, political, economic, and racial tensions continue to shape contemporary American thought.

*Photo by  
Matthew  
Brady*



## Slavery in the United States

Slavery in the United States began in 1619, soon after the English colonists first settled in Virginia, and lasted until the passage of the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1865. Before the widespread establishment of chattel slavery, much labor was organized under a system of bonded labor known as *indentured servitude*. This typically lasted a period of four to seven years for white and black alike, and it was a means of using labor to pay the costs of transporting people to the colonies.

By 1662 court rulings established the racial basis of American slavery to apply chiefly to Africans and people of African descent. Approximately 650,000 black Africans were shipped to the United States from the 17th to the 19th centuries.

In part because of the Southern colonies' devotion of resources to tobacco culture, which was labor intensive, by the end of the 17th century they had a higher number and proportion of slaves than in the North. According to the 1860 U.S. census, nearly 4 million slaves were held in a total population of just over 12 million in the 15 states in which slavery was still legal. Ninety-five percent of black people lived in the South, comprising one-third of the population there, as opposed to 1% in the North. The Union victory in the Civil War abolished the slave-labor system in the South.



## The Whipping Man in History

The idea of a person designated to whip slaves dates back to the 1700s, when a public whipper was paid up to three shillings per slave he whipped. In the 1800s, slave whippings in Richmond occurred at markets and trader's yards. Most often, whipping posts were used on the plantation to enact punishment. When



owners wanted to have their slaves whipped without the stigma of doing it themselves, however, or when they lived in the city and had no outdoor space for a whipping post, they sent their slaves to a whipping man. There was a charge for each slave brought, and most often the slaves were bound to whipping posts where they received a brutal beating. One of the newspapers in the Civil War, the *Daily Times*, reported on the little-publicized concept of a "whipping house" in 1862. These whipping houses were technologically advanced enough to use machinery in order to whip slaves. One strong slave would propel the machine with many leather straps attached to it, thus torturing both the bound and "guilty" slave as well as the slave forced to operate the machine.

In light of the close childhood friendship of John and Caleb, it is interesting to look beyond the immediate historical reality of the American whipping man and study the historical concept of the whipping boy among European royalty: A whipping boy was a young boy who was assigned to a young prince and was punished when the prince misbehaved or fell behind in his schooling. Whipping boys were established in the English court during the monarchies of the 15th century and 16th centuries. They were created because of the idea of the divine right of kings, which stated that kings were appointed by God, and implied that no one but the king was worthy of punishing the king's son. Since the king was rarely around to punish his son when necessary, tutors to the young prince found it extremely difficult to enforce rules or learning.

Whipping boys were generally of high status (and, of course, white), and were educated with the prince from birth. Because the prince and whipping boy grew up together, they usually formed a strong emotional bond, especially since the prince usually did not have playmates as other children would have had. The strong bond that developed between a prince and his whipping boy dramatically increased the effectiveness of using a whipping boy as a form of punishment for a prince. The idea of the whipping boys was that seeing a friend being whipped or beaten for something that he had done wrong would be likely to ensure that the prince would not make the same mistake again.

## A Word in Controversy

The word *nigger* is used by the characters in *The Whipping Man*. This usage reflects an accurate representation of the play's setting in the American South during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when use of the word was quite prevalent.

The word *nigger* was not originally used for verbal assault. It first appears in historical documents in 1587 as *negar*, an alternate spelling of *Negro*. *Nigger* was a common word in both England and America by the seventeenth century; it was considered nothing more than an alternate pronunciation of *Negro*. By 1825, however, both abolitionists and Blacks found the word offensive and began to object to its use.

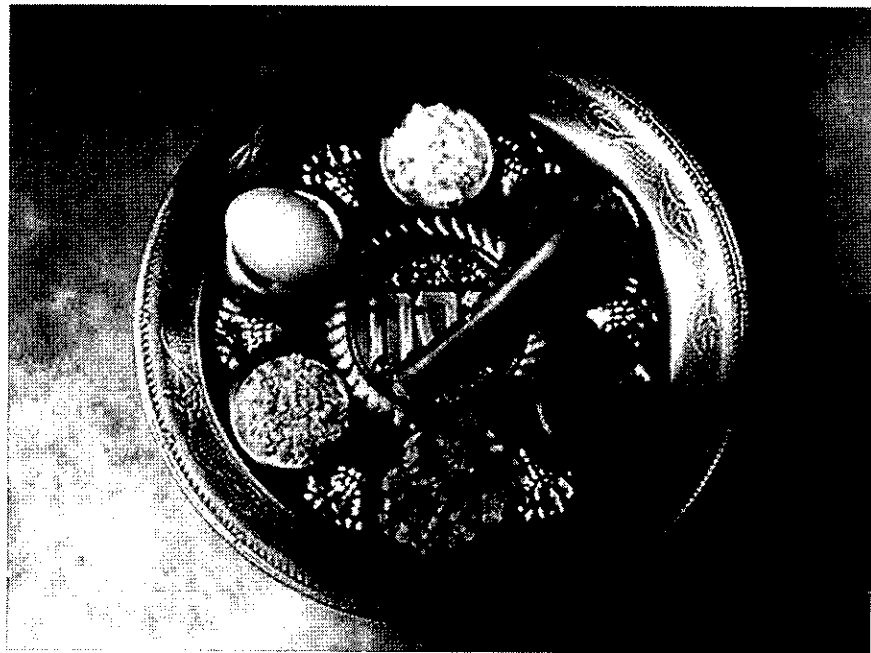
It is often the case that when a word is used as a slur against a certain group, members of the group will begin to use that word among themselves in order to rob the word of its negative power. Today, the use of the word *nigger* is still controversial. While it may be heard frequently in rap songs and in conversation among younger African Americans, many older African Americans are deeply offended by this use. Even within generations, not everyone agrees on whether or not the word should be used within the African American community. Society at large, however, has condemned the word as a racial slur; its use by other races against black people demonstrates an ignorance and hatred that should not be imitated.

## Passover and the Seder

Passover is a Jewish festival that spans eight days in early spring. It recalls the release of enslaved Israelites under the control of the Egyptian Pharaoh. The story in the book of Exodus follows Moses's command from God to tell the Pharaoh to let his people free from slavery. Pharaoh did not listen, and he received God's response in the form of ten plagues. For the tenth plague God sent the Angel of Death through Egypt and killed all the firstborn, sparing the Israelites who marked their doors with lamb's blood. At the death of his son, Pharaoh released the Israelites.

The first two days of Passover include evening Seders. A Seder is a ritual dinner that includes telling the story of the Exodus and eating specific symbolic foods. The word "Seder" means "order," alluding to the 15 parts of the meal. During the Seder, the family refers to the Haggadah, a Jewish book of prayers, Torah readings, poetry, songs, commentary on the Exodus, and Seder instructions. The word "Haggadah" means "telling," which recalls Exodus 13:8 in which the Israelites are instructed to continue telling their children about the Exodus from Egypt. This book was written around the same time as the Talmud.

Another important element in the ritual is the Seder plate, which is divided into sections to hold the various items which are part of the ritual. A roasted egg represents life and the endless existence of Jews as a people. A shank bone represents the sacrifice of a lamb during the first Passover. Other items on the plate are noted below.



The Seder begins with wine, which is blessed and drunk; then a second cup is poured. Four glasses of wine will be used in the Passover Seder, symbolizing the promise of redemption.

A vegetable, usually parsley, is dipped in saltwater and eaten. The parsley represents hope, redemption and springtime. The saltwater in which it is dipped symbolizes the tears of the enslaved Jews.

Now one matzah on the table is broken. Matzah is unleavened bread (flat bread made without yeast), representing the haste in which the Israelites had to flee. During the Seder, there are three pieces of matzah wrapped in a napkin (to mirror the way the Jews had to wrap their bread when leaving). Two of these pieces are eaten during the rituals, and one is hidden to be used near the end of the Seder.



Next is the telling of the Exodus story, including four questions asked by the youngest person present. The Four Questions are designed to inspire participation and curiosity, particularly among children learning the ritual. The introductory question asks "Why is this night different from all other nights?" The response is that "Once we were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, but the Lord, our God, brought us forth with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. If God had not brought our ancestors out of Egypt, we and our children and our children's children might still be enslaved."

The child now asks the first question: "Why is it that on all other nights during the year we eat either bread or matzah, but on this night we eat matzah?" The leader answers, "We eat only matzah because our ancestors could not wait for their breads to rise when they were fleeing slavery in Egypt, and so they took the breads out of their ovens while they were still flat, which was matzah."

The second question is, "Why is it that on all other nights we eat all kinds of vegetables, but on this night we eat bitter herbs?" and the answer is, "We eat only Maror, a bitter herb, to remind us of the bitterness of slavery that our ancestors endured while in Egypt."

The third question is, "Why is it on all other nights we do not dip even once, but on this night we dip twice?" and the answer, "We dip twice—green vegetables in salt water, and Maror in Charoset. The first dip, green vegetables in salt water, symbolizes the replacing of tears with gratefulness; and the second dip, Maror in Charoset, symbolizes sweetening the burden of bitterness and suffering to lessen its pain."

The final question is asked: "Why is it that on all other nights we eat either sitting or reclining, but on this night we eat in a reclining position?" The answer is, "We recline at the Seder table because in ancient times, a person who reclined at a meal symbolized a

free person, free from slavery, and so we recline in our chairs at the Passover Seder table to remind ourselves of the glory of freedom.”

The questions are followed by a wine blessing, drinking the wine, and refilling the cup.

A blessing is said over the *Maror*: bitter herbs, most often horseradish or some kind of lettuce, which are used to represent the bitterness of slavery. Next the bitter herbs are dipped in *Charoset*, a sweet mixture of apples, nuts, cinnamon, and wine. *Charoset* represents the mortar the Hebrew slaves used for the Pharaoh’s building projects on which they worked.

The *Maror* and the *Charoset* are now sandwiched with the matzah and eaten together.

The family then enjoys a family meal in which they choose what to eat, though there are often traditional foods eaten.

After eating, the children search for the matzah hidden earlier in the meal.

During the grace after the meal, the third cup of wine is drunk. Another cup is poured for the prophet Elijah, and the door is opened for him to enter through.

Praises are offered in the form of psalms and a blessing over the wine, and the final cup drunk.

The Seder finishes with “Next year in freedom. Next year in Jerusalem!” This statement shows the hope of a messiah to come, hope of rebuilding the temple, and the hope of returning to the Jewish homeland to celebrate Passover.





## Resources

### Fiction Books:

*All Other Nights* by Dara Horn  
*Song of Slaves in the Desert* by Alan Cheuse  
*My Name is Asher Lev* by Chaim Potok  
*In the Beginning* by Chaim Potok  
*The Trial of God* by Elie Wiesel  
*The Red Badge of Courage* by Stephen Crane  
*A Stillness at Appomattox (Army of the Potomac, Vol. 3)* by Bruce Catton  
*Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe  
*Cold Mountain* by Charles Frazier  
*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain  
*Invisible Man* by Ralph Ellison  
*Native Son* by Richard Wright  
*Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad  
*Beloved* by Toni Morrison  
*Kindred* by Octavia Butler  
*Roots: The Saga of an American Family* by Alex Haley  
*Gone with the Wind* by Margaret Mitchell  
*The Rise of David Levinsky* by Abraham Cahan  
*Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott

**Non-Fiction Books:**

*Jews and Blacks: Let the Healing Begin* by Michael Lerner and Cornel West  
*When General Grant Expelled the Jews* by Jonathan D. Sarna  
*Jews and the Civil War: A Reader* by Jonathan D. Sarna and Adam Mendelsohn  
*God's Almost Chosen Peoples: A Religious History of the American Civil War* by George C. Rable  
*American Jewry and the Civil War* by Betram Wallace Korn  
*Your True Marcus: The Civil War Letters of a Jewish Colonel* edited by Jean Powers Soman and Frank L. Byrne  
*The Jewish Confederates* by Robert N. Rosen  
*History of the Jews in America: Civil War Through the Rise of Zionism (Challenge and Change)* by Shelley Kapnek Rosenberg  
*The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews* by Historical Research Department of the Nation of Islam  
*The Black Jews of Africa History, Religion, Identity* by Edith Bruder  
*Jews Selling Blacks* by Historical Research Department of the Nation of Islam  
*Jews and Blacks in the Early Modern World* by Jonathan Schorsch  
*Richmond Redeemed: The Siege at Petersburg* by Richard J. Sommers  
*The Encyclopedia of Civil War Medicine* by Glenna R. Schroeder-Lein  
*A Southern Woman's Story: Life in Confederate Richmond* by Phoebe Yates Pember  
*City Under Siege: Richmond in the Civil War* by Mike Wright  
*Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* by David W. Blight  
*The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* by Eric Foner  
*April 1865: The Month that Saved America* by Jay Winik  
*Twelve Years a Slave* by Solomon Northup  
*Fires in the Mirror* by Anna Deavere Smith

## Websites

PBS-Ken Burns' *The Civil War*

<http://www.pbs.org/civilwar/>

Civil War

<http://www.nps.gov/civilwar/index.htm>

Civil War Trust website

<http://www.civilwar.org/>

Judaism

<http://www.iewfaq.org/index.htm>

Confederate States of America website

<http://csa.systekproof.com/>

The Passover Seder

[http://www.chabad.org/holidays/passover/pesach\\_cdo/aid/1980/jewish/Passover-Seder.htm](http://www.chabad.org/holidays/passover/pesach_cdo/aid/1980/jewish/Passover-Seder.htm)

Abraham Lincoln

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/presidents/abrahamlincoln>

Slavery in America

<http://www.history.com/topics/slavery>

*Slavery and the Making of America* website

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/slavery/>

Richmond in the Civil War

<http://www.mdgorman.com/>

Black History Timeline

<http://www.history.com/interactives/black-history-timeline>

National Museum of American Jewish History timeline

<http://www.nmajh.org/timeline/index.htm>

Aftermath of Civil War

<http://docsouth.unc.edu/true/chapter/chp06-02/chp06-02.html>

National Museum of Civil War Medicine website

<http://www.civilwarmed.org/>

Civil War Soldiers

<http://www.historynet.com/civil/war/soldiers>

Black Union Soldiers of the Civil War

<http://alexandriava.gov/historic/fortward/default.aspx?id=40018>

## **DVDs**

Ken Burns' *The Civil War*

PBS' *Slavery and the Making of America* series

*Roots*

*Glory*

*Lincoln*

*The Birth of a Nation*

*The Ten Commandments*

*Prince of Egypt*

*127 Hours*

*The Best Years of Our Lives*

*Gettysburg*

*Twelve Years a Slave*

*Cold Mountain*

*Ride with the Devil*

*Slaves in the Family*

## Questions for Discussion

### Before Seeing the Show

The Civil War was a time in which slavery oppressed African Americans. What makes freedom important? Discuss whether all Americans have equal freedom today. What liberties have you taken for granted? Discuss any experiences where you have lost freedom or liberties. What other people and groups have you seen lose their liberties? How does that make you feel?

Why is studying history important? What makes it worthwhile? What can we learn from studying history? How does history help us learn from our mistakes?

The characters of *The Whipping Man* hold a Seder, which is a ritual meal that Jews celebrate during Passover. What is the significance of such a ritual in today's world? What rituals or holidays do you or your family participate in? What makes them unique or special to you? What makes them important or unimportant to you? What is the historical significance or symbolism of these traditions? Do you plan on continuing these traditions later on in your life? Why or why not?

What does home mean to you—is it a feeling, a certain set of people, a certain location? Have you ever had to leave your home for a long time? What did that feel like? What did it feel like to return? What had changed? How did you feel about those changes?

What has been the scariest moment of your life? What brought about this fear? How does fear affected your ability to clearly and accurately assess a situation? How does fear affect your decision making? How does fear affect your ability to trust?

What do you know about the Civil War. How have you learned about this history—school, books, movies, travel? What themes or ideas seem to continually reappear in stories about the Civil War, both fictional and non-fictional? How do these issues relate to other periods in history, including today?

## After Seeing the Show

Many secrets are revealed during the play. How justified are the characters in keeping of the truth from one another? What finally propels Caleb to tell Simon the truth about his family? How important is telling the truth in a relationship?

Do the circumstances justify John's gathering of material goods during the play? Why or why not?

Playwright Matthew Lopez uses Jewish history and slavery in the Civil War to draw a number of parallels. What is the same about these two forms of slavery? What is different? What other groups from different times and places have a similar "shared history"?

What is ironic about Jewish slave-owners? How do the three characters show their recognition or lack of recognition of this irony?

How do Caleb, John, and Simon identify with one another? Are they close friends, family, property and owner, slave and master, distanced men sharing a few commonalities? How do their identities change throughout the play? How does the way they relate to each other change over the course of the play?

How does the whipping man play a role in the characters' relationships? Why did Caleb want to whip John on that first visit? Why does John bring up the subject? How are words, actions, revelations, and secrets used by the characters as "whips" during the play?

What is the role of history in this play? Where does personal history and cultural history collide? How does playwright Matthew Lopez show history's importance through its effect on character, plot, theme, and other elements?

What is the role of the Passover Seder in the play, both in terms of history and character development?

How is slavery presented in *The Whipping Man*? How do Caleb, Simon, and John each view slavery differently? Where do their ideas overlap and where are they very distinct from one another? Slavery does not necessarily just mean the ownership of another human being. What other types of slavery do the characters experience beyond the straightforward definition? For example, what is Caleb a slave to? What are John and Simon slaves to, even now that legally they are free men?

The characters of Sarah and Mr. de Leon are very important characters, yet we never see them onstage. What does this absence do to the interactions between the three onstage characters and to the mood of the play? What do we learn about these characters from various accounts of them? What can we infer about them? What do they do to drive the plot?

How is religion portrayed in *The Whipping Man*? How is celebrating the Seder a different experience for Simon, Caleb, and John? What does it mean to each of them? How has the war affected each of their understandings of religion, particularly Judaism? How important is religious freedom to each of them? How important is it to you?

Simon compares Caleb's love for Sarah to that of loving a dog because he legally owned her. Do you agree? What type of love exists between these two characters? What different types of love are shown in *The Whipping Man*? How has this love changed over time? How has the war affected character relationships?

The Civil War is known as one of the biggest military struggles in history. How does it still affect our country today? How can we see the war's aftermath today in such issues as race relations or states' rights? How are the North and the South different today? What differences in perspective exist between these parts of our nation?

How is this play relevant and important to our contemporary world? What larger issues appear in this play that still resonate in our world? What current events show similarities to themes in this play? What lessons or themes may be found in this play?

## Writing Prompts

Letter writing was an important form of communication during the Civil War, and often letters sustained the determination of soldiers on the warfront. In the play we hear a letter from Caleb to Sarah, but we don't hear Sarah's response to this letter. Write a letter from Sarah to Caleb, either in response to Caleb's letter, or about her circumstances at the end of the play.

Write a series of journal entries from soldier on the brink of desertion. What side are you fighting for? What factors are driving this decision—is it fear, homesickness, lack of food, lack of leadership, inadequate pay? Is it a combination of factors such as these? What is your personal struggle with this decision? What will you do once you leave the forces—where will you go? Do you have a family, a wife waiting for you? What will they think? What consequences could occur if your desertion is discovered?

Parallels between President Abraham Lincoln and the Biblical figure of Moses are drawn in *The Whipping Man*. Do some more research on these two legendary figures and write a compare and contrast essay about their stories and their leadership. Which do you think was a more effective leader?

Write a sequel to *The Whipping Man*. What do you believe happens after the end of the play? When and where does your play take place? Are we introduced to the characters of Caleb's father, Sarah, Elizabeth, Bad Eye, Freddy Cole, or even Sarah's child?

Write a review of the play. What moments made an impression on you? How do the elements of scenery, costumes, lighting, and sound work with the actors' performance of the text to tell the story? What ideas or themes did the play make you think about? How did it make you feel? Post your review on the IRT website:

<http://reviews.irtlive.com/>



## Activities

Find a genealogy website or ask a grandparent if you had any relatives in the Civil War. If not, choose another war. Research as much as you can about them. Who did they fight for? In what branch of the military did they serve? What was their rank? Where were they stationed? What battles or missions did they fight in?

Hold your own Seder meal, using what you can find in your own kitchen to represent the actual foods at a Seder, much like Caleb, John, and Simon did. How did they improvise their meal? How might you improvise yours? As you eat the food you prepare, make sure you remember the symbolic meaning of each of these foods.

Research a medical procedure from the Civil War (such as an amputation). Give a short presentation about the differences between the procedure then and now. What is different in terms of medical knowledge? Equipment? Sanitation? Anaesthesia?? The procedure itself? Survival rates? Prosthetics?

Create a dramaturgical packet for your school's next theatrical production. Research what a dramaturg does. Using the library and the internet, study the show's writer(s) and the creation of the original production. Collect information about the historical and social setting of your play or musical and share it with your cast. Read the script to find names of historical people and real places, as well as antiquated or unfamiliar vocabulary, and create a glossary for your cast to use. Use your findings to create program notes or a collage for your auditorium lobby that helps prepare your audience for the world of the play. Which aspects of your research might be more useful to your actors, and which might be more useful for your audience?

## Glossary

### **Appomattox**

General Lee surrendered to General Grant on April 9, 1865, in the village of Appomattox Court House. Among the terms decided upon, the Confederate soldiers were paroled and sent to their homes.

### **artillery**

Engines of war that operate by projection of munitions far beyond the effective range of personal weapons.

### **Chimborazo**

Chimborazo was the most famous, largest, and best organized hospital in the Confederacy.

### **cracker**

Derogatory slang word for a white Southerner, perhaps derived from the crack of a slave-owner's whip.

### **President Davis**

Jefferson Davis (1808-1889) was the only President of the Confederate States of America.

### **deserter**

A deserter is a member of the military who purposely leaves before his/her term of service is over. There were many deserters during the Civil War: about one in five Union soldiers, and one in three Confederate soldiers. Although punishment in the South could be execution, desertion rates escalated during the final months of the war. Several hundred soldiers deserted per night in the days before Richmond fell, and thousands left the army along the march to Appomattox.

### **Frederick Douglass**

Frederick Douglass (1818-1895) was an escaped slave who became a famous abolitionist lecturer and anti-slavery newspaper publisher. His autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave, Written by Himself*, was published in 1845. During the war, Douglass advised President Lincoln and helped to recruit black soldiers for the Northern army. After the war, Douglass continued his fight for black civil rights and women's rights.

### **emancipated**

"Emancipated" means to be set free from control, bondage, or oppression. Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, set in effect on January 1, 1863, paved the way to slaves' freedom in the United States.

**Father Abraham**

This tribute to Abraham Lincoln alludes to Abraham, the patriarch of Judaism, the first to teach belief in one god, despite his father's worship of idols. Abraham is also a major figure in Christianity, which stems from Judaism, and in Islam, because of Abraham's son Ishmael, who is an ancestor to Muhammad.

**Fredericksburg**

In the Battle of Fredericksburg, Virginia, in December 1862, 114,000 Union troops fought 72,000 Confederate troops. The resulting loss, despite superior numbers, was a very low point for the Union.

**gangrene**

Gangrene is the death of tissue in a part of the body, with symptoms such as discoloration of the skin, bad-smelling discharge, and loss of feeling in that part. During the Civil War, amputations due to gangrene were common.

**Gettysburg**

The Battle of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, July 1863, ended the Confederate invasion of the North and was the major turning point of the war.

**"Go Down Moses"**

This African-American spiritual was first published in 1862. The metaphor in the lyrics shows how the slaves of the South are similar to the Israelites in Egypt. Although it is often viewed as a Christian song, today among Reform and Conservative Jews it has become a staple song in the Seder.

**hardtack**

Hardtack was a staple food for soldiers during the Civil War, a hard biscuit made of flour, water, and occasionally salt. Because it was so hard, soldiers gave hardtack nicknames such as "teeth dullers."

**Harvard**

Harvard University is a private, Ivy League college founded in 1636 in Cambridge, Massachusetts. It is the oldest institution of higher learning in the nation and perhaps the most prestigious.

**Hebrew**

Hebrew is one of the world's oldest languages, associated with Judaism because of its roots with the ancient Israelites.

**high holy days**

The Jewish high holy days include Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and the ten-day span between the two holidays. Rosh Hashanah is considered the Jewish New Year, recalling the creation of the world. Yom Kippur is the Day of Atonement, when the Jewish people reflect and repent for their mistakes throughout the year. The high holy days generally occur during September on the Georgian calendar.

**kosher**

Kosher is a term meaning "clean," "fit," or "proper," which can be applied to any Jewish ritual, but most often is applied to Kashrut, or the Jewish biblical dietary restrictions.

**larder**

An area in which one stores food; pantry, storeroom.

**Lee**

General Robert E. Lee (1807-1870) commanded the Confederate forces in the Civil War.

**Caleb Legree**

Simon Legree is a particularly vicious and brutal slave owner in Harriet Beecher Stowe's widely popular and influential 1852 anti-slavery novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Very soon after the book's publication, the name Simon Legree began to be used as an appellation for any harsh boss or cruel taskmaster.

**Leviticus**

Leviticus is the third book of the five books of Moses. It details the duties and role of a priest, but it also describes the same for the laity, telling them how to properly worship their God (including dietary laws).

**President Lincoln**

Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865) served as president of the United States throughout the Civil War. His Emancipation Proclamation, which freed slaves in Confederate states, and his Gettysburg Address, which used the Founding Fathers and the topic of equality to speak of the war's purpose, proved to be two of his most famous accomplishments. In 1864 Lincoln was reelected as President; his inaugural address focused on the reconstruction of United States. On April 14, 1865, President Lincoln was assassinated by Confederacy supporter John Wilkes Booth while attending a play at Ford's Theatre in Washington. This event occurred only five days after the end of the war, and probably led to a bumpier reconstruction than might otherwise have happened.

**minyan**

Minyan, meaning "count," is a rule that comes from the Mishnah, designating ten men over the age of thirteen to be the minimum number to hold traditional Jewish public services.

**Moses**

Moses is considered by many to be the most important figure in Judaism. He was a prophet, leader, and teacher of the Israelites, leading them out of Egypt.

**munitions**

Any material for war, such as ammunition or weaponry.

**Passover**

Passover is a Jewish festival that spans eight days in early spring. It recalls the release of enslaved Israelites under the control of the Egyptian Pharaoh. The first two days of Passover include evenings seders, which are family meals with special guidelines to commemorate the flight of the Israelites.

**Pesach**

The Hebrew word for "Passover."

**Petersburg**

Petersburg, Virginia, was a center of importance for the Confederacy, as a supply conduit and deployment headquarters. Beginning in June 1864, Union troops kept the city under siege for nine and a half months, cutting off supply lines by eradicating transportation routes. Casualties numbered 70,000 between both sides, but eventually Richmond was isolated and the city fell in April 1865.

**rabbi**

A rabbi, meaning "teacher" or "master," is the religious leader in a Jewish community.

**reveille**

The military wake-up call alerting military members to assemble in order to start the day, most often played on a bugle or on drums.

**Richmond, Virginia**

During the Civil War, Richmond was the capital of the Confederate States of America. When the confederates evacuate the city on April 2, 1865, they torched warehouses of tobacco and other goods to prevent Union forces from gaining supplies. An estimated 25 % of Richmond was consumed by the fire.

**Sabbath**

The Sabbath is the Jewish day of rest and spiritual growth, which starts Friday at sundown and ends Saturday at sundown. On the Sabbath, there are services and fairly elaborate meals, as well as studying of the Torah and leisure activities, culminating in a day of celebration and prayer.

**Shabbat Shalom**

A Hebrew phrase meaning "a peaceful Sabbath," spoken as a greeting among Jews between Friday at sundown to Saturday at sundown (the Sabbath).

**Sharpsburg**

Sharpsburg, Maryland, was the site of the Battle of Antietam, named after Antietam Creek. In September 1862, 87,000 Union soldiers contested with 41,000 Confederate soldiers during the bloodiest day of the Civil War, with a total of about 23,000 casualties. The Union's success emboldened Lincoln to deliver his Emancipation Proclamation.

**shells**

A payload-carrying projectile that contains an explosive or other filling (as opposed to shot, which is a solid projectile).

**Torah**

The term Torah sometimes refers to the five books of Moses including Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. A broader definition is the entire Jewish bible, or the Tanakh, which is the equivalent of what Christians call the Old Testament. Often when Torah is used in this way, the word also references the parchment scroll on which scripture is handwritten in Hebrew and kept in a synagogue's ark. An even broader view of the word Torah includes the Talmud, with explanations of scripture and how commandments should be applied in everyday life.

**Nat Turner**

Nat Turner (1800-1831) led a slave rebellion in 1831, with about 40 slaves killing several white families over two months. Turner was eventually caught, hung, and skinned, and slave owners retaliated by killing some 200 slaves who were not related to the insurrection, but who were assumed to be.

**unleavened**

Made from dough that contains no yeast or any other rising agents.

**Union**

The Union was essentially the group of states that supported the federal government upon the outbreak of the Civil War. This consisted of twenty free states and five slave states. In comparison to the Confederacy, the Union was much more urbanized, with a population five times that of the South.

**Williamsburg**

The Battle of Williamsburg, in May 1862, was one of the first large-scale battles of the Civil War, with 41,000 Union soldiers taking the Virginia city from 32,000 Confederate soldiers.

## Going to the Theatre

You, the audience, are one of the most important parts of any performance. The theatre is a group activity shared not only with the actors, but also with the people sitting around you. Your attention and participation help the actors perform better, and allow the rest of the audience to enjoy the show. Here are a few simple tips to help make each theatre experience enjoyable for everyone:



Leave CD players, mp3 players, cameras, cell phones, beepers, and other distracting and noise-making electronic devices at home.

You may think texting is private, but the light and the motion are very annoying to those around you and on stage. Do not text message in the theatre.

Food and drink must stay in the lobby.

The house lights going out signal the audience to get quiet and settle in your seats: the play is about to begin.

Don't talk with your neighbors during the play. It distracts people around you and the actors on stage. Even if you think they can't hear you, they can.

Never throw anything onto the stage. People could be injured.

Remain in your seat during the play. Use the restroom before or after the show.

Focus all your attention on the play to best enjoy the experience. Listen closely to the dialogue, and look at the set, lights, and costumes. These elements all help to tell the story.

Get involved in the story. Laugh, cry, sigh, gasp—whatever the story draws from you. The more emotionally involved you are, the more you will enjoy the play.

Remain at your seat and applaud during the curtain call because this is part of the performance too. It gives you a chance to recognize a job well done and the actors a moment to thank you for your attention.