

Director's Notes

We are, all of us, grateful to be involved with this production and to have the opportunity to be part of the **Dead Man Walking School Theatre Project** and help pilot this new, and as of yet unpublished, play script. It has been a rewarding and challenging experience for everyone. Like the movie of the same name, the play is based on the experiences of Sister Helen Prejean, a Roman Catholic nun who became the spiritual advisor to several convicts condemned to death at Louisiana's Angola State Prison.

Through the course of the play, Sister Helen takes us on a journey through the "system" that we call capital punishment. It is a fascinating and yet devastating look at prison life in American and the effects of the crime of murder on the families of the victims, those involved with the legal process and on the accused themselves. Tim Robbins and indeed all involved with the **Dead Man Walking School Theatre Project** echo the belief that capital punishment is wrong and should be abolished in this country, as it is in most of the civilized world.

And so the controversy begins. We have heard it all so many times. An "eye for an eye" versus "turn the other cheek." It is easy, my conservative friends tell me, to turn the other cheek until someone close to you falls victim to a heinous crime. And yes, it is easy for me to say I could forgive someone of such an act — until I am confronted with such a nightmare. There are so many issues and so many questions on both sides. To discuss them all here would be lengthy and inappropriate. But what we can do with a play like **Dead Man Walking** is begin a dialogue and confront this issue. We can talk about it and yes, perhaps, argue and yell, but we cannot ignore the issue.

I would like to recount an incident that happened to me several months ago as I was taking a leisurely walk. In my mind I was thinking of the play from a director's point of view — casting, staging, conceptual ideas. I thought to myself that the political views of **Dead Man Walking** notwithstanding, I am first and foremost an artist and I shouldn't concern myself with the politics of capital punishment. This is, after all, a powerful drama filled with moments of tension and compassion, good characters and an interesting, through line of action. Those are the elements that endear me to the play. Suddenly I stopped cold in my tracks and realized that such thinking was, simply put, "a cop out." To divorce myself from the issues of capital punishment is exactly what Tim Robbins and Sister Helen Prejean are saying we cannot do, no matter who we are. It affects us all and we all must be witness to the event. In the play the character of Sister Neal warns us, "To be apolitical in the face of these injustices is to uphold the status quo, a very political position to take. To not fight against injustice is to actively condone it." I have come to believe that whether you are in favor of capital punishment or whether you condemn it, you cannot remain "apolitical" to what happens secretly at night and behind closed curtains. It is a public issue.

And so, tonight, in this house of illusion, unlike the reality of the capital punishment system in this country, you will witness an execution. You will hear characters in the play tell you that they don't like carrying out the act but it is after all "their job" to systematically take a life. After learning everything that Sister Helen has gained in her journey of self discovery as a spiritual advisor to those prisoners condemned to death, you must, I believe, step one way or the other over the line in the sand. I hope you discover, as I did, that nothing can excuse you from the issue.

— Alan Klem,
Director



The Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival,TM
XXXVII

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This production is entered in the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival (KCACTF). The aims of this national theater education program are to identify and promote quality in college-level theater production. To this end, each production entered is eligible for a response by a regional KCACTF representative, and selected students and faculty are invited to participate in KCACTF programs and involving scholarships, internships, grants and awards for actors, playwrights, designers, stage managers and critics at both the regional and national levels.

Productions entered on the Participating level are eligible for inclusion at the KCACTF regional festival and can also be considered for invitation to the KCACTF national festival at the John F Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, DC in the spring of 2005.

Last year more than 1,300 productions were entered in the KCACTF involving more than 200,000 students nationwide. By entering this production, our theater department is sharing in the KCACTF goals to recognize, reward, and celebrate the exemplary work produced in college and university theaters across the nation.

This production was partially funded by the generous support of the Richard and Mary McCormick Endowment Fund for the Fine and Performing Arts

Creighton University Department of Fine and Performing Arts presents
through special arrangement with
Tim Robbins and the
Dead Man Walking School Theatre Project

Dead Man Walking

a drama by Tim Robbins based on the 1993 Pulitzer Prize winning book by
Sister Helen Prejean, CSJ

Feb. 24 – 26 & Mar. 3 – 5, 2005 at 7:30^{pm}
Feb. 27, 2005 at 2:00^{pm}

Mainstage

Lied Education Center for the Arts
24th & Cass Streets on the Creighton University campus

Dead Man Walking

drama by Tim Robbins

Alan Klem

Director

Bill Van Deest

Lighting & Scenic Designer

Mark Krejci

Technical Director

Lindsay Pape

Costume Designer

Christine Sheil Salhany

Music

Kelly Klem

Music Coordinator

Elizabeth Kendall

Photo Projections

Please turn off all cell phones!

The use of cameras or other recording devices
is strictly prohibited.

Portions of instrumental and vocal music for this production of *Dead Man Walking* were taken from the compact disks *O Magnum Mysterium: The Advent of the Lord* and *In Paradisum*, both by Christine Sheil Salhany.

A professional singer and flutist, Christine Sheil Salhany is currently Cantor and Director of Children's Choir at Dowd Chapel on the campus of Girls and Boys Town in Omaha.

More information about her performances and information on how to purchase her CDs can be found by contacting her at singoloproduction@yahoo.com or at 402-981-6647.

Cast

Helen Prejean Jeanne Tiehen*
Matt Poncelet Rusty Perry
Montoya / Beliveau / P.B. Official Wesley Pourier
Colleen Lena Cigleris
Chaplin Farley Michael Arch
Lucille / Sister Neal Mary Shimerda
Gilardi Brian Hardie
Hilton Barber Jon Purcell
Clyde Percy / Gov. Fredericks / Inmate Andrew Hickman
Marybeth Percy Kate Simmons
Earl Delacroix Ryan Lampe
Hope / Emily Katherine Larsen
Walter C. J. Cornwell
Trapp Jonathan Franks
Hartman / Reporter / Mirabeau /
Survivor of Violence/Radio Voice Bill Grennan
Doctor / Reporter / Survivor of Violence /
Prison Visitor Jeffrey Peak
Mother / Female Guard / Reporter /
Survivor of Violence Alexis Janda
Mitch / Guard / Survivor of Violence Erik Thomas
Herbie Hansel Morrow Jr.
Troy Alex Fowler

*in partial fulfillment for a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree
in Theatre, Performance Theatre Track

Time

Spring of 1994

Place

In and around Angola State Prison, Louisiana and in the
memory of Sister Helen Prejean.

Dead Man Walking

is presented in two acts with a 15 minute intermission.

Production Crew

Stage Manager Erin Burns
Assistant Stage Manager Elizabeth Kendall
Assistant Lighting Designers Alexis Janda,
Elizabeth Kendall
Assistant Scenic Designers Rusty Perry,
Erin Burns
Sound Operator Elizabeth Kendall
Lightboard Operator Laura Knudsen
Stage Crew Matthew Anzur, Toby R. Gibson,
Jeremy Holan, Georgiana Lee, Chaela Robinson
Scenic & Lighting Crew Margaret Andrews, Matthew Anzur,
Michael Arch, Karen Clingman,
Laura Domeier, Megan Hewett,
Jeremy Holan, Elizabeth Kendall,
Katherine Larsen, George Lee,
Chastity O'Bradovich, Katrina Reed,
Ted Riesenbergh, Chaela Robinson,
Catherine Silver, Chase Sokol,
Michelle Townsend, Johnny Zapala
Costume Stitchers Lena Cigleris, Megan Fitzsimmons,
Alexis Janda, Ashley Kealhofer,
Jeanne Tiehen, Kristy Tielebein,
Maria Masek, Kate Simmons
House Manager Caitlin James
Box Office Manager Kristin Schwartz

Special Thanks

Omaha Community Playhouse

Terry Doughman

Opera Omaha

Tesco Productions

Maria Teresa Gaston

Creighton University Center for Service & Justice

Dr. Wendy Wright

Creighton University Keneflick Chair in Humanities

Christine Wiseman

Creighton University Vice President for Academic Affairs

cover photograph by Renée Malloy