

My Aunt Jeanne was very involved in genealogy and often talked of our ancestor Talitha, an 1850s Southern belle, who (spoiler alert!) hid her wedding dress under her bustle and eloped with the mailman, a Union sympathizer who delivered the mail by stagecoach. It all sounded so romantic-- two people from opposing sides meeting and falling in love during the Civil War. After Aunt Jeanne passed away, I found in her belongings a 150-year-old letter which Talitha had written to her husband, who was serving in the Civil War (on the Union side). The P.S. of the letter is a love poem which I set to music, TALITHA'S SONG, for female voice, cello and violin (stay tuned for a recording!). I envision the song being played at the beginning and at the end of the show.

However, as I learned more--that Talitha's father owned slaves--I felt like I had been kicked in the stomach. Not *our* family!

I wondered what I could do (in my own small way) to lessen the current racial tensions in our country, and decided to go back to the roots of the problem by showing Talitha's "first contact" with people of diverse ethnicities, such as Native Americans, and also how she came to understand the evils of slavery. So, here's the logline for TALITHA FORD OF KENTUCKY: *After a life-transforming journey migrating West, a spoiled Southern belle learns the evils of slavery and elopes with a Union soldier.*

I began writing the play in Trey Nichols' Workshop in Los Angeles and continued working on it in Eric Webb's online Writers Group and Mastermind Group and in Amanda Yesnowitz's online Writers Group (the latter three under the auspices of Ken Davenport's Producer's Perspective PRO). The play grew from being a one-woman show to having 25 characters! It's like a reversible dress; it can be done with varying cast sizes of 7, 11 or 25, depending on doubling. If a professional theatre wants a small cast, that's possible, or if a community theatre, college or high school wants parts for everyone, then there are parts for everyone!

I'm happy to report that when I pitched TALITHA FORD OF KENTUCKY to three Broadway producers at the Super Conference's "Producer Pitch Night", two asked to see the script (and the third said I could use his name as a reference).

Talitha is an iconic character who has a very particular way of speaking. She is very opinionated but good-hearted; to know her is to love her. "Talitha is a feisty yet naïve Scarlett-O'Hara-type Southern belle who moves from a place of pride and vanity to a place of humility and humanity".

In Ken's Office Hours call, he encouraged us PROs to take action by setting a deadline (in my case, for a Table Read), announce it publicly (in order to be held accountable), and move forward. So, I organized a pizza Table Read at my house. The response was even more excited and enthusiastic than I could have imagined! The participants (including a prospective director and actress) were firm in their belief that this play needs to be produced *now*, as it deals with many of today's current topics, through a historical lens. It's a coming-of-age story, a racial reconciliation story, and above all, a love story.

After the Table Read, I submitted the script to theatres which were seeking plays for their reading series, then waited to hear back from them. Essentially, I was putting my script into their hands as if they were the only gatekeepers to future readings and productions. However, at my first Inner Circle meeting, Ken gave me the specific advice to put on a formal reading, myself. He urged me to take action, instead of passively waiting to hear back from those theatres (which might take months, years... or never).

So, I've begun taking action by lining up a director, actors and a venue. The first step is renting a space to hold auditions, callbacks, rehearsals and the actual reading, plus paying the director and actors, providing refreshments, printing scripts, inviting guests, etc.

TALITHA FORD OF KENTUCKY is finished (that is, I've written END OF PLAY), but as every writer knows, "writing is rewriting". Ken's generous \$10,000 investment will make it possible for me to put on a public reading, which will generate audience feedback that will assist me in "tweaking" the script.

Then comes a workshop, with the actors off book and moving around the stage--to put the show "on its feet" (literally). Next, industry professionals--folks with connections and financial clout to get the script off the ground--are invited to attend and invest.

The Inner Circle speakers were top-notch (I especially enjoyed Sue Gilad's presentation on "Raising Money"; she had us all repeat "I love money!"), but I found that listening to Ken addressing other people's questions was a Master Class in itself; I learned answers to questions that I didn't even know existed!

And, far from being competitive, the attendees were incredibly helpful, generous and supportive of each other's projects; I was struck by the passion and seriousness of writers and producers who came from every corner of the country to learn and network and help each other attain our big goal: to get our shows produced.

I look forward to introducing you to Talitha! Please vote for TALITHA FORD OF KENTUCKY, as the project literally cannot move forward to the next stage without funding. Thanks in advance, and see you at the theatre!

www.TalithaFordKentucky.com