



EDUCATION PACK

**Cross-curricular: Drama and Theatre Studies, English Literature,
History, Politics, PSHE**

Key Stages 4 & 5

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introduction

The resources, research and information in this study pack are intended to enhance your understanding of *The Royale* by Marco Ramirez and to provide you with the materials to assist students in both the practical study of this text and in gaining a deeper understanding of this exciting new play. This includes context (both political and theatrical), production photographs, discussion points and exercises that have been devised to unpack the play's themes and stylistic devices.

In line with the national curriculum, *The Royale* would be a suitable live theatre production for analysis. It will also provide an invaluable resource for students who are focusing on new writing, ensemble work and theatre productions based on historical and real life figures.

The Royale tackles the challenges of researching, presenting and understanding social, historical and political issues in an accessible and creative way. The play will provoke students to ask pertinent questions, think critically, and develop perspective and judgement.

If you have any further questions please don't hesitate to get in touch with Amanda Castro on 0208 743 3584 or at amandacastro@bushtheatre.co.uk



synopsis

Jay 'The Sport' Jackson dreams of being the undisputed heavyweight champion of the world. But it's 1905 and, in the racially segregated world of boxing, his chances are as good as knocked out.

When a boxing promoter hatches a plan for the 'Fight of the Century', The Sport might land a place in the ring with the reigning white heavyweight champion, but at what cost? It's not just a retired champ he's facing, it's 'The Great White Hope'. In daring to realise his dream, is Jay responsible for putting African American lives in the danger zone?

Told in six rounds and set in a boxing ring, *The Royale* is inspired by the often overlooked story of Jack Johnson, a boxer who – at the height of the Jim Crow era – became the most famous and the most notorious black man on Earth.



Nicholas Pinnock plays Jay 'The Sport' Jackson

classroom exercise #1

Reflecting on the production

Curriculum links: Drama, Art & Design, Music

Time: 20 minutes

Materials: Flipchart paper and pens

Use this exercise to get your students responding to work that they have seen onstage. This tool enables students to respond to any piece or dance, theatre or live performance that they have seen.

Organise the class into groups of 4 or 5 and give each group a large sheet of paper and some pens. Write the name of the production on the whiteboard, then assign each group an area of the production to explore including:

- The set and staging
- Directing
- Costume
- Music and Sound
- Acting
- Themes of the play

Each group should write their chosen area of the production as a heading on their flip chart paper. Each group then has five minutes to brainstorm thoughts and comments around their assigned area of the production, noting them in a spider diagram on their flip chart paper. After five minutes each group must pass their paper onto the next group and repeat this process until the every group has commented on all areas of the production listed by the class.

These sheets can then be photocopied and handed out. You could also put the sheets up in the classroom for inspiration when discussing the production.

Who was Jack Johnson?

The Royale is loosely based on the story of Jack Johnson, the first African American world heavyweight boxing champion.



Jack was born in 1878 in Galveston Texas, the son of two former slaves who worked as a janitor and dishwasher to support him and his eight siblings. As a child race did not present issues for him; he had white friends and did not suffer discrimination. He said: "As I grew up, the white boys were my friends and my pals. I ate with them, played with them and slept at their homes. Their mothers gave me cookies, and I ate at their tables. No one ever taught me that white men were superior to me."

Johnson left school and began working in a variety of different labouring jobs and got his start in boxing in small games in back alleys and bars. He made his debut as a professional boxer in 1898 when he knocked out Charley Brooks in the second round of a 15-round fight.

In 1901 he fought Joe Choynski and was knocked out in the third round. Prize fighting was illegal in Texas at that time and they were both arrested after the fight. Choynski trained Johnson while they were in prison, telling him "A man who can move like you should never have to take a punch", and the Sheriff, who was a boxing fan allowed the local boxing club to send them gloves so they could spar in the jail cell. Large crowds gathered to watch them spar.

As Johnson rose through the ranks as a boxer, one goal eluded him: the World Heavyweight championship. In those days many white fighters refused to play against black fighters, and it took Johnson two years to convince the reigning world champion Tommy Burns to fight him. The fight eventually happened in 1908 and lasted fourteen rounds before being stopped by the police, with Johnson being declared the winner.

historical context

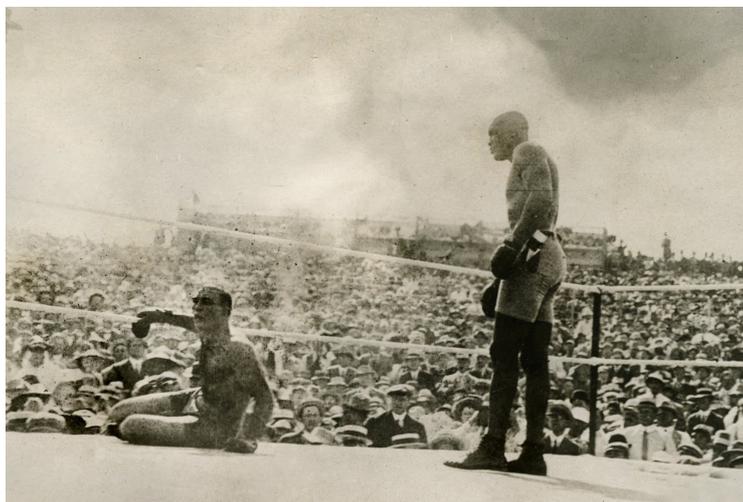
The Fight of the Century

Johnson's victory over Burns caused such anger among many white boxing fans and promoters that they started looking for a "Great White Hope" to defeat Johnson. In 1910, former heavyweight champion James J. Jeffries came out of retirement to challenge Johnson, having been offered \$120,000 to fight Johnson (about \$3 million in today's money). He was overweight and hadn't fought in years; he quickly started training hard to get back in shape and get ready for the fight.

The fight took place on July 4, 1910. Johnson dominated the match and at the 15th round, Jeffries' corner threw in the towel to end the fight. Afterwards, Jeffries said: "I could never have whipped Johnson at my best. I couldn't have hit him. No, I couldn't have reached him in 1,000 years."

Johnson wrote about the fight in his autobiography: "More than 25,000 people had gathered to watch the fight and, as I looked about me and scanned that sea of white faces, I felt the auspiciousness of the occasion. There were few men of my own race among the spectators. I realized that my victory in this event meant more than on any previous occasion. It wasn't just the championship that was at stake: it was my own honour, and in a degree the honour of my own race. The 'White Hope' had failed."

The aftermath of the fight was brutal, culminating in race riots that included the lynching of at least 20 black people and hundreds more injured. The film of the fight was banned from being shown in most cities.



Johnson's life after the fight

What further angered whites was Johnson's lifestyle, which was ostentatious and unapologetic. He drove fast, flashy cars, ran nightclubs, had gold teeth and furs, had his own jazz band, gambled, parties, seduced white women and apparently walked his pet leopard through the streets. He frequently broke conventions of what was expected behaviour from a black man and was criticised by both white and black people for this.



Johnson was married three times, each time to white women, causing further controversy. In 1912, Johnson was arrested on the grounds that his relationship with his girlfriend, Lucille Cameron, violated the Mann Act. This act prohibited "transporting women across state lines for immoral purposes" – Cameron was allegedly a prostitute and because of Johnson's race, and the fact that he had paid for her tickets to travel across states to meet him, this was deemed to be illegal. The couple later got married. Johnson was convicted by an all-white jury and sentenced to a year and a day in prison. He skipped bail and went into exile in Europe before giving himself up seven years later.

Johnson died in 1946 in a car crash, aged 68.

classroom exercise #2

Debate and discussion, cultural icons

Curriculum Links: Drama, PSHCE, English, History

Time: 45 minutes – 1 hour

Resources: Open space, print outs of cultural icons (e.g.: Barack Obama; Kim Kardashian; Malala Yousef; David Beckham; Angelina Jolie; Jay-Z)

Exercise 1

In the play, Jay is a cultural icon because he is the first black heavyweight boxing champion. He triumphed over adversity and bridged a gap through hard work and sacrifice. But what is it that makes a cultural icon?

Place a selection of images of 'cultural icons' up on a wall, in a line across the room and check that people know who everyone is. Ask the students to:

- Stand by the image of the person they think is most famous. Ask students what has influenced their choice.
- Stand by the person they think is most important. Why?
- Stand by the person they would most like to be like. Why?

Discuss: what makes a cultural icon and why might these people have been chosen?

Exercise 2

Ask the students to get into small groups and give them three minutes to decide on a new person who they choose as their ultimate cultural icon. Ask them to think about the discussions they just had about what makes a cultural icon when making their choice. Only one icon per group.

In these teams, lead a verbal boxing match to decide who our most important cultural icons are. Each team will take their icon, and argue against another team why THEIR icon is the most important.

Each team will have one minute to come up with their arguments, before one volunteer from each team comes forward to "box" (i.e. present their arguments). After all arguments have been presented, ask the whole class to take a vote on who is their biggest cultural icon.

historical context

Race and the Jim Crow laws

The Jim Crow laws were racial segregation laws that were enacted primarily in the Southern states of the United States of America, between 1877 until the mid-1960s. Under this set of laws, African Americans were relegated to the status of second class citizens. This system was designed to prevent any contact between blacks and whites as equals, with segregation enacted in schools, public transportation, parks, cemeteries, hospitals, prisons, theatres and restaurants.

The Jim Crow laws touched upon every aspect of everyday life: separate entrances to buildings for blacks and whites were created and in some areas blacks and whites were not allowed to work in the same room. There were entire towns where, under these laws, black people could no longer live. Some towns passed a curfew for black residents, or had segregated parks, drinking fountains and even phone booths. In some areas, there were different textbooks for black and white students and even different bibles for blacks and whites in courtrooms.

It was also made increasingly difficult for black people to be able to vote – black people who wanted to vote had to pay poll taxes or faced literacy requirements or eligibility tests that white voters did not have to face. As a result the number of black voters dropped drastically.

Black people who violated these laws risked their homes, their jobs and even their lives: beatings and lynchings occurred frequently against black men and women accused of breaking the law.



historical context

Jim Crow Etiquette

Alongside this set of laws was what was known as 'Jim Crow etiquette', a set of informal rules that blacks and white lived by during this period. This included rules such as:

- Blacks and whites were not supposed to eat together. If they did eat together, whites were to be served first, and some sort of partition was to be placed between them.
- The white owners of clothing stores did not allow blacks to try on clothing
- Custom did not allow motormen or conductors to assist black women with bags or parcels. It was expected that blacks would give up their seats to white passengers during peak or crowded times.
- A black male could not offer his hand (to shake hands) with a white male because it implied being socially equal.
- Blacks were not allowed to show public affection toward one another in public, especially kissing.
- If a black person rode in a car driven by a white person, the black person sat in the back seat, or the back of a truck.
- Blacks had to use courtesy titles (like Mr or Mrs) when referring to whites, and were not allowed to call them by their first names.



classroom exercise #3

Exploring history through theatre

Curriculum Links: Drama, history

Time: Two 1 hour sessions

Resources: Open space, Computers/internet, pens, paper, flipchart & pens.

“You’re gonna knock him out in three,
Your name’s gonna get written in history,
And not in Black history,
Not in White history, either, Jay –
In something better –
In Sports history.”

Max, *The Royale*

The Royale is set in the turn of last century and dramatises a pivotal moment in racial and sports history. In order for the production to represent this period accurately the cast and creative team were required to research the period and the pertinent issues that people faced.

Session 1

In small groups ask students to research one of the historical events and cultural icons below. Find out what cause these icons were fighting for, why it was important? What life was like for the everyday people affected? What was a key moment in the individual’s campaign and what sacrifices you think they made?

(Note for teacher, you may want to ensure an equal number of groups covers each subject)

- The civil rights movement (1960s) – Malcolm X
- The miners strikes (1980s) – Arthur Scargill
- Gay rights movement (1970s) – Harvey Milk
- The Suffragette movement (Early 1900s) - Emmeline Pankhurst

Each group should present their research, making notes on a flip chart of the information learnt. Any notes/pictures/photos can then be pinned on the wall to form a research wall.

Discuss: what key points you think are most important? Most interesting? What stands out about this person? What would be the best or most interesting to dramatise? Have you ever seen these stories dramatized before, in theatre, film, TV or literature?

Session 2

In the same groups, using the information learnt during the research process ask students to create a 5 minute piece dramatising their event and the individual involved in it. Ask them to try to be accurate to the research they uncovered and think also about the way people walked/talked/behaved during that period.

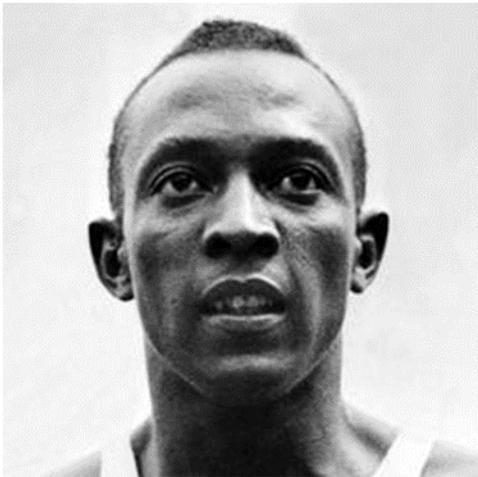
After presenting their scenes, lead a discussion: was it any different using a real historical event as inspiration rather than making it all up? Did the groups at any point deviate from the facts and extra moments to add tension or drama, or to make it more exciting? Was it difficult to stick to the facts or did it change how they worked in any way? What might an artist have to think about when using a real life historical event as the basis for a work of art?

Sport and Race

Jack Johnson was a pioneer, overcoming significant discrimination in his time to become the world's first African American boxing heavyweight champion.

Here are some sporting icons you may not know about, who also had to overcome racial prejudice and discrimination to reach the top of their fields.

Jesse Owen

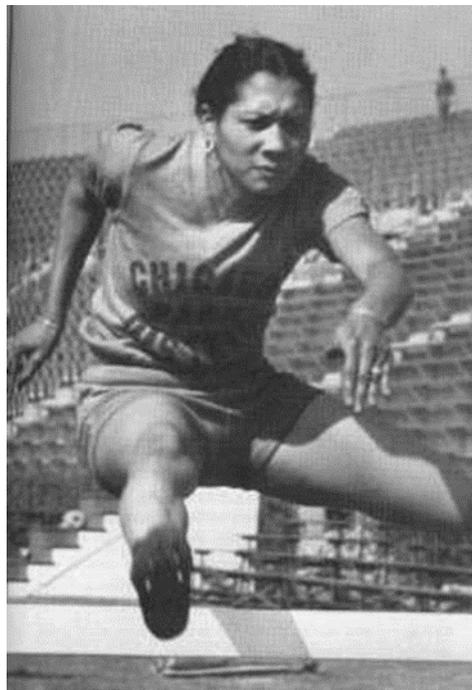


Hitler viewed African Americans as inferior and chastised the United States for stooping to use these "non-humans." Despite the endless racial epithets and the constant presence of the red and black swastika Twenty-two-year-old American Jesse Owens didn't care much for Hitler's politics, he just wanted to show off his immense skills and represent his country to the best of his abilities. He made Hitler eat his words with four gold medals.

Ironically, the real snub of Owens came from his own president. Even after ticker-tape parades for Owens in New York City and Cleveland, President Franklin D. Roosevelt never publicly acknowledged Owens' achievements (gold in the 100 meter, 200 meter, 400 meter relay, and long jump). Owens was never invited to the White

House and never even received a letter of congratulations from the president. Almost two decades passed before another American president, Dwight D. Eisenhower, honoured Owens by naming him "Ambassador of Sports" — in 1955.

Tidye Pickett



The first African American woman to compete for the United States in the Olympic Games, Tidye Pickett was born November 3, 1914 in Chicago, Illinois. She was educated at Illinois State University. Pickett qualified for the U. S. team scheduled to compete at the 1932 Los Angeles Olympic Games but was replaced at the last minute because of her race. She did compete at the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games, reaching the quarterfinals of the low hurdles before breaking her foot and was unable to continue. After retiring from track, Pickett served as principal of a school in East Chicago Heights, Illinois for 23 years. When she retired in 1980, the school was renamed in her honour.

Jackie Robinson and Branch Rickey



Branch Rickey was a Major League Baseball executive. It was Rickey's steadfast opposition to baseball's colour barrier that would forever identify him as one of the game's great pioneers. In 1945, he founded a new league for black players. While he was criticised for encouraging continued segregation in sports, Rickey's overriding idea was to scout black ballplayers until he found just the right one to bring about the desegregation of the major leagues.

On August 28, 1945, Rickey chose Jackie Robinson to be the first player to integrate baseball. Rickey told Robinson he was looking for a man who "had guts enough not to fight back". Robinson was warned about the abuse he would take, but took the job and followed Rickey's advice with remarkable restraint. Jackie Robinson broke down the racial barriers in professional baseball by serving as the first African-American player ever in the league. His courageous assertiveness during a time where racial discrimination dwelled all over the country continues to inspire all people even today.

Wilma Glodean Rudolph



Wilma Glodean Rudolph was not the most likely choice to become one of the best runners of her generation. The 20th in a family of 22 children, she was a premature birth, weighing only 4.5lbs. Racial segregation in the US at the time prevented Wilma from being treated at the local hospital.

At one point she was unable to walk unaided, and at one point was told by doctors that she'd never walk at all. In 1960 Wilma went to the Rome Olympics and landed no less than three gold medals, the first American woman to do so.

classroom exercise #4

Exploring physicality

Curriculum Links: Drama, PSHCE, dance & movement

Time: 30 minutes

Resources: Open space, playing cards

In *The Royale* the actors worked with a movement coach not only to stage the fight scenes but also to explore the physicality of the characters in everyday life. You can read more about the work that a Movement Director does later on in this education pack, which includes an interview with The Royale's movement director Lucie Pankhurst.

Exercise 1: Sculptures

In pairs ask students to stand facing their partner: one partner is going to be the artist, the other a sculpture. It is the job of the artist to position the sculpture into a stance of an influential person. You may choose one of the following examples:

- A sports person.
- An actor.
- A musician.
- A politician.

Ask students to think about how they stand, how they hold themselves, their head, their facial expressions, their eye gaze.

Exercise 2: Room Walk

Now that the students have been sculpted they may use this as a starting point for the next exercise.

Ask them to take the position of their sculpture and then begin to walk around the room in the character of their influential person. Using a pack of playing cards pick cards at random, each card number represents a different level of the size of their gestures and movement. With 10 being highest level (Exaggerated posture, gestures and movement) and 1 being the lowest (very small, subtle posture gestures and movement), students are to adapt their movement in response to the number on the card you pick.

Discuss: What did the students discover about body language? Does an influential person stand in a particular way? Does the way we stand and physically move affect the way people think about us? What do the students think about how they physically represent themselves in everyday life? Does it affect the way they are perceived by others?

classroom exercise #5

Staging scenes in a stylised way

Curriculum Links: Drama and music

Time: 30 minutes

Resources: An open space

The boxing fight scenes in *The Royale* are stylised rather than naturalistic, meaning they are done in a way that is not naturalistic in order to create an artistic effect. The actors only ever actually throw a punch to mark a moment and the rest of the time work as an ensemble to build dramatic effect and represent a fight scene. They use their bodies to create sounds: claps, “oohs”, “ahhs” and stomps on the floor whilst adding a rhythm to their sounds to add to this effect. Physically the actors respond to these sounds and rhythms.

This is a response to the stage directions for the play, which say: *“In production, the SOUNDS should be made organically, from the actors onstage. CLAPS from the ensemble should come mostly from those not actively in the scene at hand – serving as punctuation. LAUGHTER, OOHs, and AAHs can sound a little more realistic, but are still punctuation.”*

Here is an example from the script::

JAY
Just pinch him,
Let him know this ain't a –

(-Jay JABS-)

ENSEMBLE
OOH!

MAX
The Sport with a shot across the bow!

FISH
(to himself)
That wadn't nothin' –

(CLAP-CLAP.)

JAY

(to Fish)
Boy, that wadn't nothin' –

(-Jay JABS-)

ENSEMBLE
OOH!

MAX
Two from Jay Jackson!
Starting things off early here tonight!

Discuss: What is stylisation? What kind of techniques can performers and theatre makers used to produce a stylised effect? How does stylising the fight scenes of *The Royale* benefit the dramatic structure of the play?

In groups of four ask students create a short scene depicting one of the following:

- The last moment of a football match.
- An accident in the work place: Office, factory, shop.
- An incident in a public place.

These scenes should be without sound and should last no longer than 60 seconds. Students should try to make the scenes stylised (using techniques such as breaking the fourth wall, choreography/ synchronisation, exaggerated gesture etc.)

Students should then present these pieces to the group and discuss what sound effects could be added to the scenes to make them more dramatic. How can these sounds be created using the body?

interview with the playwright

Meet Marco Ramirez

What and/or who inspired you to write *The Royale*?

I never set out to tell Jack Johnson's story, or even to write a story about race relations. At first, all I wanted was to write a play about boxing. I love the simplicity of it. The bare-bones nature of it. It's an inherently dramatic sport, and very theatrical. Two go in, one comes out. They have nothing more than their physical and emotional selves in that ring, and I love that. I mulled over what kind of boxing story I wanted to tell for a while - with Jack Johnson's story being the most obvious elephant in the room for a while. At first, I thought I'd go in a different direction, because another play (*The Great White Hope*) had already told Jack's story. But eventually, I realized I could tell my own version of the story. I could take liberties, change names, and change events to suit my purposes as a "dramatist" - to make the story as compelling in shape and scope as I wanted it to be.

You also write for TV; why did you chose to tell this story through theatre?

There have been plenty of "realistic" depictions of boxers on film and TV, and so it was important for me - very early on - to set this apart from all of those. Boxing is theatre. It's a play with two characters, and one of them wins in the end. It just made sense.

Yes, I write for TV, but when it comes to the stories I tell in theatre, I'm interested in what makes a piece worth seeing live, up close, and in the flesh. It's a live event, like a magic trick or a sporting event, and to treat it like it's anything else is just not using the form for all it is worth.

With no disrespect intended to stage fight choreographers, I knew at the very beginning that I wanted the "fighting" in this play to be a character in itself, something unseen that could only be understood in person. I knew I was going to do the direct-address fighting-without-fighting boxing matches themselves before I even knew which story the play would tell.



interview with the playwright

Jack Johnson became an iconic figure in his day. Who are your own personal cultural icons and why?

I think it's a myth that we get to choose our cultural icons. Society, time, and culture choose them for us. Whether or not we want to follow them or reject them is our own decision, but as far as who becomes an icon - we have no choice. In each generation, there are some voices, faces, personalities, leaders that - for whatever reason - rise above the rest. In my lifetime, I've seen figures transcend to "icon status" - from Kurt Cobain to Michelle Obama, Steve Jobs to Kanye West.

Where there any difficulties when writing the play?

It was difficult at first because I always wanted the "historical setting" to feel contemporary. The lead character is as much Jack Johnson as he is Jay-Z. He's bombastic and realizes the only way to get a seat at the table of high society is to take it. He will be remembered - whether the establishment likes it or not. He's the very definition of boisterous modern day hip-hop swagger, and yet in reality he's alive in the early 1900s, at a time when there were serious limitations to what a young African-American man could do with his life. It was a hard tight-rope to walk, but I think (hopefully) it works now.

If you had to choose one character you most relate to in the play who would you choose and why?

Every character in this play (at some point) is my voice. It's unavoidable.

What is your favourite moment in the play and why?

I'm pretty proud of the moment when the second contender walks into the ring in the final fight. It's brought me a lot of joy, watching people react to that.

What advice would you give to someone who is writing or starting to write plays and for screen?

Watch lots of plays. Watch lots of movies. Take notes on the moments you love. Try to figure out what makes those moments so exciting. Try to figure out what it is about YOU that is attracted to those moments. Once you figure that out, you can cherry-pick those techniques and incorporate them into your own writing. Looking back at this play, there are moments in *The Royale* that I now realize are basically moments from my favourite plays and movies. There's a Banquo's-ghost-in-Macbeth moment. There's a Quint's-monologue-from-Jaws moment. There's nothing to stop you from making your own version of your own favourite moments.

interview with movement director

Meet Lucie Pankhurst, movement director

What attracted you to becoming a movement director?

I enjoy working as a choreographer and dance teacher. Directing movement in this way unearths a different emphasis within the text, which is exiting. Studying and researching different periods in time and the results of different circumstances is endlessly interesting.

You have also worked for TV and Film; does movement in a play differ from TV and Film and if so, how?

Movement for a play needs to be durable! The actor will have to perform that repeatedly and often under the scrutiny of a small venue, or in the round. It can't be edited, enhanced or adjusted in post-production, so even in a production-heavy piece, it needs to stand alone.

Jack Johnson became an iconic figure in his day. Who are your own personal cultural icons and why?

My personal cultural icons are the facilitators, the administrators, the producers and the patrons who have made the making of all art work possible.

What were the challenges of working on the movement of the play?

The text is fractured, in places, so the actors' narrative tracks weren't linear in the conventional way. Add some physical blocking to that and some significant rhythm and pace and you have a very hard-working cast!

What would be your top tips to an emerging movement director?

Watch everything you can, in the real world, in film and theatre, documentaries... keep watching, everything, everyone, all the time and build your own data base of this information.

What is your favourite moment in the play and why?

There is a particularly tender moment that shows the bond in shared experience, true empathy and compassion between the protagonists... made me weep!

Do you have any go-to games that you play with actors to warm them up?

I choose my warm-up music very carefully to provoke a particular mood and that can often be playful. With younger actors, games can work a treat, but with a grown-up group, who have also accrued the odd injury, we focus on preparing the body sufficiently.

further reading & viewing

Jim Crow Laws:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jim_Crow_laws

<http://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/what.htm>

<http://www.crf-usa.org/black-history-month/a-brief-history-of-jim-crow>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x2lwa9LeuFM>

Jack Johnson:

<http://www.theguardian.com/sport/blog/2010/jul/04/jack-johnson-pioneer-black-boxer>

<http://fightland.vice.com/blog/the-war-on-jack-johnson-boxings-first-black-heavyweight-champion-versus-the-world>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=esnq-orAvo8>

Sport and race:

<http://www.infoplease.com/spot/summer-olympics-jesse-owens.html>

<http://german.about.com/library/blgermyth10.htm>

<http://sisterthunderradio.com/2014/11/21/theodora-ann-tidye-pickett/>

<http://www.biography.com/people/branch-rickey-9458118#early-years>

<http://baseballhall.org/hof/rickey-branch>

<https://badreputation.org.uk/2011/05/19/unsung-heroes-wilma-rudolph/>