

CURVE

A CURVE AND BIRMINGHAM HIPPODROME CO-PRODUCTION

H
BIRMINGHAM
HIPPODROME
PROJECTS



The Color Purple

THE MUSICAL

EDUCATION PACK

BASED UPON THE NOVEL WRITTEN BY ALICE WALKER AND THE WARNER BROS./AMBLIN ENTERTAINMENT MOTION PICTURE
BOOK BY MARSHA NORMAN MUSIC & LYRICS BY BRENDA RUSSELL, ALLEE WILLIS & STEPHEN BRAY

THE COLOR PURPLE was produced on Broadway at the Broadway Theater by Oprah Winfrey, Scott Sanders, Roy Furman and Quincy Jones. The world premiere of THE COLOR PURPLE was produced by the Alliance Theatre, Atlanta, Georgia.

DIRECTOR TINUKE CRAIG DESIGNER ALEX LOWDE MUSICAL SUPERVISOR & MUSICAL DIRECTOR ALEX PARKER ORCHESTRATOR MARTIN HIGGINS
CHOREOGRAPHER MARK SMITH LIGHTING DESIGNER JOSHUA PHARO SOUND DESIGNER TOM MARSHALL CASTING DIRECTOR KAY MAGSON COG

THE COLOR PURPLE is presented through special arrangement with Theatrical Rights Worldwide, 1180 Avenue of the Americas, Suite 640, New York, NY 10036. www.theatricalrights.com

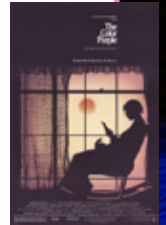
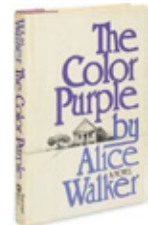


EDUCATION PACK SECTION 1

The Color Purple THE MUSICAL

HISTORY OF THE NOVEL & ADAPTATION(S)

- **1982** – Novel *The Color Purple* is published
- **1983** – Wins the **Pulitzer Prize** for fiction
- **1985** – Film directed by **Steven Spielberg**, starring **Whoopi Goldberg**, **Oprah Winfrey**, **Danny Glover**, **Laurence Fishburne** is nominated for 11 Oscars
- **2005** – Original Broadway production
- **2013** – London production
- **2019** – New production opening at Curve



INTRODUCTION

BY CHARITY MUIRURI – CURVE YOUTH & COMMUNITY PRACTITIONER

The Color Purple was a book I came across, in school, by accident. I don't remember how old I was at the time but the themes explored left a lasting impression. 'You black, you poor, you ugly, you a woman' is a statement that, similar to Celie, became part of my believed identity. Many people can relate to the pressures and heightened experiences of being a teenager. However, these experiences are often intensified when gender, race, religion, class, sexuality etc. is applied. Celie's character, although fictional, was a testament to what felt like my suffering – she represented a person that I could relate to both internally and externally.

Growing up in a British school but living in a home with very cultural and traditional beliefs, meant that I found it difficult to assert my voice. 'I'm beautiful, yes I'm beautiful and I'm here' is expressed by Celie, showing her transformation to finding strength and power as a woman. This inspired me because it allowed me to believe that I too could become unapologetic of myself. My journey to inner peace, self-love and being confident didn't manifest as quickly as I had read the book, but I was proud of Celie for getting there.

More than a decade later, I've been re-introduced to *The Color Purple* through its musical revival. Reading the story now, I appreciate the importance of solidarity, particularly between the female characters, and how this positively affects their circumstances and views of self.

The Color Purple is a story that celebrates life; through all its complications. The characters explored are on very separate journeys of realising their identity and power of voice. This parallels our human experience, no matter what age or stage we may be in. I'm optimistic that this show will offer young people the incentive to consider those relations, and how they can empower themselves and each-other, especially living in a multi-cultural society.

EDUCATION PACK SECTION 1

The Color Purple THE MUSICAL

ALICE WALKER BIOGRAPHY

Alice Walker was born on 9 February 1944 in segregated Eatonton, Georgia, USA, the last of 8 children and daughter of a sharecropper. After losing an eye in an accident at the age of eight she immersed herself in her studies and took full advantage of educational opportunities, although she and her mother had to fight for her to stay in school. In 1964 she left Georgia having won a scholarship; first to Spelman, a leading black college, then to Sarah Lawrence College in New York. She became a political activist and returned to the southern states in the late 1960s to campaign for civil rights, as well as teaching and writing poetry and short stories. In 1968 she married Melvyn Leventhal, a human rights lawyer, and they had a daughter, Rebecca. It was the first interracial marriage in Mississippi but the couple divorced in the early 1970s. Her first novel, published in 1970, was *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*.

In 1982, Alice Walker's novel *The Color Purple* was published. It is written in an epistolary style, meaning that it takes the form of a series of letters written by the characters, with Celie at the centre of the story. The novel spans over forty years, starting in the early part of the 20th century. It tells through the correspondence of Celie's abuse from her father, her abusive marriage to Mister and her estrangement from her sister Nettie, as well as the sale of her child by her father and her infatuation with the glamorous night-club singer Shug Avery. It ends with Celie finding peace as someone with financial independence, and reunited with her beloved sister and children.

Walker published several more novels, as well as a sequel to *The Color Purple* called *Possessing the Secret of Joy* but none were as well-received. Walker has also published several short story collections and poetry and released new novels as recently as 2013. Walker's writing focusses heavily on themes of sexism and racism and specifically on the lives of black women in America.

Thadious M. Davis, in his *Dictionary of Literary Biography* essay, says of Alice Walker: 'Walker writes best of the social and personal drama in the lives of familiar people who struggle for survival of self in hostile environments. She has expressed a special concern with exploring the oppressions, the insanities, the loyalties and the triumph of black women.'

In her own words: 'I would like to call myself revolutionary, for I am always changing and growing, it is hoped for the good of more black people... the truest and most enduring impulse I have is simply to write... Our people are waiting.'

EDUCATION PACK SECTION 1

The Color Purple THE MUSICAL

HISTORICAL & SOCIAL CONTEXT FOR ALICE WALKER'S WRITING

The African-American Civil Rights Movement encompasses social movements in the United States whose goal was to end racial segregation and discrimination against black Americans and enforce constitutional voting rights to them.

The movement was characterised by major campaigns of civil resistance. Between 1955 and 1968, acts of non-violent protest and civil disobedience produced crisis situations between activists and government authorities. Federal, state, and local governments, businesses, and communities often had to respond immediately to these situations that highlighted the inequities faced by African Americans. Forms of protest and/or civil disobedience included boycotts such as the successful Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955–56) in Alabama; 'sit-ins' such as the influential Greensboro sit-ins (1960) in North Carolina; marches, such as the Selma to Montgomery marches (1965) in Alabama; and a wide range of other non-violent activities.

Noted legislative achievements during this phase of the Civil Rights Movement were passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, that banned discrimination based on 'race, color, religion, or national origin' in employment practices and public accommodations; the Voting Rights Act of 1965, that restored and protected voting rights; the Immigration and Nationality Services Act of 1965, that dramatically opened entry to the U.S. to immigrants other than traditional European groups; and the Fair Housing Act of 1968, that banned discrimination in the sale or rental of housing. African Americans re-entered politics in the South, and across the country young people were inspired to take action.

A wave of inner city riots in black communities from 1964 through 1970 undercut support from the white community. The emergence of the Black Power Movement, which lasted from about 1966 to 1975, challenged the established black leadership for its co-operative attitude and its non-violence, and instead demanded political and economic self-sufficiency.

Description taken from Wikipedia

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/African-American_Civil_Rights_movement_

EDUCATION PACK SECTION 1

The Color Purple THE MUSICAL

THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN AMERICA

Celie begins first letter **1904**

Celie marries **Albert** (Mister) **1910**

Nettie runs away **1912**

Harpo and **Sofia** marry **1917**

Shug comes to stay with **Albert** and **Celie** **1921**



1926 Carter G. Woodson proposes **Negro History Week** (a pre-cursor to Black History Month, 1976).

1929 **Hallelujah!** The first film with an all black cast is released in America.



1931 The **Scottsboro' Boys** are arrested – a group of young black African-American boys are arrested accused of rape and assault.



Nettie's first letter given to **Celie** **1935**

1936 **Jesse Owens** wins four gold medals at the Summer Olympics in Berlin.

1939 World War II begins, African-Americans enlist.

1940 **Hattie McDaniel** is the first African-American to win an Academy Award.



Celie is reunited with **Nettie** and her children

1941 The **Fair Employment Act** is issued by Roosevelt.

1942 The **Committee on Racial Equality** is founded.

1943 The **Detroit Race Riot**, which lasts for 3 days.

1947 **Jackie Robinson** plays for the Brooklyn Dodgers.

1950 Under court order, University of Virginia admits an African American student to its law school.

1954 The beginning of the **African-American Civil Rights Movement**.

1955 The Supreme Court rules that desegregation must occur with *'all deliberate speed.'*

1956 Singer **Nat King Cole** assaulted during a segregated performance.

1957 A report is published in the New York Times highlighting that in 3 years since the Supreme Court ruling 11 southern states have failed to desegregate.

1960 Four African-American students sit at a lunch counter in Greensboro and spark six months of the **Civil Rights Act** of 1960 signed by Eisenhower.

1961 Interstate buses display the following notice, *'Seating aboard this vehicle is without regard to race, color, creed, or national origin, by order of the Interstate Commerce Commission.'*



EDUCATION PACK SECTION 1



TINUKE CRAIG THE DIRECTOR

Tinuke trained as a director at LAMDA.

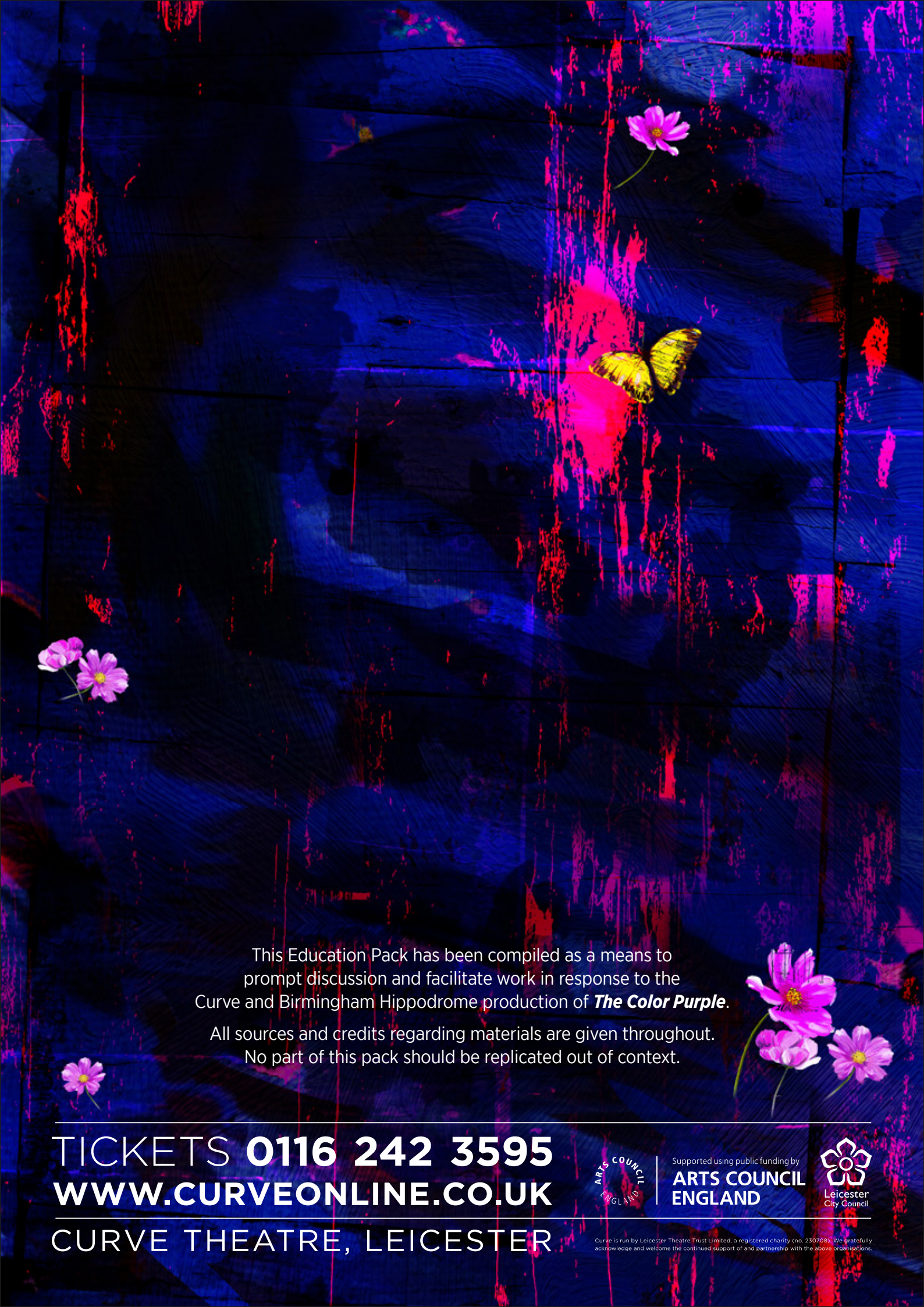
Directing credits include: *Random/Generations* by Debbie Tucker Green (Chichester Festival Theatre), *I Call My Brothers* by Jonas Hassen Khemiri (Gate Theatre) and *Dirty Butterfly* by Debbie Tucker Green (Young Vic).

Assistant/Associate director credits include: *wonder.land* (National Theatre), *Hamlet* and *All's Well that Ends Well* (RSC) and *The Changeling* (Young Vic).

Tinuke was the Gate Theatre's Associate Director from 2015-2016. In 2014 she was the winner of the Genesis Future Director Award. She is an associate artist of HighTide, a selector for the National Student Drama Festival, an associate of the National Youth Theatre, and an Education Associate Practitioner at the RSC.

COMING SOON...

- Video Q&As with cast and creatives of the show
- Classroom exercises and discussion points for teachers
- Set and costume designs
- Rehearsal room footage



This Education Pack has been compiled as a means to prompt discussion and facilitate work in response to the Curve and Birmingham Hippodrome production of ***The Color Purple***.

All sources and credits regarding materials are given throughout.
No part of this pack should be replicated out of context.

TICKETS **0116 242 3595**
WWW.CURVEONLINE.CO.UK
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