

artspot productions presents

THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS

AS TOLD BY GRANDMOTHER TO LITTLE RED

written and performed by
Kathy Randels

directed by and co-created with
Odile Del Giudice

Music and Sound Steve Gilliland
Lighting Design Diane Baas
Set Design Kevin Griffith
Costumes Shawn Hall
Stage Manager Tricia Anderson

**LAMBENT
FOUNDATION**



THE ST. CHARLES
CENTER FOR
FAITH + ACTION

Arts New Orleans

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PRODUCTIONS**

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A NOTE FROM KATHY

This project draws from three major streams in my life, which I will mention here chronologically. First, my family's religious practice, and especially my father, Rev. James Richard Randels, and maternal grandfather, Leonard Oren McCracken, both Southern Baptist preachers, both of whose actual books are used in the performance. In the 80's my father complained about the fundamentalist take-over of the Southern Baptist Convention. After he left his church of five decades, I moved with him and my mother Eloise to St. Charles Ave. Baptist Church, a progressive Baptist congregation led by Rev. Elizabeth Lott. This church has been deeply invested in criminal legal system reform and other social justice needs in our state—and has recently developed a new organization, the St. Charles Center for Faith + Action. In the early months of the pandemic, we read *White Too Long* (Robert P. Jones' response to James Baldwin's *The Fire Next Time*), a look at the white church in America's role in sanctifying white supremacy in all of our country's systems.

The second stream comes from working with the women of The LCIW Drama Club and The Graduates for 25 years, and especially on the *FreeMamaGlo* campaign with PDMNOLA, a two-and-a-half-year struggle to release Gloria Williams, the woman whose 52 years of imprisonment was the longest in our state. She was finally released in January of 2022 and she is now living with her family in Texas. Mama Glo and the other women in these two programs have shared deep stories of their lives with one another; and they have schooled me in the horrific effects of slavery, racism, and sexual violence—which persist in our state—on their and their families' lives.

The third stream comes from work that Odile Del Giudice and I have been doing together over the past five years. We began doing performance training and somatic practices together; and over the past two years, we have channeled that work into this performance. Odile's work—surfacing and healing individual, inter-generational and collective trauma structures, rooted in our past, and living currently in our bodies/systems—has created the link, in the present, for me to navigate those first two streams of my life. This piece has been a deep conversation between the two of us around creating space for healing from collective trauma at the intersection of the church and prison systems in Louisiana. I am deeply grateful to Odile for the way she has supported me and this process; and to Diane, Kevin, Steve, Tricia, Shawn and Sean for the creativity and support they have given to this work. Our intention is to share this work with churches throughout the state, to begin or deepen a dialogue around the role the church has played in the manifestation of our criminal legal system; and to vision the role it can play in changing it.

Tricia Anderson splits her time between New Orleans, where she is a member of Intramural Theater Company, and upstate New York, where she is a member of Siren Theatre, focusing in both on producing new works.

Diane Baas is an Associate Professor of Design in the Department of Film and Theatre at the University of New Orleans and a frequent collaborator with many companies regionally and nationally. She studied Lighting Design at the School of Drama at The University of Washington in Seattle, and Lighting and Scenic Design, Art History, and Painting at Tulane University in New Orleans.

Odile Nicole Del Giudice is honored to have served as midwife for this piece with Kathy over the last two years, taking *The Road to Damascus* into the pine woods of Lafayette, researching in Opelousas, discovering new life in New Orleans, and making space for the emergence of magic in Appalachia. Through a somatic/body-centered approach, ritual, story-telling, shadow work and inner science, Odile seeks to create containers for transformation, ultimately leading to contact with our true, embodied nature. For this piece, the intention has been to create a bridge for meaningful dialogue and integration of seemingly divergent perspectives on God, Race, and Structures of Dominance—moving away from focus on intellectual discourse and towards integration of our human experience, inextricably bound to each other.

Steve Gilliland is a musician, sound designer and audio engineer who has been living in New Orleans since 2019. He performs locally and regionally with the eclectic improvisational group New Thousand, and produces original music under the moniker GillaWatts. He has worked with a multitude of local groups and organizations in varying capacities, including Goat in the Road Productions, Prospect New Orleans and the Contemporary Arts Center.

Kevin Griffith is currently serving as a Professor of Design for the Department of Film and Theatre at The University of New Orleans and works regionally as a designer, builder, and scenic artist. He studied theater at Arkansas State University and The University of Southern Mississippi.

Shawn Hall earned her MFA at the Mount Royal School of Maryland Institute College of Art as a Patricia Harris Fellow. She has a BFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago and an AS in Science from Delta College in MI. Shawn toured with her collaborative installation/performance HOW TO BUILD A FOREST with PearlDamour, which premiered at the Kitchen in NYC in 2011 and went on to universities and art spaces around the eastern and southern USA. Her work has been reviewed nationally and is included in the permanent collections of the Ogden Museum and Linklaters Corporate collection in NYC, as well as numerous private collections in the USA and Europe.

Kathy Randels, born and raised in Bulbancha|New Orleans, founded ArtSpot Productions in 1995. She has written, performed in, and directed numerous original solo and collaborative group works for professional, student and incarcerated ensembles in Louisiana and beyond. She co-founded in 1996 and co-directs the LCIW (Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women) Drama Club; and The Graduates, a performing ensemble of formerly incarcerated women, since 2012. For more information, visit www.artspotproductions.org.

JUSTICE FOR SURVIVORS

The Justice for Survivors coalition is a community of survivors of violence, formerly and currently incarcerated survivors, advocates, attorneys, and organizations working together through a campaign **that centers the voices of currently and formerly incarcerated survivors, victims' loved ones, and survivors of human trafficking, intimate partner violence, and sexual violence.** To receive updates and join the fight, scan this QR code:



THANK YOU

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