

# Study Guide

# AMERICAN SPIRITUAL ENSEMBLE



**Sponsored in part by SouthArts Regional  
Touring Grant**

**January 12 & 13, 2012**



Greenwood-Lander  
Performing Arts

**Outreach Program**

Greenwood-Lander Performing Arts

[www.greenwoodlanderperformingarts.com](http://www.greenwoodlanderperformingarts.com)

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## Attending Shows in the Lander University Josephine Abney Cultural Center Auditorium

The Lander University Cultural Center Auditorium seats 630 people. This performance hall provides an up-close arts experience. Below are some specific things you should plan for when visiting the auditorium:

**Arrival and Departure** For a Lander University campus map:

<http://www.lander.edu/en/About-Us/Visitor-Information.aspx>



- Plan to arrive at least 15 minutes before the performance. All GLPA outreach performances last one hour.
- Buses may unload in the PEES circle drive to the left of the Cultural Center.
- Remain seated on your bus until a volunteer provides you with a bus number. This is how you will be dismissed. Please make sure everyone in your group knows this number.
- Your group will be escorted into the auditorium by a volunteer. Please stagger chaperones (1 chaperone for every 15 students) throughout the group to help keep children in line and moving quickly to their seats.
- Performances will not be held for late buses or groups. If you arrive late, your group will have to wait until an appropriate break in the program to be seated.

### **Homeschoolers/Groups Arriving in Cars and Vans**

- For your safety, DO NOT drive into the PEES circle next to the cultural center to unload or pick up students. For security reasons, when buses are in the Cultural Center circle, cars are prohibited from entering.
- Please allow time to park and walk to the theatre with your group. Limited parking is available on campus and in the visitor parking lot.
- Information on parking is included on the university campus map.

### **Entering the Auditorium**

- After your group has unloaded from the bus with a chaperone, a GLPA volunteer will walk you into the auditorium.
- When your volunteer takes you into the auditorium, ushers will seat the children row by row. As a result, your class may not all be seated in the same row. With adequate supervision, a group that is split into two or more rows should have enough chaperones to ensure safety.
- Once your entire group has been seated, feel free to move students to new seats within your space and to send students in small groups to the restroom with an adult.

### **Dismissal**

- A GLPA representative will come onstage following the performance to dismiss each group. Please stay seated until your bus number has been announced. When your group is dismissed, your volunteer will escort you directly to your bus/car.
- Restroom stops after shows are strongly discouraged, unless an emergency.

## Before the Performance



### Performance Study Guides

- Students who are prepared for the GLPA Outreach Performances at Lander University enjoy the show and learn more than students who arrive without preparation. GLPA encourages every teacher to spend time familiarizing students about the performance by using the study guides posted on the GLPA website. Filled with background information, student activities and interdisciplinary lesson plans, these curriculum based guides will enhance your students' performance experience. **Please make sure that every teacher from your group who is bringing students to the outreach performance knows about the available study guides.**
- The study guides will also include suggested activities you can use before and after the performance. Teachers are encouraged to use the guides as a resource for ideas on how to best prepare students for their theatre experience. One positive benefit is that students who are prepared also behave better!

## After the Performance

- **Post-Performance Activities**
- When students leave Lander University, they return to school with a great level of excitement. Greenwood-Lander Performing Arts Outreach Program encourages every teacher to take advantage of this and to continue the theatre experience upon returning to the classroom. Talking and writing about the performance helps students develop the ability to form individual aesthetic judgment in response to professional live theatrical productions. Suggested post-performance activities are also included in the study guide. Please encourage students to discuss the performance and respond critically through discussion and writing. **Please share students' responses with GLPA!**
- **Performance Evaluations**
- Teacher feedback is a crucial part of the continuous development of the GLPA Outreach Program. Encourage participating teachers to share their response with GLPA programming by using the evaluation form. A blank evaluation form is provided in the study guide and will also be emailed to teachers after each performance. Evaluations may also be done online from the Outreach Program section on the GLPA website.

***Thank you very much for your support of  
education and the arts.***

**THE AMERICAN SPIRITUAL ENSEMBLE** was founded by **Everett McCorvey** in 1995. The mission of the American Spiritual Ensemble is to keep the American Negro Spiritual alive. Its members have sung in theaters and opera houses around the world, including the Metropolitan Opera, New York City Opera, Houston Grand Opera, and abroad in Italy, Germany, Britain, Scotland, Spain and Japan. The repertoire of the American Spiritual Ensemble ranges from opera to spirituals to Broadway. The members of the American Spiritual Ensemble are soloists in their own right and the vocalists have thrilled audiences around the world with their dynamic renditions of classic spirituals, jazz and Broadway numbers highlighting the Black experience.



**EVERETT MCCORVEY** is a native of Montgomery, Alabama. He received his degrees from the University of Alabama, including a Doctorate of Musical Arts. As a tenor soloist, Dr. McCorvey has performed in major centers around the world including the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., the Metropolitan Opera in New York, Aspen Music Festival in Colorado, Radio City Music Hall in New York and in England, Germany, Italy, Spain, Japan, China, Hungary, Poland and the Czech and Slovak Republics. During the summers, Dr. McCorvey is on the artist faculty of the American Institute of Musical Study (AIMS) in Graz, Austria and the Intermezzo Opera Program in Palm Beach, Florida. Dr. McCorvey holds an Endowed Chair in Opera Studies and is Director of Opera at the University of Kentucky in Lexington, Kentucky. Dr. McCorvey was recently announced as the Executive Producer of the Opening and Closing Ceremonies for the Alltech 2010 FEI World Equestrian Games to be held in Lexington, Kentucky in September of 2010. The Alltech 2010 FEI World Equestrian Games will be the largest equestrian event to ever be held in the United States.

## MEMBERS OF THE AMERICAN SPIRITUAL ENSEMBLE:

### SOPRANO:

Jeryl Cunningham-Fleming  
 Calesta A. Day  
 Audrey DuBois  
 Pamela Jones  
 Mari-Yan Pringle

### ALTO:

Gwendolyn Brown  
 Sabrina Elayne Carten  
 Leah Dexter  
 Hope Koehler  
 LaToya Lain  
 Stephanie McGuire

### TENOR:

Alfonse Anderson  
 Barron Coleman  
 Larry Hylton  
 Chauncey Packer  
 Phumzile Sojola  
 John Wesley Wright

### BASS:

Laurence Albert  
 Eric Brown  
 Frederick Jackson  
 Johnathan Green  
 Ricky Little  
 Michael Precely  
 Tay Seals  
 Nathaniel Thompson

**Everett McCorvey, Founder and Music Director; Ricky Little, Assistant Conductor  
 Jeryl Cunningham-Fleming, Assistant Conductor**

VISIT THE AMERICAN SPIRITUAL ENSEMBLE WEBSITE

[www.americanspiritualensemble.com](http://www.americanspiritualensemble.com)

# TIMELINE OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN MUSIC

## 1619-1840

**CHANTS**- recitations containing religious themes which asked for blessings or sought to appease the spirits and deities. The chants were expressed on board slave ships.

## 1619-1865

**FIELD HOLLERS**- melodic moaning and humming by enslaved Africans on the plantations, prior to their learning the English language.

## MID 1600'S-MID 1800'S

**WORK SONGS**- songs sung on the plantations by enslaved Africans as they labored.

## 1700'S TO LATE 1800'S

**SPIRITUALS**- songs created and sung by enslaved Africans on the plantations after they learned English and were given religious instruction.

## LATE 1800'S

**BLUES**- a style of music, usually having a slow tempo, that evolved from southern African American secular songs. The blues were sung after the Civil War by newly freed African Americans and expressed their bitter experiences with slavery, discrimination, and poverty.

**JAZZ**- a type of American music marked by a strong, but flexible, syncopated rhythm, with solo and ensemble improvisations. It first developed in New Orleans.

## 1920'S

**GOSPEL**- urban sacred music that encompasses the musical styles of spirituals, blues, and jazz..

## LATE 1930'S

**RHYTHM AND BLUES (R&B)**- music that combines blues and jazz. It is characterized by strong, simple rhythm and is sung by blues singers backed by large rhythm bands.

## 1970'S

**HIP HOP**- music characterized by the mixing of two songs played simultaneously by a disc jockey.

**RAP**- a highly rhythmic musical form, characterized by rhyming lyrics, percussive mouth sounds, and themes that address a variety of societal issues.

## PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES

### ACTIVITY ONE: ALL KINDS OF MUSIC

- As a class, brainstorm a list of kinds of music.
- Listening to music can create an emotional response. Ask students what kind of emotions they feel when listening to these different kinds of music.
- Can students think of specific songs that generate an emotional response? Is there a song that always makes someone sad, or happy?
- If possible, play a song that is sung in a language other than English. Is the emotional meaning still clear to students? How important are the lyrics?

### ACTIVITY TWO: THE ROLE OF AN AUDIENCE

- Ask students to think about the **role of an audience**. Prompt them by asking them to recall the last time they attended a movie or concert, and whether or not the audience responded appropriately. Why or why not? Make a list of all student responses on the board.
- After brainstorming, discuss with students their responses. Mention that an audience can **collaborate with the artists** by listening, watching and applauding. Talking to friends, eating, chewing gum or unwrapping anything disturbs the performers and the other members of the audience, even if they seem not to mind.
- Compare how an audience behaves in a movie theater compared to watching a video at home. How does watching a live performance compare to watching a film? Discuss how much live performers rely on **audience behavior and feedback**.

### MUSIC LESSON: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SPIRITUALS

This lesson is from the  
EDSITEment website:  
[http://edsitement.neh.gov/  
view\\_lesson\\_plan.asp?id=318](http://edsitement.neh.gov/view_lesson_plan.asp?id=318)

#### LESSON OVERVIEW:

This lesson plan introduces students to the role that spirituals have played in African American history and religion. The lesson begins with a review of factors that contributed to the development of the spiritual, which reflects the influence of African religious traditions, Christian traditions, and the conditions of slavery. Students explore the community-building power of this combination by listening to a performance of "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," perhaps the best-known spiritual. They then turn to the 19th-century biography of Harriet Tubman to examine how she used spirituals as a secret signal to fugitive slaves on the Underground Railroad. Finally, to conclude the lesson, students collect spirituals by interviewing family members, friends, and acquaintances, in order to investigate how deeply this African American religious tradition has woven itself into American culture, and share similar songs that reflect their heritage.

## LESSON OBJECTIVES:

- To learn about the role spirituals have played in African American history and religion
- To examine Harriet Tubman's use of spirituals in her work for the Underground Railroad

## ACTIVITY 1: HOW SPIRITUALS DEVELOPED

- Inform students that spirituals arose in the early 19th century among African American slaves who had been denied the opportunity to practice traditional African religions for more than a generation and had adopted Christianity. For the most part, slaves were prohibited from forming their own congregations, for fear that they would plot rebellion if allowed to meet on their own. Nonetheless, slaves throughout the South organized what has been called an "invisible institution" by meeting secretly, often at night, to worship together. It was at these meetings that preachers developed the rhythmic, engaging style distinctive of African American Christianity, and that worshippers developed the spiritual, mixing African performance traditions with hymns from the white churches.
- Explain to students that scholars have long debated the extent of African influence on the spiritual, but that most now trace the "call and response" pattern in which they are typically performed to worship traditions in West Africa. This is a pattern of alternation between the voice of an individual and the voice of the congregation through which individual sorrows, hopes, and joys are shared by the community. In the performance of spirituals, in other words, slaves were able to create a religious refuge from their dehumanizing condition, affirming their humanity as individuals and their support for one another through an act of communal worship.
- Point out to students that spirituals also reflect the influence of slavery in their emphasis on traditional Christian themes of salvation, which in this context take on a double meaning. The worshippers sing of their journey toward spiritual freedom through faith, but the song also expresses their hope for physical freedom through God's grace. These two levels of meaning are especially clear in the many spirituals that recount God's deliverance of his chosen people in the Old Testament, in whom African American slaves saw a reflection of their own suffering.

## ACTIVITY 2: LISTEN TO AND/OR SING A SPIRITUAL

Have students experiment with this community-building power by listening to (or singing) a spiritual in class. A text of what is probably the most widely known spiritual, "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot," is provided below (in standard spelling rather than dialect). Have students notice the song's **call-and-response pattern** and reflect on the experience of emerging from the group in the solo lines (in *italic*) and then feeling the group affirm this individual "testimony" with its response.

### **Swing Low, Sweet Chariot**

Swing low, sweet chariot,  
Coming for to carry me home.  
*Swing low, sweet chariot,*  
*Coming for to carry me home.*

*I looked over Jordan, and what did I see,  
Coming for to carry me home?  
A band of angels coming after me,  
Coming for to carry me home.*

*Swing low, sweet chariot,  
Coming for to carry me home.  
Swing low, sweet chariot,  
Coming for to carry me home.*

*If you get there before I do,  
Coming for to carry me home,  
Tell all my friends I'm coming too,  
Coming for to carry me home.*

*Swing low, sweet chariot,  
Coming for to carry me home.  
Swing low, sweet chariot,  
Coming for to carry me home.*

### **ACTIVITY 3: ROLE SHARING SPIRITUALS PLAYED FOR THOSE ENSLAVED**

To what extent is this spiritual a song about escaping the physical conditions of slavery? To what extent is it an expression of religious hope and faith? Have students speculate on the role sharing spirituals in this way might have played for African Americans living in slavery.

### **ACTIVITY 4: ROLE SPIRITUALS PLAYED FOR FUGITIVE SLAVES**

Have students examine the role spirituals played for fugitive slaves, who sometimes used them as a secret code. This chapter in the history of the spiritual is best illustrated by several episodes in the life of Harriet Tubman as recounted in *Harriet, the Moses of Her People*, a 19th-century biography based on interviews with this most famous conductor on the Underground Railroad, which is available through EDSITEment at the Documenting the American South website.

- Have students read the account of Harriet's own escape from slavery where she uses a spiritual to let her fellow slaves know about her secret plans:

*When dat ar ole chariot comes,  
I'm gwine to lebe you,  
I'm boun' for de promised land,  
Frien's, I'm gwine to lebe you.*

*I'm sorry, frien's, to lebe you,  
Farewell ! oh, farewell!  
But I'll meet you in de mornin',  
Farewell! oh, farewell!*

*I'll meet you in de mornin',  
When you reach de promised land;*

*On de oder side of Jordan,  
For I'm boun' for de promised land.*

What kind of leave-taking is this song about when it is performed as part of religious worship? What is the figurative or coded meaning Harriet communicates to her friends through the song? What is the relationship between these two levels of meaning? How is Harriet's escape like a passing away from the viewpoint of those she will leave behind? How does the song serve to create a bond that will connect her to her friends even after she is gone? Through questions like these, help students recognize that Harriet draws on the community-building power of the spiritual to add religious and social significance to her departure. Her song reaffirms her place in the slave community, even as she declares her intention to leave it, and at the same time expresses the double faith in salvation that will sustain her on her way.

- Later, when Harriet is guiding other slaves to freedom, she uses a spiritual to reassure them that they have eluded a pack of slave hunters:

*Up and down the road she passes to see if the coast is clear, and then to make them certain that it is their leader who is coming, she breaks out into the plaintive strains of the song, forbidden to her people at the South, but which she and her followers delight to sing together:*

*Oh go down, Moses,  
Way down into Egypt's land,  
Tell old Pharaoh,  
Let my people go.*

*Oh Pharaoh said he would go cross,  
Let my people go,  
And don't get lost in de wilderness,  
Let my people go.*

*Oh go down, Moses,  
Way down into Egypt's land,  
Tell old Pharaoh,  
Let my people go.*

*You may hinder me here, but you can't up dere,  
Let my people go,  
He sits in de Hebben and answers prayer,  
Let my people go!*

*Oh go down, Moses,  
Way down into Egypt's land,  
Tell old Pharaoh,  
Let my people go.*

Have students explain the literal and figurative levels of meaning in this song. How does this spiritual fit the circumstances of a narrow escape from slave hunters? To what extent is it a signal and celebration of their escape? Again, help students recognize that the spiritual infuses a religious significance into the situation and serves to reaffirm the group's strength as a community.

## ACTIVITY 5: INTERVIEW AND COLLECT SPIRITUALS

Conclude this lesson by having students collect spirituals and other shared songs of their heritage by interviewing family members, friends, and acquaintances in their own community. Some people they talk to may know many songs; some may know only a few scattered verses. If possible, have students record the songs they collect on audiocassette and transcribe the words to create a class booklet, noting for each text where, when, and from whom they collected it, as well as any reminiscences or facts about the song that their source provides. What ethnic groups and religious denominations are represented in your collection? How diverse are the circumstances in which people learned these songs? How pervasive has the spiritual become in American society, and what do spirituals mean to Americans today?

## POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES

### ACTIVITY ONE: WRITE A REVIEW

**Music Standards/Evaluating** Grade 5: Use appropriate music terminology to explain their personal preferences for specific musical works and styles. Grades 6-8: Apply specific and appropriate criteria for evaluating and improving performances, compositions, arrangements, and improvisations.

**Have students write a review of the performance.**

- Start by writing down everything students remember from the show. Remind students they should not be expressing opinions during this phase of the activity. Write it in a “brainstorm box” on the board. Prompt students with objective questions, like:
- What kinds of songs did they sing?
- Describe different ways the singers used their voices.
- Describe the attire worn by the singers.
- How did the singers move during the performance?
- What else can you remember from the performance?
- Review the following musical terms and their definitions:

<b>Acoustics</b>	<b>Instrumentation</b>	<b>Mood</b>	<b>Texture</b>	<b>Visualization</b>
<b>Rhythm</b>	<b>Harmony</b>	<b>Melody</b>	<b>Timbre</b>	<b>Dynamics</b>

- Once you have a list of what happened during the performance, ask students to write a review that follows this format:

1. You must give the performance a rating, out of five stars. □□□□□
2. For each positive star, you must discuss one thing you liked about the performance. For example, for a five-star rating, you would need to mention at least five things you liked about the performance.
3. For each star under five, you must describe one thing you did not enjoy about the performance. For example, a three-star rating would have three positive comments along

with two things you felt needed to be improved or that you simply did not like, with reasons why. *Don't just make a list!*

4. Students should use music vocabulary terms when describing the quality of the performance. Keep a checklist of the following terms on the board while students write: (Students should correctly use at least four terms in context.)

5. Teacher should set other writing expectations based on the ability of students.

**Don't forget to proof read your reviews with a partner, and send a finished copy to:**

**Greenwood-Lander Performing Arts  
Lander University  
CPO 6044  
320 Stanley Ave.  
Greenwood, SC 29649**

### RELATED WEBSITES:

African American Music: Spirituals and Gospel Music

<http://www.sbgmusic.com/html/teacher/reference/styles/spirituals.html>

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



# Experiencing Live Theatre

## To the Teacher

Please share the following information with your students prior to your visit to Lander University. Many of the outreach performances will involve audience participation. Students should be prepared to behave appropriately given the nature of the performance and the requests of the artist on the stage.



## Preparing Students to be Audience Members

A theatre is an energetically charged space. When the “house lights” go down everyone feels a thrill of anticipation. By discussing appropriate audience behavior as a class ahead of time, the students will be much better equipped to handle their feelings and express their enthusiasm in acceptable ways during the performance.

## Audience Members Play an Important Role

Until an audience fills the auditorium the performers are only rehearsing. When there is a “great house” (an outstanding audience) it makes the show even better because the artists feel a live connection with everyone who is watching them. The most important quality of a good audience member is to respond appropriately to what’s happening on the stage. Sometimes it’s important to be very quiet, but other times it’s acceptable to laugh, clap or make noise! By coming to the Lander University Cultural Center Auditorium, students will have the opportunity to practice being good audience members.

## Key Words:

**Concentration:** Performers use concentration to focus their energy on stage. If the audience watches in a concentrated and quiet manner, the performers “feel” this support and are able to do their very best!

**Quiet:** The theatre is a very “live space”. This means that sound carries very well all over the auditorium. Theaters are designed this way so that the voices of singers and actors can be heard. It also means that sounds in the audience like whispering, talking or rustling papers, can be heard by other audience members and the performers on stage! Behavior like this can destroy everyone’s concentration and spoil the performance. Do not make any unnecessary noise that would distract the people sitting around you. Be respectful and listen to the performers on stage!

**Respect:** The audience shows respect for the performers by being attentive. The performers show respect for their art form and for the audience by doing their best possible work. Professional actors and musicians always show up for work ready to entertain you. As a good audience member you have a responsibility to bring your best behavior to the theatre as well. Doing so shows respect for the actors who have rehearsed long hours to prepare for this performance.



**Appreciation:** Applause is the best way for an audience to share its enthusiasm and to show the performers how much they are appreciated. In a musical or opera it's not usually acceptable to applaud in the middle of a song. However, it is appropriate to applaud at the end of each song. When the program has finished it is customary to continue clapping until the curtain drops or the lights on stage go dark. During the curtain call the performers will bow to show their appreciation to the audience. If you really enjoyed the performance you may

want to thank the artist with a standing ovation!

**Common Sense:** If audience members conduct themselves in orderly, quiet ways and each person respects the space of those around them, everyone will be able to fully enjoy the performance experience.

### **Rules of Behavior:**



- Students should enter and exit the building in an orderly and quiet fashion.
- Please get rid of any gum, food and drinks before entering the auditorium.
- Use the restroom after you are seated but before the performance begins. Do not get up to use the restroom during the performance unless there is an emergency.
- Whisper while waiting for the show to begin.
- Students should remain quiet during the performance.
- Students should realize that they are part of the performance. Listen and watch attentively to what is happening on the stage. The performers have worked hard to get the show ready!
- Students should stay seated at all times, not kneeling in the seats or putting feet up on the seat in front of them.
- Students should laugh and respond appropriately.
- If the students *really* enjoyed the performance, they may clap as loudly and as long as they like. This shows the performers appreciation for their hard work.
- Enjoy the show!





## Outreach Performance Evaluation 2011-2012

It is our desire to provide high-quality, educational and professional productions for your students. Please take some time after you return to school to complete this evaluation and send it back to GLPA.

School Name: \_\_\_\_\_ District: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade level \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of performance: \_\_\_\_\_ Time of show: \_\_\_\_\_

### Please rate today's performance.

**Poor -Average- High**

How would you rate the educational value of the performance? \* \* \* \* \*

How would you rate the entertainment value of the performance? \* \* \* \* \*

How would you rate the students' impressions of the performance? \* \* \* \* \*

How would you rate the performance overall? \* \* \* \* \*

Would you return with a new group of students to see this production in the future? \_\_\_yes\_\_\_no

Why or why not? Please share some comments about the production.

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### Please rate the GLPA Study Guide

**Poor-Average-High**

How would you rate the GLPA Study Guide? \* \* \* \* \*

If you did not use the GLPA Study Guide, please check. \_\_\_ I did not use the GLPA Study Guide.

Did you use any of the following sections of the GLPA Study Guide?

Background Information on the Performance \_\_\_yes \_\_\_no Pre-performance Activities \_\_\_yes \_\_\_no  
Post-Performance Activities \_\_\_yes \_\_\_no

Please share some comments about the GLPA Study Guide.

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What types of programs would you like to bring students to see?

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Please share some general comments about your experience with the GLPA Outreach Program.

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Greenwood-Lander Performing Arts Lander University 320 Stanley Ave. Greenwood, SC 29649

Phone: (864) 388-8326 Fax: (864) 388-8036

**Thank you for supporting the arts!**

***GLPA gratefully acknowledges the supporters of our outreach program:***

**Lander University  
South Carolina Arts Commission  
National Endowment for the Arts**

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**Self Family Foundation  
SouthArts: American Spiritual Ensemble and Aquila Theatre - Macbeth**

**Outreach Show Sponsors(\$500-2999)**

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(The Magic School Bus LIVE! The Climate Challenge)**

**Dr. & Mrs. Jack Parham  
(Karkowska Sisters Duo)**

**Reta Richardson  
(Aquila Theatre Company in William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*)**

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