THE CRADLE WILL ROCK

UM SCHOOL OF MUSIC, THEATRE & DANCE • DEPT OF THEATRE & DRAMA
OCTOBER 5 - 15, 2006 • WALGREEN DRAMA CENTER STUDIO ONE
The University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre & Dance  
Department of Theatre & Drama  
presents

THE CRADLE WILL ROCK

By Marc Blitzstein

Director  Robert Benedetti  
Musical Director  Christian Matjias  
Scenic & Lighting Designer  Gary Decker  
Costume Designer  Christianne Myers  
Dialect Coach  Annette Masson  
Choreographer  Melissa Beck Matjias  
Stage Manager  Stephen Siercks

Setting:  
Steeltown, U.S.A., 1930s

The Cradle Will Rock will be performed without an intermission.

The Cradle Will Rock is presented by special arrangement  
with Tams Witmark Music Library, Inc.

Latecomers will be seated at a suitable break or scene change. As a courtesy to others, please set  
pagers to silent mode. Cellular phones and electronic watch alarms should be turned off so  
they will not interrupt the performance. Photography and videotaping are not permitted due to  
copyright restrictions. Flash photography endangers performers by causing momentary blindness.
Cast of Characters (in order of appearance)

Marc Blitzstein/Clerk.................................................................................Christian Matjias
Olive Stanton/Moll..................................................................................Rachael Soglin
Gent/Bugs/Prof. Scoot/WPA Cop...........................................................................Kevin McCarthy
Dick/Gus/Reporter 1/Will Geer..............................................................................Daniel Kane
Cop/Stevie/Reporter 2/WPA Cop............................................................................Nick Lang
Dr. Specialist ........................................................................................................Frank Maiorana
Rev. Salvation .......................................................................................................Eric J. Schinzer
Dauber .................................................................................................................Sari Goldberg
Coach Trixie .......................................................................................................Eric Kahn Gale
President Prexy .................................................................................................Cara Akselrad
Prof. Mamie ......................................................................................................Alexandra Odell
Editor Daily .......................................................................................................Brian Holden
Yasha ..................................................................................................................Daniel Strauss
Orson Welles/Harry Druggist ................................................................................Pat Rourke
Mrs. Mister/Tart 3/Peggy Coudray........................................................................Rebecca Schwartzstein
John Houseman/Mr. Mister...................................................................................Sharif Nasr
Ella Hammer/Tart 2 .............................................................................................Zoe Palko
Sadie/Tart 1 .........................................................................................................Sara Greenfield
Howard Da Silva/Larry Foreman........................................................................James Wolk

About the Playwright

Marc Blitzstein (Composer) (1905-1964) A respected colleague of Aaron Copland and mentor of Leonard Bernstein, Blitzstein was a child musical prodigy, performing at age 5, composing at 7, and at 15 was a soloist with the Philadelphia Orchestra. Among his works were The Cradle Will Rock, the opera Regina, an adaptation of Lillian Hellman’s The Little Foxes, the Broadway musical Juno based on Sean O’Casey’s Juno and the Paycock, No For An Answer, and his off-Broadway translation/adaptation of Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill’s Threepenny Opera which gave Blitzstein his only pop hit, “Mack the Knife.” Additional compositions include the autobiographical radio song play I’ve Got the Tune, The Airborne Symphony, and Reuben Reuben. Although Blitzstein married novelist Eva Goldbeck, he was openly gay. In 1964, Blitzstein was robbed and beaten in Fort-de-France, Martinique by three Portuguese sailors after a sexual encounter. He identified his assailants, who were later convicted of manslaughter after he had died of his wounds in the hospital. At his death Blitzstein was at work on Idiots First, an opera based on the eponymous story by Bernard Malamud and a three-act opera commissioned by the Ford Foundation and optioned by the Metropolitan Opera, Sacco and Vanzetti. Both Tales of Malamud and Sacco and Vanzetti were completed, posthumously, with the approval of Blitzstein’s estate, by composer Leonard Lehrman. — compiled from Wikipedia.com
“It is clear to me,” composer Marc Blitzstein wrote in 1935, “that...Music must have a social as well as artistic base; it should broaden its scope and reach not only the select few but the masses.” Shattered by the sudden death of his wife Eva in 1936, and in order to escape his grief, Blitzstein threw himself into his work, beginning composition of a political opera, suggested to him by Bertolt Brecht some months earlier, which would demonstrate the various ways in which people sell “themselves, their art, their ideals.” In a creative frenzy, *The Cradle Will Rock* was completed in six weeks.

In 1937 producer John Houseman and a 21-year-old director named Orson Welles decided to produce *The Cradle Will Rock* for the Federal Theatre Project — part of the Works Progress Administration, President Franklin Roosevelt’s jobs program during the depression. Welles had grand plans for the *The Cradle Will Rock*, envisioning a visually and technically ambitious production design for the show. His expectations for the actors were no less ambitious. It was not uncommon for Welles to start a rehearsal at 10 AM and keep the actors working until 4 o’clock the next morning.

Meanwhile, the labor movement — after nearly 50 years of struggle — was gaining momentum during the months just before *The Cradle Will Rock* was scheduled to open. In addition to the steel industry, the labor movement was building support with workers from a number of other industries including the auto workers, miners, farm workers, textile workers, metal workers, and seamen. As the number of volatile confrontations between labor and management increased, Congress blamed the WPA and decided to implement financial cuts to the program.

On June 10, 1937, Flannigan was ordered to cut 10% of the FTP budget and all new shows in New York City were forbidden to open until July 1, effectively canceling the scheduled June 16 opening of *Cradle*. Welles and Houseman pleaded their case to open as scheduled to no avail - over 14,000 advance tickets had been sold for the run of the show. With the governmental edict, both the Actors’ Equity Union and the Musicians Union imposed restrictions on their members performing. Ironically, unions themselves were undermining a show about unions. Welles and Houseman determined that the show would go on - no matter the consequence.

On opening night, hundreds of ticket-holders showed up outside the padlocked and guarded Maxine Elliott Theatre anticipating a night of musical entertainment. As the actors entertained the crowd, Welles and Houseman desperately telephoned theatres all over the city looking for another location to open the show. Finally, after securing the Venice Theatre, they led the audience on a 20-block march uptown, piano in tow, gathering additional audience members on the way.
As the audience filed into the theatre Blitzstein sat alone, at a piano, on the stage. In the true spirit of “the show must go on…” he began to play and sing the score himself. Then, seemingly out of nowhere, actress Olive Stanton began singing her part from her theatre seat. Her voice trembled at first when the spotlight flashed on her. But as she stood and continued her voice grew stronger and louder. Other actors were inspired to do the same and the entire show was performed by a company sitting in the theatre seats and accompanied by a single piano. When the performance ended there was thunderous applause and a theatre legend was born.

*The Cradle Will Rock* ran for a further 18 performances at the Venice Theatre. It then re-opened at the Windsor Theatre in January 1938, produced by Sam Grisman, although still without props, and with Blitzstein playing the piano, where it ran for 108 performances.

Welles resigned from the Federal Theatre Project over the controversy and Houseman was fired under a WPA rule which forbade the employment of non-American citizens. Blitzstein went on to compose *Regina*, *The Airborne Symphony*, and *Reuben Reuben*. Blitzstein died on January 22, 1964. Aaron Copland wrote of Blitzstein, “His purpose was not merely to write the words and music of effective theatre pieces; he wanted to shape each piece for his own ends, to shape it for human ends. He took a certain pleasure in needling his audiences, in telling unpleasant truths straight to their faces. To sing these truths only gave them greater poignancy. The moral fervor that fired his work in the depression-haunted ‘Thirties resulted in the writing of *The Cradle Will Rock*. The opening night of *Cradle* made history; none of us who were there will ever forget it.”

---

**Director’s Notes**

As America emerged from the Great Depression, the WPA provided the highest level of governmental support for the arts in our history. The Federal Theatre Project alone created over 3000 theatre groups across the country, and the country responded; for an all-too-brief period the theatre was an active force in the lives of ordinary working people like my parents. The extraordinary opening night of *The Cradle Will Rock* was in many ways the point at which this great wave of socially active and publicly-funded theatre broke, and the point from which it has rolled steadily back into the murky shallows in which we find ourselves floundering today. I was fortunate to know John Houseman and to talk with him about that night, and to interview also several people who were in the audience. We hope tonight to recreate not just the play, but its social setting as well, and we invite your participation. The piece remains relevant: though unionism, once a burning issue, is today barely an ember, nevertheless the deeper issues of integrity and justice driving the play are more important than ever. Our shifting economy and governmental policies have created a greater chasm between the “haves” and the “have-nots” than existed even in 1937. Mr. Mister is alive and stronger than ever, though today he sits in the boardrooms of multinational corporations.

—— Robert Benedetti
ABOUT THE CAST

Cara Akselrad, senior, BFA Perf./BA English, Princeton Junction, NJ
Eric Kahn, junior, BTA Theatre, West Bloomfield, MI
Sari Goldberg, senior, BFA Perf., New York, NY
Sara Greenfield, junior, BFA Perf., Plymouth, MI
Brian Holden, junior, BFA Perf., Traverse City, MI
Daniel Kane, junior, BFA Perf., Northbrook, IL
Nick Lang, junior, BFA Perf., Franklin, MI
Frank Maiorana, senior, BFA Perf., Sterling Heights, MI
Christian Matjias, see about the artists
Kevin McCarthy, junior, BFA Perf., Atlanta, GA
Sharif Nasr, junior, BFA Perf., Bay City, MI
Alexandra Odell, junior, BFA Perf., Charlotte, NC
Zoe Palko, senior, BFA Perf., Ludington, MI
Pat Rourke, junior, BFA Perf., Port Huron, MI
Eric J. Schinzer, senior, BFA Perf., Portage, MI
Rebecca Schwartzstein, senior, BTA Theatre, Bethesda, MD
Rachael Soglin, senior, BFA Perf., Madison, WI
Daniel Strauss, senior, BFA Perf., Washington, D.C.
James Wolk, senior, BFA Perf., Farmington Hills, MI

The performers in this production are composed of undergraduate students and faculty in the School of Music, Theatre & Dance. The designers are composed of faculty in the Department of Theatre & Drama. Scenery, costumes, properties, sound, and lighting were realized by the students and staff of University Productions, the producing unit of the School of Music, Theatre & Dance.

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Robert Benedetti (Director) PhD, Northwestern University. 1960s: Artistic Director, Chicago’s Court Theatre and performer with the Second City Theatre. 1970s: Chairman at the Yale Drama School, Chairman at York University, and Dean of Theatre at the California Institute of the Arts. Benedetti has seven widely-used textbooks in print and in 2005 received the Lifetime Career Achievement Award from the Association for Theatre in Higher Education. He has directed over 100 productions at theatres like the Guthrie, the Milwaukee, San Diego, and South Coast Repertory Theatres, and the Oregon, Great Lakes, and Colorado Shakespeare Festivals. As a film writer and producer he has won three Emmys, two Humanitas Prizes, a Peabody Award, and numerous other awards. He is currently preparing his third film for HBO. His first novel, The Long Italian Goodbye, was a fall selection of the Sons of Italy Book Club.
About the Artists

Melissa Beck Matjias (Choreographer) is a lecturer in both Dance and Musical Theatre. She holds a MFA in Choreography and a BA in English. Her choreography has been presented in Chicago at Around the Coyote, Bates Dance Festival, and many venues in Michigan. She has been commissioned to create works for Chamber Music Ann Arbor and Bowling Green State University among others. She has been a Teaching Artist for both Arts Unlimited: A Lincoln Center Institute and Ohio Wolftrap, and a member of the ballet faculty at Interlochen Arts Camp.

Gary Decker (Scenic & Lighting Designer) has designed more than 100 productions. In Michigan, he has worked at the Gem, Attic, Birmingham, Boarshhead, and Purple Rose Theatres. Recent designs include the national tours of The Sunshine Boys and Same Time, Next Year. His scenic design for Fully Committed at The Century Theatre earned the Detroit Free Press 2002 Theatre Design Excellence Award. He has designed interiors or lighting for commercial projects including: The Elwood Grill in Detroit, The Fashion Cafe in New York, and The Arndale Centre in Manchester, UK. He has been a member of the Theatre Department faculty since 1984.


Christianne Myers (Costume Designer) is an asst. professor in the Dept. of Theatre & Drama. UM: The Coronation of Poppea, Tartuffe, Hansel and Gretel, Cunning Little Vixen, Xerxes. New York: 17 different productions at The Juilliard School; Running Man, Music Theatre Group; Dare Clubb’s Oedipus, Blue Light; The Acting Co.; Theatreworks/USA; The Public Theatre & Ma-Yi Ens.; Irondale Ens.; Lincoln Center Institute. Regional Theatre: The Purple Rose Theatre; Indiana Rep; Vermont Stage Co.; Clarence Brown Theatre; Syracuse Stage; Caldwell Theatre; Pine Mountain Music Festival. Other: BFA, Pace Univ.; MFA, New York Univ.

Stephen Siercks (Stage Manager) is a senior in the design and production program studying lighting design and stage management. UM: A Flea in Her Ear, 2005 School of Music Halloween Concert, 2004 Political Cabaret, stage manager; Jesus Christ Superstar, Guys and Dolls, asst. stage manager; The Gold Diggers, 1918, A Midsummer Nights Dream, lighting designer; Seussical, asst. lighting designer. Basement Arts: Artistic Director for the 2006/2007 seasons. Regional Theatre: Hamlet, A Midsummer Nights
**ABOUT THE ARTISTS**


**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

Special thanks to Mary Cole. Additional thanks to Ann Zalucki and the Office of the Associate Vice President for Facilities and Operations, the North Campus Deans, the Department of Public Safety, Grant Winston from the Office of Parking and Transportation Services, and the staff of the Duderstadt Center.

**STAFF FOR THE CRADLE WILL ROCK**

**SCHOOL OF MUSIC, THEATRE & DANCE**
Dean ............................................ Christopher Kendall

**DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE & DRAMA**
Chair ........................................................ Greg Poggi
Department Administrator .................. Bonnie Kerschbaum
Student Services .................................. Becky Seauvageau
Admin Assistant ..................................... Lauren Adkins,

**UNIVERSITY PRODUCTIONS**
Director .................................................. Jeffrey Kuras
Admin. Assoc. ........................................ Fatima Abdullah
Office Assistant III ................................... Shelda Smith
Marketing & Communications Dir. ....... Kerianne M. Tupac
Information Systems Manager ............. Henry Reynolds
Facilities Manager ................................. Shannon Rice
House Manager ....................................... Dianne Widzinski
Graphic Design ...................................... Don Hammond
Photographer ...................................... Peter Smith Photography
Office Assistants ..................................... Chelsea LaBrie,
......................................................... Stephanie Shechter, Valerie Weber

**PRODUCTION STAFF**
Production Manager ................................ Amanda Mengden
Production Stage Manager ..................... Nancy Uffner
Technical Director (Walgreen) ............. Richard W. Lindsay, Jr.
Technical Director (Power) .................. Donald C. Watkins
Carpenter .......................................... Robert Michael
Charge Scenic Artist ............................ Toni Y. Auletti
Asst. Scenic Artist ............................... Elizabeth Sandmaier
Properties Master .................................. Arthur Ridley
Asst. Properties Master ......................... Dan Tracy
Properties Artisan .................................. Patrick Drone
Master Electrician ................................. Mark Allen Berg
Costume Shop Manager ....................... Jan Evans
Assoc. Costume Shop Manager ............. George Bacon
Cutter/Drapers ................................. Virginia R. Luedke,
Lea Marzonie, T J Williamson
Crafts Artisan ....................................... Elizabeth Gunderson
Sound Engineers ............................... Roger Arnett, Henry Reynolds
Senior House Operations Manager ....... Barry LaRue
House Operations Mgrs ........................... Ron Cypert, Mark Gordon
Office Assts ......................................... Adam H. Caplan, Jamie Fortier

**PRODUCTION CREW**
First Asst. Stage Manager ..................... Stephanie Shechter
Asst. Stage Managers ......................... Alex Bisker, Kathryn Edwards
Asst. Director ......................................... Beth Chrobak
Scenery ............................................. students of Theatre 250
Paint ................................................. Adam Moskal, Matthew Semler, Laura Strowe,
students of Theatre 250
Props .................................. Catherine Keys, Matthew Noellert, Ruth
Pferdehirt, students of Theatre 250
Professional Stitchers ......................... Laurie Kantner,
Jaclyn Young, Suzanne Young
Costumes ........................................... Melanie Taves
Lighting ............................................ Justin Lang, Joseph Walls, Caroline Williams,
students of Theatre 250

**RUNNING CREW**
Props/Scenery ..................................................
Light Board Operator ..................................
Sound ............................................................
Wardrobe ....................................................