

# THE WHIPPING MAN

success

*the rep*

by MATTHEW LOPEZ

ARKANSAS REPERTORY THEATRE

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Prepared by Robert Neblett

## INTRODUCTION

“Why is this night different than all other nights?”

This is the core idea behind the Four Questions of the Passover Seder. It is also the core idea behind the tension and drama of Matthew Lopez's play *The Whipping Man*. Arguably, this question is the spark behind all good theatre: what makes these events onstage so special that they must be told in this specific way, with these specific characters?

Not only is April 14, 1865 one of those unusual confluences of history that unfolds with layers of resonance for generations to come – Passover for the Jews, Good Friday for Christians, the date of Abraham Lincoln's tragic assassination – it becomes a night of a portentous homecoming for Caleb DeLeon and two of his family's former slaves, a night when secrets will be revealed and the ghosts of the past will haunt their lives.

When Simon first encounters the injured Caleb, he recites the Hebrew blessing for the revival of the dead. But there are some things that may need to stay dead, some secrets that are better off unspoken.

At the Arkansas Repertory Theatre, we hope that you will listen to the themes of liberation and deliverance that populate this intensely intimate human drama and that it inspires you and your students to delve deeper into our nation's troubled history to explore the power of freedom as an intrinsic founding value of the United States.

### Special Note for Educators:

Throughout this Study Guide you will find words, names and phrases in **RED**. These items are key terms and phrases to understanding the world and context of *The Whipping Man* in greater detail. We encourage you to identify these items as vocabulary terms and as suggestions for further research and study among your students, both before and after you attend the performance at The Rep.

### Disclaimer:

*The Whipping Man* contains language that employs negative racial epithets as part of its historical context. While this strong language may be shocking or deemed offensive to students and/or parents, it plays a very specific, necessary role in establishing the reality of the play's action and characters.

## SYNOPSIS

Caleb DeLeon, a young Confederate Captain, returns to his family's deserted home in Richmond, Virginia, late one night following the surrender of Lee to Grant at Appomattox in April 1865. His leg is severely injured and he is surprised to see the decrepit state of the house. Simon, a former slave owned by his family, greets him and tends to his wounds. He informs Caleb that his leg has become infected and will have to be amputated, but Caleb refuses to be taken to the nearby military hospital. John, another former slave but closer to Caleb's age, enters after hiding in the shadows outside. After getting Caleb drunk on whiskey, Simon and John amputate Caleb's leg above the knee.

Simon chastises John for looting the empty houses in the town. Simon reveals that the reason he has not left the house is that he expects Caleb's father to pay him now that he is a free man and that is waiting for his wife and daughter to return, now that the war is over.

Caleb wakes after several hours of unconsciousness after the surgery. John reveals his plan to go to New York City to Caleb, who laughs it off. Simon tells John that a man named Freddy Cole has been looking for him (John). Simon reveals to Caleb that it is Passover, and that he is preparing a Seder for their dinner. Simon recalls how John came to live with them as a child. John turns the tables on Simon's good nature and recounts a story of being whipped by "The Whipping Man" in town in which Caleb asks for the opportunity to whip John as well. After Simon leaves the room, John accuses Caleb of being a **deserter** and informs him that his father sold Simon's wife and daughter Sarah. John also reveals that he knows Caleb and Sarah were romantically involved and that when she was sold, Sarah was pregnant with Caleb's child.

We see Caleb reading one of his love letters to Sarah. Caleb wakes to find John reading his letters. Simon enters and announces that President Lincoln has been assassinated. John is about to confess what has happened to Simon's wife and Sarah, when John threatens to turn him in to the military, who will hang him for the crime of desertion. The three observe the Passover Seder, but Caleb interrupts the meal to reveal the fates of Simon's wife and daughter. John confesses to killing The Whipping Man, and that Freddy Cole witnessed the murder. Simon leaves the two in a quiet rage. Neither John nor Caleb can bring themselves to leave the house. They sit in silence, passing the whiskey bottle between them.

## THE WHIPPING MAN CAST



From left: Damian Thompson (John), Michael Shepherd (Simon) and Ryan Barry (Caleb DeLeon). Photo by John David Pittman.

### CHARACTERS

Caleb DeLeon: 20s, the only son of the DeLeon family of Richmond, Va.

Simon: 50s, former slave in the DeLeon home

John: 20s, former slave in the DeLeon home

### SETTING

Time: April 14-15, 1865

Place: The DeLeon Home, Richmond, Virginia

## PRODUCTION HISTORY

Playwright Matthew Lopez states that *The Whipping Man* began as a twenty-minute one-act play called “The Soldier and the Slave” many years ago. Once it developed into a full-length drama, it received its world premiere at Luna Stage in Montclair, NJ, in 2006. Since then, it has had major productions around the country, including an acclaimed West Coast premiere at the Old Globe Theatre in San Diego in 2010 and an Off-Broadway production at Manhattan Theatre Club in 2011 starring André Braugher.

The play won the 2011 John Gassner New Play Award from the *NY Outer Critics Circle*, as well as several 2011 *Lucille Lortel Awards* and nominations and a 2011 *Obie Award* for Braugher’s performance.

“There’s a rare-bird quality to this play. When I heard about slaves in the American South who were raised Jewish, I couldn’t even fathom what that life would look like. It was beyond my imagination. I think audiences feel the same and come to the theater saying, ‘Let’s see what this guy has come up with.’”

(SFGate, April 3, 2013)



### QUOTES FROM PLAYWRIGHT MATTHEW LOPEZ

“In college, I had an opportunity to work with one of my own plays and it was fulfilling so, like a drug addict, I wanted more. But what really attracted me as a writer was the sense of ownership, of being able to change things. I liked the idea of the responsibility and the opportunity that came with it. To this day, I am never more alive than when I am in production (writing a play) I really relish the challenge of sitting alone in a quiet room with a piece of paper and creating. I am learning not to be afraid of that. Yet, I am alive in the rehearsal theatre, working with the actors and the directors and I like the interaction with the audience. I like the give and take of rehearsals. I am essentially a social person, which is ironic because writing is a solitary endeavor.” (culturalworldbilingual.com, 2010)

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Whipping Man takes place in mid-April, 1865. This is a time of great potential and even greater tension. The American Civil War has come to an abrupt end with the surrender of Confederate General Robert E. Lee to Union military leader Ulysses S. Grant on April 9, 1865. On April 14 of that same year, President Lincoln is assassinated. While the War is over and Southern slaves have been legally emancipated, a long period known as the **Reconstruction** is about to begin in the United States, which will seek to unify the citizens and borders of a broken country. Prejudices, anger, and abuse remain, and corruption abounds during the period between 1863 and 1877.

Rebuilding the cities and railroads of the South in the wake of violent battles was a national priority, as was the demand that newly-freed African-Americans be granted the rights they had won in the War. Several Confederate states were placed under federal military control, in order to prohibit the remilitarization of areas once served by Rebel troops. Confederate leaders were prohibited from holding political office and the Southern economy had to be rebuilt, due to the collapse of Confederate currency. In order to facilitate these efforts businessmen and politicians from the North were sent to Southern cities, but their presence was an unwelcome one, and the Southerners often referred to them as "**Carpetbaggers**." Many of their efforts to regain control in the South were accomplished using fraudulent and coercive methods.

Financially, these free African-Americans in the South had very few options. Some, albeit few, entrepreneurial figures were able to transform the labor skills they had learned as slaves into their own businesses. Many actually returned to the service of their former masters (as Simon intends to do in *The Whipping Man*), performing the only duties they knew, and were paid very low wages for their work. Still more, like John, aspired to move North to seek their fortunes in the socially liberal urban areas such as New York City.

Often those who chose to stay near the only homes they had ever known, became **sharecroppers**, working on a tract of land for the landowner, participating in a share of the profits, once the crops were sold. With the collapse of the plantation system following the emancipation of the slaves, many of these sharecroppers were white men as well. Landowners infamously lent sharecroppers lines of credit that they could never realistically pay back, creating a cycle of debt that transformed these agricultural workers into legal indentured servants. On paper they were freedmen, but their reality often did not seem to differ much from their previous lives as slaves.

Despite the efforts of social activists who sought to ensure the enfranchisement of freed and legal African-American citizens in a post-slavery society, many areas of the South employed discriminatory tactics of segregation later known as "**Jim Crow Laws**," which would wait until 1965 to be deemed unconstitutional.



## Jewish Southerners and Jewish Slaves

Historically, Jews accounted for only 1.25% of all slaveowners in the American South in the period leading up to the Civil War. Jewish Southerners seemed to possess many of the same attitudes toward slave ownership as their Gentile neighbors, but because the Jewish landowners did not possess the wealth of their Christian fellows, they were less likely to own and operate plantation estates, as the DeLeon family in *The Whipping Man* demonstrates.

Author Jonathan Sarna, in his book *American Judaism: A History*, proposes that Southern Jews often possessed house slaves but did not have the wealth necessary to own a large collection of field slaves. Sarna also explores the historical evidence that suggests it was not unusual for slaves of Jewish owners to adopt the Jewish identity and customs of their masters. These slaves, who likely performed basic domestic duties such as cleaning and cooking, would therefore be well-versed in the necessary regulations and guidelines surrounding observances such as the Passover Seder. Such revelations, along with the epiphany that the Civil War ended during the Passover festival of 1865, inspired Matthew Lopez to begin the creative process that led to the writing of *The Whipping Man*, which has sparked even more research among theatre historians into the evidence surrounding these questions about our American heritage.

## The Civil War and Reconstruction in Arkansas

In the years leading up to the beginning of the American Civil War, the state of Arkansas was resistant to the idea of secession, until April 1861 when President Lincoln called upon the Unionist-allied state to supply military aid against Confederate troops in South Carolina. The state's response was clear and secede from the Union in May 1861 with a 69-1 vote.

Small cells of resistance in Northern Arkansas broke with the state's position and supplied many troops to the Union forces. After several successful Union incursions across the Missouri-Arkansas border, the majority of the state's soldiers were relocated east of the Mississippi River. Arkansas soon found itself on the verge of lawlessness, with taxes being uncollected, no real defense forces to speak of, and a lack of food and goods that left the state on the verge of financial collapse.



In 1863, Union forces attacked several garrisons throughout the state, including the defenders of Arkansas Post, where almost 5,000 Confederate soldiers were taken prisoner as a result of their loss. Throughout the rest of the year, Union troops pushed the Confederate presence farther and farther south in the state, and in September 1863, Little Rock fell to Union control. In March 1864, Union forces suffered a defeat during the **Red River Expedition** and were forced back to Little Rock. By the end of the War, more than 10,000 Arkansans lost their lives, regardless of color or political affiliation.

During the Reconstruction Era, political ideals in the state did not differ that strongly from pre-War beliefs. However, African-Americans were granted voting rights, legal representation, and access to education. Sharecroppers became prevalent as Arkansas tried to regain its agricultural power, yet the state never returned to its prior standing with its money crops.

In 1868, resistance to the new unified federal government arose in the guise of the Ku Klux Klan in Arkansas, resulting in several months of terrorist tactics as a means of intimidating voters throughout the state. This resulted in a five-month campaign of martial law in which state forces fought the KKK in what is now known as the **Militia War**.

Although Arkansas was readmitted to the Union in June 1868, the governor's calls for martial law against the Klan left a scar on the state that divided many of its citizens along racial lines for decades to come.



## THE PASSOVER SEDER

Passover is one of the most commonly observed Jewish holidays, taking place on the 15th day of **Nissan**, the first month of the Jewish calendar (which occurs during the months of March/April). It is directly associated with the Exodus of the Hebrew slaves from Egypt, as recounted in the book of Exodus of the Jewish **Torah** and the Christian **Old Testament**.



According to the book of Exodus, the tribes of Israel had emigrated to Egypt during a famine, when Joseph (a son of Jacob, also known as Israel) became a powerful figure in Egyptian politics. Several generations later, the Israelites were enslaved by the Egyptian **Pharaoh**. The Hebrew child Moses escaped the cruelty of the Pharaoh and grew up alongside the heir to the throne. One day, Moses killed an Egyptian for beating a Hebrew slave, embraced his Jewish heritage and fled into the desert, where God spoke to him and commanded him to free the Hebrew slaves. After the land of Egypt experienced a series of ten plagues, the Pharaoh released the slaves.

The final plague involved the visitation of the Angel of Death over any house that had not painted its doorjamb with the blood of a spring lamb. The Angel killed the firstborn male child of each household that was not adorned in this way, including the son of the Pharaoh. Those Hebrew slaves who had obeyed God's command were "passed over" by the Angel.

Thus, Passover is a celebration of liberation and deliverance for a people that has experienced much prejudice and persecution throughout its history. Because of the speed with which the Hebrews were forced to leave Egypt, many of the food preparations and associated traditions are associated with haste and limited means. For example, the matzah is prepared without yeast because the Jews had no time to allow their bread to rise.

Unlike many other Jewish holidays such as Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah, Passover is not observed in a synagogue, but rather around a dinner table. The central event of Passover is the preparation and consumption of the Seder meal, which involves recitation of texts that remind the participants of their shared heritage, and is thus closely associated with the values associated with family structure and community connections. Since World War II and the Holocaust, many associations with Passover have taken on additional meanings of deliverance from captivity and hope for a peaceful future in a prophesied homeland.

In this way, playwright Matthew Lopez has connected the observation of this holiday with the end of the American Civil War (and the horrific assassination of President Lincoln) as a way of exploring the plight of newly-freed African-American slaves in the South on the eve of Reconstruction and the pangs of creating a new identity in the wake of injustice and violence.



### TRADITIONAL OBSERVATION OF THE PASSOVER SEDER

The most important aspect of the Passover meal preparation is that no *chametz* (or leavening, such as yeast) may be used. In fact, it is customary for all leavening to be removed from the household and the food preparation areas are to be cleaned thoroughly in advance, to prevent any possibility of food contamination. Pets may not even eat foods containing chametz during Passover. Symbolically, the absence of chametz not only reminds the participants of the haste with which the Hebrews left Egypt during the Exodus, but it also signifies that they should remove all elements in their lives that may lead to pride.

The text of the *Haggadah* is recited as a formal guide to the proper order of the Seder observance. The *Haggadah* also provides commentary upon the historical and cultural significance of many of the rituals of the Seder. The overall structure of the Seder consists of the blessing/drinking of four cups of wine, the asking of four questions about the lasting heritage of the Exodus, and the consumption of specific foods in symbolic ways.

The six food items on a Seder plate are arranged symbolically, while a plate of three pieces of *matzah* is placed separately on the Seder table. These foods are:

**Maror and Charezot:** Two bitter herbs - often horseradish and romaine lettuce, signifying the bitterness of captivity

**Charoset:** A sweet paste of fruits and nuts, representing the mortar used by the Jewish slaves

**Karpas:** A vegetable - usually parsley, celery or cooked potato, which is dipped into salt water or vinegar

**Zeroa:** Roast lamb or goat shank bone, sometimes a chicken wing, which symbolizes the original sacrifice of a lamb in the Temple as part of ancient Passover ritual

**Beitzah:** A hard-boiled egg, symbolizing the second traditional sacrifice in the Temple in Jerusalem. Various theories as to this item's inclusion are varied, as some surmise that it is meant to represent the "mystery" of the ritual, while others believe it symbolizes the Jewish people themselves (the more you oppress/boil them, the harder they get).

## ORDER OF SEDER DINNER

### 1. Kaddesh: Sanctification

A blessing and the first cup of wine is drunk, the second cup of wine is poured.



### 2. Urechatz: Washing

Hands are washed with no blessing, to prepare for the karpas.

### 3. Karpas: Vegetable

Dipping of a vegetable (parsley, celery, cooked potato) into salt water and eaten. The salt water represents the tears shed as a result of the Hebrew captivity.

### 4. Yachatz: Breaking

One of the three matzahs on the table is broken. Part is returned to the pile, the other part is set aside for the *afikomen*.



The cast attended a Seder Dinner, hosted by Jan & Larry Alman to better prepare for their roles.

### 5. Maggid: The Story

A retelling of the story of the Exodus from Egypt and the first Passover. This is accompanied by the asking of the Four Questions:

- “Why is it that on all other nights during the year we eat either bread or matzah, but on this night we eat only matzah?”
- “Why is it that on all other nights we eat all kinds of herbs, but on this night we eat only bitter herbs?”
- “Why is it that on all other nights we do not dip our herbs even once, but on this night we dip them twice?”
- “Why is it that on all other nights we eat either sitting or reclining, but on this night we eat in a reclining position?”

At the end of the maggid, a blessing is recited over the second cup of wine and it is drunk.

### 6. Rachatzah: Washing

A second washing of the hands, this time with a blessing, in preparation for eating the matzah.

### 7. Motzi: Blessing over Grain Products

A generic blessing for bread or grain products used as a meal, is recited over the matzah.

### 8. Matzah: Blessing over Matzah

A blessing specific to matzah is recited, and a bit of matzah is eaten.

### 9. Maror: Bitter Herbs

A blessing is recited over the maror, and it is eaten. The maror is dipped in charoset.

### 10. Korekh: The Sandwich

The maror is eaten on a piece of matzah, with some charoset.

CONTINUED

## ORDER OF SEDER DINNER (CONTINUED)

### 11. Shulchan Orekh: Dinner

A festive meal is eaten. There is no particular requirement regarding what to eat at this meal (except, of course, that chametz cannot be eaten). Popular items for the meal include: matzah ball soup, roast chicken, turkey, and beef brisket.

### 12. Tzafun: The Afikomen

The piece of matzah set aside earlier during the yachatz is eaten as "dessert," the last food of the meal. Often a game is made of hiding the matzah, to keep children involved in the Seder activities.

### 13. Barekh: Grace after Meals

The third cup of wine is poured, and birkat ha-mazon (grace after meals) is recited. A blessing is said over the third cup and it is drunk. The fourth cup is poured, including a cup set aside for the prophet Elijah, who is supposed to herald the Messiah, and is supposed to come on Passover to do this. The door is opened for a while at this point. Traditionally, this was done to welcome Elijah, but in the Middle Ages, Jews performed this act to prove to their Christian neighbors that they were not mixing the blood of Christian babies with flour to make their matzah - a popular superstition at the time.

### 14. Hallel: Praises

Several psalms are recited. A blessing is recited over the fourth cup of wine and it is drunk.

### 15. Nirtzah: Closing

The completion of the Seder, often concluded with the hopeful prayer, "Next year in Jerusalem!" This signifies the desire for peace and unity for the children of God, brought about by the Messiah, to be fulfilled in the construction of a new Temple in Jerusalem and the return of all exiled Jews to their homeland.



A special thanks to Larry & Jan Alman for hosting  
cast, director and show stage manager, Danny Kuenzel.

## Q&A WITH DIRECTOR GILBERT MCCUALEY

Q: As a director, what attracts you to a play like *The Whipping Man*?

A: I like the subject matter. The Civil War changed the United States as a whole as well as future generations of the people in those United States.



Q: What is its central message, if you were to pare it down to just one?

A: I'm not sure I can. But it has to do the understanding that freedom is not something that is given to us, it is something we must constantly strive to realize and maintain.

Q: Does this play have a personal relevance for you?

A: I think that for me personally, at this phase of my life, the notion of freedom is tied up with the notion realizing the fullness of who I am and recognizing the things that get in the way of that. And even more importantly, doing something about it.

Q: How would you describe the role of the director in the contemporary American theatre?

A: Every director goes about it in their own way, but I think the role has to do with establishing a creative environment that brings out the best in the all of the artists involved to make the work as significant and powerful as possible for the audience or community that experiences it.

Q: How do you prepare to approach the process of directing a play like this? What do you bring with you to the first rehearsal in terms of historical research and goals for the staging and building actor/character relationships?

A: For this production it was most important for me to feel I had a good grip on the historical research to understand more clearly the world of the play. I shared a good deal of what I had found with the actors when we started but I also made it clear that the exploration would be ongoing and that the purpose of the research was to illuminate the world of the play, their characters and what was going on between them.

Q: This is a very intimate drama, with only three characters onstage in deeply emotionally charged situations. As a director, how do you approach the rehearsal process with the actors differently than you might with a larger production?

A: I like for everyone in the rehearsal room to do personal source work on the issues explored in the play (i.e., whipping, slavery and freedom). With a small cast like this it allows us to go deeper and find richer connections to the work.

## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

### Jewish Religion



**Rabbi:** Hebrew for “master,” a **Rabbi** is a Jewish teacher and religious leader who is trained in the laws and writings of Judaism. The official recognition of this title within Judaism did not occur until circa 200 CE and became more common and codified in the Middle Ages.

**Kosher:** A description of foods and food preparation techniques adhering to ancient Jewish dietary laws. Not only does Hebrew law determine acceptable methods for the slaughter of animals for food, it prohibits the consumption of shellfish, pork, invertebrates, amphibians, and insects, as well as meat combined with milk products.

**Shabbat Shalom:** Hebrew for “Have a peaceful Sabbath.” A common greeting between Jews as they observe the weekly day of rest that occurs between sundown on Friday night and sundown on Saturday.

**Pesach:** Hebrew word for Passover.

**Moses:** The Hebrew prophet who led the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt and into the “Promised Land.” He is said to have spoken to God directly and transcribed the sacred laws of the Israelites directly from God’s spoken word to stone tablets (the **Ten Commandments**).

**Leviticus:** One of the five books of the Torah, this text provides regulations for the Levites, or priest class, of the ancient Israelites. These laws are designed to govern ritual and moral practices, and outlines specific guidelines for the selection, ordination, and behavior of Jewish priests, as well as strict designations of cleanliness, sacrifice, and purification.



## Civil War

Gangrene: A life-threatening form of necrosis that arises when a significant portion of a body's living tissue dies due to a lack of blood supply. When healthy blood flow cannot be restored to the dying tissue, the most common treatment is amputation of the affected body parts.

Lee: General Robert E. Lee (1807-70), the commander of the Confederate Army between 1862 and 1865. After several successful campaigns, Lee's forces were devastated by defeat in 1863 at the Battle of Gettysburg, which resulted in the largest loss of life in any battle of the American Civil War. After this defeat, he attempted to resign, but President Davis refused to accept his resignation. Lee finally surrendered to Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox on April 9, 1865.

Petersburg: Petersburg, Virginia, the site of the nine-month-long *Siege of Petersburg*, which lasted from June 9, 1864 to March 25, 1865. During this lengthy campaign, Union forces throttled railroad and supply lines that brought much-needed goods to the Confederate capital in Richmond. Lt. General Ulysses S. Grant engaged in an early form of trench warfare to interrupt supplies to the South. Robert E. Lee's defeat in this battle led to his surrender in April 1865. This military action also featured the largest number of African-American soldiers to fight during the Civil War.

Yanks: Union soldiers were often referred to by Confederate soldiers as "Yankees." Union soldiers would often refer to Confederate soldiers as "Rebs" (short for "Rebels").

Chimborazo Hospital: One of the most famous, sophisticated hospitals in the Confederacy, located on Chimborazo Hill in Richmond, Va. The hospital was constructed from wooden buildings left behind by military personnel who had used them at the onset of the war for training and drills. Because the city of Richmond suffered no direct attacks during the War, the hospital provided uninterrupted, quality care to its patients, primarily as a convalescent facility. The location of the hospital is currently a park that contains a medical museum.



## QUESTIONS FOR WRITING

### Before You've Seen the Play:

1. Write a story about the Civil War from the perspective of a Union soldier. Write the same story from the perspective of a Confederate soldier. Write the same story from the perspective of a Southern slave. Share your stories with the class and discuss how a change of point of view alters the way you look at events in your own life. What if one of the soldiers was African-American? What if all of the characters were black? How would that change your perception of them and their actions?
2. Turn the stories you wrote in Question 1 into a one-act play, in which these three characters you have created occupy the stage at the same time and the action of the drama involves how each must interact and communicate with the other. Read the play out loud, with students playing each of the characters.
3. Research the traditions surrounding the Jewish Passover celebration. Are there any similar types of rituals or customs that you share with your family? What are the rules for proper observance? What do these special commemorations mean to you?
4. Write down five things that freedom means to you. Now, ask yourself what would happen if those five things were taken away. How would you feel about the person who took those freedoms away? What would you do to get that freedom back? What would you do to the person who stole your freedom if you were given the chance?

### After You've Seen the Play:

1. Read Stephen Crane's 1895 novel *The Red Badge of Courage* and compare/contrast the emotional and psychological struggles of Henry Fleming with those of Caleb DeLeon in the play. Though Henry is a Union soldier and Caleb is a Confederate soldier, both deal with the theme of courage and cowardice in similar ways.
2. *The Whipping Man* is a very intimate drama, with only three characters onstage. Because of this, the action of the drama is designed to unveil secrets about each of them in a way that builds tension to a breaking point. What are the highest points of tension in the play? Would the play be improved or hindered by other characters onstage? Who else would you place onstage with these three? How would that alter the play's structure and tone?
3. The Passover Seder is normally observed with close family members as a way of expressing a shared past of trials and tribulations with one another. How are Simon, Caleb, and John a family, both literally and figuratively?
4. Throughout the action of *The Whipping Man*, the dynamics of power shift considerably from character to character. This power struggle can be represented by physical advantage, emotional manipulation, secrets/information withheld or shared. Name at least two examples from the play (six total) in which each character has the upper hand on the other two. What causes the power to shift in his favor? When does that character lose his advantage? At the end of the play, has anyone "won"?

## ACTIVITIES

1. Divide into teams of five. Choose one person to be the team leader. For a half hour, all of the members of the team must do exactly what the team leader says, without question. How long does it take before the team leader's commands start feeling oppressive or arbitrary to the other four members of the team? At what point do team members begin wishing they could rebel against the leader's authority?

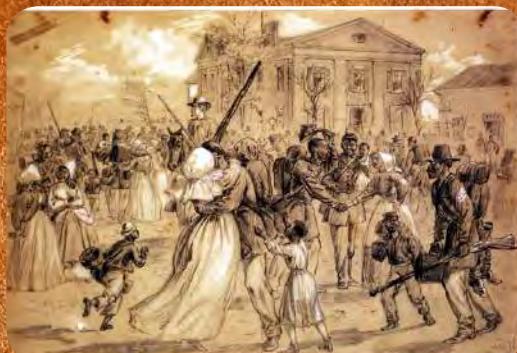
After a half hour, choose another member to be the team leader. The same rules apply as before. Does the new leader act more compassionately than the previous one? How do the team members that have remained in the submissive group regard the former leader in the second exercise?

Once both parts of this activity have been completed, discuss as a class how the changing power dynamics made you feel. Ask yourself how you would feel if you spent your entire life forced to do what someone else said, with no recourse if you were mistreated or punished unfairly.

2. Divide students into groups. Distribute one copy of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution (including the Bill of Rights), and the Emancipation Proclamation to each group. Ask each group to pull out quotes about freedom from each document and to create a new master document that expresses the role that freedom plays in America today.

Share these new documents with the rest of the class. Discuss how these values are represented (or absent) in *The Whipping Man*. What do you think is missing, if your group's document were to honestly reflect freedom in American society in 2015?

3. Choose a play for the entire class to read. Map out the setting, characters' motivations, and actions according to the Seder's question, "Why is tonight different than any other night?" Why must this story be told in this way, featuring these particular people, using this type of language, etc.? How does this question make the play's themes and emotional life more immediate, more important?



## OUR STORY

Founded in 1976 and enjoying its 39th season, Arkansas Repertory Theatre is the state's largest non-profit professional theatre company. A member of the League of Resident Theatres (LORT'D), The Rep has produced more than 280 productions including forty world premieres on its 385-seat Main-Stage and 99-seat black box Second Stage located in its historic Galloway building in downtown Little Rock. The Rep relies on season subscriptions, special events, foundation support, corporate and individual donations, Shakespeare in American Communities, The Shubert Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts and Arkansas Arts Council funding.

## OUR MISSION

Arkansas Repertory Theatre exists to create a diverse body of theatrical work of the highest artistic standards. With a focus on dramatic storytelling that illuminates the human journey, The Rep entertains, engages and enriches local and regional audiences of all ages and backgrounds.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

For questions or comments concerning this production of *The Whipping Man* or the Arkansas Repertory Theatre, contact our offices at (501) 378-0445. Additional information may also be found at [www.therep.org](http://www.therep.org). The Box Office may be reached at (501) 378-0405.

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