

EMU Multicultural Student Services presents:

Janet Langhart Cohen's
*Anne &
Emmett*

**Eastern Mennonite University
Lehman Auditorium**

Friday, January 14, at 6 p.m.

Saturday, January 15, at 2 p.m.

Sunday, January 16, at 5 p.m.

Monday, January 17, at 3 p.m.

Written by
JANET LANGHART COHEN

Produced by
CELESTE R. THOMAS

Directed by
EZRIIONNA PRIOLEAU



Sponsored by
The Arts Council of the Valley
and Interfaith Youth Core grants



Anne & Emmett

Director.....	Ezrionna Prioleau
Producer.....	Celeste Thomas
Stage Manager.....	Jareya Harder
Production Assistant.....	Akiel Baker
Music Composer.....	Joshua Overacker
Scene Designer.....	Shannon Dove
Costume Designer.....	Hailey Holcomb
Lighting Designer.....	Robert Weaver
Media Designer.....	Kara Painter
Promotions Assistant.....	Anna Hoover

Cast

Anne Frank.....	Greta Schrag
Emmett Till.....	Thaddeus Jackson
Otto Frank.....	Andrew Stoltzfus
Mamie Till.....	Deanna Reed
J. W. Millam*.....	Isaac Longacre

*Many of the lines that are spoken by this character are quoted lines spoken by J.W. Millam on the killing of Emmett Till. William Bradford Huie, "The Shocking Story of Approved Killing in Mississippi," *Look* 20, no.2 (January 1956): 46-48, 50.

We invite you to stay after the show for a talkback.

Warning: This show contains graphic images and strong language.

Director's Notes

In 2019 I wanted to put on a play that would look at the injustices of today. I read so many plays that it made my head spin. Every one of them lacked something. Just as I was getting discouraged, I found a play titled *Anne and Emmett*. There was no script to be found, just a synopsis and promotional videos for shows that have premiered in the past. Thus started my quest to produce this wonderful show on the EMU campus. I am excited to get this chance here at EMU – the place that gave me the tools needed to put something like this on.

The concept of this show is a conversation that gets bigger than the two people who are having it. We all know the fate of Anne and Emmett, but what can we learn from their deaths? What can we do with this information now that we know more about what happened to them? I am a black female who grew up in a world where people did not look like me. A black woman in a white world. I'm still in that world and navigating the best way I can. When talking about these topics, one thing that is said is that it was all in the past. Things are different now. Are they? Was it? The Civil Rights Act, which granted freedom by law, was passed in 1964, only 57 years ago. We still have foot soldiers living among us. This act came after 101 years of segregation within the United States. Emmett died 66 years ago and Anne 76 years ago. This history is not distant, but within living memory. Hate is the reason that they died: Emmett for hate of his race and Anne for hate of her religion.

There is so much hate going on in the world today that I fear that we will repeat history. I look at those who have lost their lives due to hate and violence. I think of those who were brave enough to speak up. If it was not for them, these stories may have gotten lost. Mamie Till-Mobley and Otto Frank both lost their children due to this hate. They both spoke up and told the world what happened, Mamie with a picture and Otto with words. The parallels in their stories are important and without them we may have never known about what hate was doing.

I invite you to join me in this conversation, to look at the past and also look towards a better future. Anne Frank and Emmett Till were two children who were unable to escape the hate in the worlds they lived in. Although we cannot change history, we can learn from it. I dedicate this show to all those who have lost their lives due to hate. I hope that you will join me in the fight for injustice. And never forget those who died due to hate that surrounded them.

Ezrionna Prioleau
Director

Composer's Notes

While composing this music, I found it hard to capture the essence of oppression. In the play you will hear many motifs that resembles Negro spirituals; another motif heard is the sound of a heartbeat, a sound often associated with life.

Emmett's theme is in the key of C# minor, which is described as "regret of wrongdoings" or "an intimate conversation with God." Emmett says, "Anne, you tell everybody to remember! Everybody tells us to forget!" This line was my main inspiration for the themes. Emmett's theme contains a descending melody, symbolizing that things have not gotten better for the black community. The accompaniment also has meanings that relate to the background of the character; the piano part is thin, and the melody is doubled in the left hand because Emmett's only close family is his mother (his father was sent off to war and never returned, leaving him and his mother to develop a deep connection).

Anne's theme is in the key of Ab minor, which is described as a "wailing lament" or a "difficult struggle." Anne's theme ascends and descends throughout the melody. We know that the Jewish people affected by the Holocaust got reparations – meaning things got better for them – but there is still hate in the world. In Anne's theme, there is more movement and full chords. Anne had a sister and two parents, and while she was stuck in the annex, there were some family friends living with them as well. The movement in the right hand tells of Anne's feeling of wanting to be free and not confined in the annex.

At the end of the show is a triumphant theme that features both themes, as well as the motifs throughout the show. After the music stops, will you remember the conversations these two had or will you kill them a second time?

Joshua Overacker
Composer

Letter from the Producer

Celeste R. Thomas currently serves as the Director of Multicultural Student Services at Eastern Mennonite University where our mission is to increase awareness, cultivate inclusiveness and mutual respect of diversity and multicultural aspects of African American, Hispanic, Asian and Native American people throughout the community.

I arrive at the goal of producing *Anne and Emmett* out of a strong passion and commitment to social justice. I am planted, rooted and have grown up in a deep history of social justice. The original Free African Society's desire to worship openly and freely led to what is now the African Methodist Episcopal Church, of which I am a member. It was the first major religious denomination in the western world originating from sociological and theological beliefs and differences. The founders rejected the negative theological interpretations which rendered people of African descent second-class citizens. The church was born out of protest against slavery-against the dehumanization of African people, who were brought to the American continent as free labor. This is Where I Am From.

Anne and Emmett is the third play that I have produced. *The Wiz* is at first glance a story about a girl trying to find her way back home to Harlem. In actuality, its focus is on persons in the margins dealing with issues around race, belonging, home, and desires to obtain courage, a brain and a heart. Oppression plays a role in how they unrealistically view their innermost gifts.

The Waiting Room introduces us to three women from different cultures and periods of time who are all seeking unrealistic standards of beauty in worlds where they are considered second-class citizens due to their gender. There is the woman seeking beauty through breast augmentation, the wealthy woman whose feet are bound and finally the woman who is tightly corseted.

Unfortunately, we find ourselves in a period of time in our society when the climate that killed Anne and Emmett is being mirrored, where people are still being killed due to their race. History continues to repeat itself. Remember their names: George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Donovan Lynch, Breonna Taylor and Atiana Jefferson to name a few have violently lost their lives senselessly, as did Anne and Emmett. It is due to the continuation of hate that I wanted to bring Anne and Emmett's stories to light. We must never forget that their lives were short lived but meaningful.

As we acknowledge the contributions of the foot soldiers of the Civil Rights movement during the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration of Legacy, Education and Service, we are centering around the following: **"History will have to record that the greatest tragedy of this period of social transition was not the strident clamor of the bad people, but the appalling silence of the good people."** —Martin Luther King, Jr., **"Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story"** (1958)

Anne and Emmett, the play fits nicely into the MLK, Jr. celebration as it aims to create dialogue around race, religion, oppression, healing and reconciliation.

Celeste Thomas
Producer

CAST BIOS

Greta Schrag – Anne Frank

Greta is a sophomore Political Science and Sociology double major with a minor in Community Organizing and Development from Harleysville, PA. In high school, she was part of Dock Mennonite Academy's productions of *Newsies* (Kathrine) and *The Sound of Music* (Liesel). At EMU she has been seen in *Shrek: The Musical* (Teen Fiona) and *U2: Romeo and Juliet* (Juliet).

Thaddeus Jackson – Emmett Till

Thaddeus is a sophomore music major from Harrisonburg, VA. His past productions include *The King and I* (King) at EMHS, *Pride and Prejudice* (Lady Catherine De Bourgh), and *U2: Romeo and Juliet* (Paris) at EMU. During his free time, Thaddeus enjoys playing instruments and annoying Benjamin Bergey.

Andrew Stoltzfus – Otto Frank

Andrew is a senior nursing major with a theater minor from Harrisonburg, VA and beyond at Rift Valley Academy (Kijabe, Kenya). At EMU, he was in Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* (Duke Vincentio), Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* (Beast), *Pride and Prejudice* (Mr. Collins, Mr. Wickham), *Shrek: The Musical* (Farquaad), *U2: Romeo and Juliet* (Romeo).

Deanna Reed – Mamie Till

Mayor Deanna Reed was sworn into office for Harrisonburg City Council on January 3, 2017, and then selected by her fellow council members as mayor. Becoming mayor of Harrisonburg made her the first African American female mayor in Harrisonburg's history. Although this is her first public office, she is no stranger to Harrisonburg and its people. Mayor Reed currently serves as the Director of Community and School Partnerships for On the Road Collaborative, a non-profit youth empowerment organization that serves more than 300 middle school and high school youth annually. Beyond her leadership and achievements serving the youth, Mayor Reed has a Bachelor's of Education degree from Liberty University. She has served as a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc. for over 32 years and serves on the advisory team for Iota Alpha Chapter of James Madison University, and she is currently serving as Vice President of the Charlottesville Alumnae Chapter. Mayor Reed continues to hold numerous offices within several communities. She serves as the Vice Chair of the Virginia Municipal League Legislative Committee and the Vice President of the Virginia Transit Association. She currently serves on the Board of Trustees for Eastern Mennonite University, the Advisory Board for Civic Engagement for James Madison University, Racial Equity Task Force- James Madison University, Social Services Advisory Board and the Parks and Recreation Commission. She is an honorary member of the American Association of University Women (AAUW). Mayor Reed remains passionate in her work to enrich the lives of youth in her community.

Isaac Longacre – J. W. Millam

Isaac is a senior music education major from Quakertown, PA. At EMU, he was seen in Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* (Angelo), Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* (Gaston), *Shrek: The Musical* (Shrek) and *U2: Romeo and Juliet* (Tybalt, assistant director).

CREW BIOS

Ezrionna Prioleau '17 – Director

Ezrionna is an EMU theater graduate, who is now at EMU/EMS graduate student pursuing her MDiv and MAOL. She has worked on many productions at EMU, including assistant stage manager for *On the Verge*, and stage manager on *Twelfth Night*, *Distant Witness*, and *The 39 Steps*. She was in *The Crowley's of Tobias* (Dr. Tanner), *Into the Woods* (Granny, Milky White, movement chorus), *The Woodsman* (Lucas), and *A Year With Frog and Toad* (Snail). She directed, designed scenery and lighting for, and was seen in *The Beginning of Spring*. Ezrionna also stage managed *The Gospel Project* and *Firebrand: The Life of Paul* for The Wanderlust Theater Company. At EMS she was the lights designer *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. Recently, she has worked on Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* (assistant producer), *Shrek: The Musical* (production assistant), and *U2: Romeo & Juliet* (production assistant) at EMU.

Jareya Harder – Stage Manager

Jareya is a senior computer science major with a minor in theatre from Mountain Lake, MN. At Mountain Lake High School, Jareya participated in *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, *You're a Good Man Charlie Brown*, *The Middle of Yesterday*, and *Blues* (lighting technician). She was the light operator at Mountain Lake High school from 2012 to 2018. At EMU, she was the assistant stage manager in *Measure for Measure* and Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* and the stage manager for *Shrek: The Musical* and *U2: Romeo & Juliet*.

Joshua Overacker '21 – Composer

Joshua hails from Mount Crawford, Virginia. He is an EMU alum who majored in music. Joshua was seen at EMU in *Beauty and the Beast* (Orchestra), and *Shrek* (Peter Pan, Knight 4, Duloc Dancer, Guard and Happy Villager). This production is serving as his senior project and features his original compositions.

Hailey Holcomb '17 – Costume Designer

Hailey Holcomb is a graduate student in Eastern Mennonite Seminary's MDiv. program. Hailey has worked for EMU Theater since 2014, when she was an undergraduate at EMU. She has worked in various capacities - including stage management, scene shop crew, props, costuming, acting, and her current role as a production assistant. Her shows include *Into the Woods*, *Dark at the Top of the Stairs*, *A Year with Frog and Toad* (Squirrel), *Distant Witness*, *39 Steps*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *The Gospel Project*, *Firebrand: The Story of Paul*, *Corpus Christi* (Thomas), *Beginning of Spring*, *Measure for Measure*, Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, *Shrek: The Musical*, and *U2: Romeo & Juliet*.

Shannon Dove – Scene Designer

Shannon is a local grad of JMU and Broadway High School. He has been a scenic artist, master electrician, master carpenter, master painter, technical director, and overall crew chief at EMU since 2002. He has worked to produce theatre for various organizations at the college, community, and professional levels. In addition, he is currently scenic artist, co-technical director, and adjunct professor of theatre at Bridgewater College. Shannon is also an avid musician.

Robert Weaver '18 – Lighting Designer

Robert is a recent EMU grad from Baltimore, MD. He majored in photography and minored in theater and business administration. Robert is a freelance theater artist in D.C. and Baltimore. Robert is currently a stagehand and lighting designer at the Lisner Auditorium at George Washington University. He recently enjoyed working with *Step Afrika!* as an assistant master electrician for their touring production of *The Migration: Reflections on Jacob Lawrence*. Robert has most recently been the lighting designer for *Measure for Measure*, Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*, *Pride and Prejudice*, *U2: Romeo and Juliet* (Eastern Mennonite University) and assistant lighting designer for *The Spitfire Grill*.

Akiel Baker '21 – Production Assistant

Akiel is an EMU alum who is now a graduate student pursuing his master's in social work from Bowie, MD. In addition to his studies Akiel is the Site Coordinator at Thomas Harrison Middle School for On the Road Collaborative, a nonprofit based in Harrisonburg dedicated to closing the learning gap and empowering youth. He is also the Hillside Residence director here at EMU.

Kara Painter '18 – Media Designer

Kara is a digital media and communications EMU alum from Harrisonburg, VA. She recently attained her MBA/MHA from Mary Baldwin University '21. When at EMU Kara was seen and worked on *Beginning of Spring*. She was also an assistant stage manager for *Distant Witness*.

Janet Langhart Cohen is an award-winning playwright, and journalist who grew up in a segregated housing project in Indianapolis, Indiana, and went on to enjoy a career in modeling, television, and public service as the nation's "First lady of the Pentagon."

She published her memoir, *From Rage to Reason: My Life in Two Americas*, and co-authored *Love in Black and White: A Memoir of Race, Religion and Romance*.

The National Association of Women Judges presented Janet with "The Lady Justice Award" for artistic integrity in writing *Anne & Emmett*.

Janet is currently completing a book on the reason she wrote *Anne & Emmett* and the experiences in her life that contributed to the play's dialogue.



INFORMATION FOR THE SHOW

Anne Frank

Born in Germany in 1929, Anne was the youngest child to Otto and Edith Frank. She had a sister who was three years older named Margot. Adolf Hitler was rising to power creating a problem for the Franks. Anne's parents decided to move to Amsterdam in order to leave the anti-Semitism and poor economic situation. All was going well for Anne she learned Dutch and went to school not too far from where she lived. That all changed on May 10, 1940 when Nazi Germany invaded the Netherlands. Soon many places were closed to all Jews including Anne. The Otto family went into hiding in 1942. Just before they went into hiding Anne was given a diary, there she wrote about her feelings, short stories, and even started on a novel. August 4, 1944 the Annex was discovered. Anne was deported to Auschwitz where she was sent to a labor camp for women with her mother and sister. Anne and Margot were transported to Bergen-Belsen in November of 1944. There they contracted typhus, both dying in February 1945. Margot first then Anne.

Otto Frank

Otto Frank grew up in Germany. He fought in the First World War and became a decorated lieutenant. He married his wife at the age of 39 and had two children Margot (1926) and Anne (1929). He and Edith decided to move to Amsterdam in 1933 in order to create a better life for their family. Otto started a business in the Netherlands. In 1937 due to concerns of Nazi Germany he started looking into opening a branch in Great Britain. These plans never worked out. Otto's business in Amsterdam began selling spices and herbs in addition to the pectin it was selling in 1938. After the Netherlands was occupied, Otto worked hard to keep his business out of Nazi hands. In that he succeeded. Otto heard about what happened to people who were taken to work camps and tried to leave Europe. He also tried to emigrate to the US, but the time to do this ran out when the US joined the war. In 1942 Otto began to create a hiding place in an unused part of his business. This hiding place was not quite ready on July 5, 1942 when Margot got a letter to report to a labor camp in Nazi Germany. The next morning the Otto family left to go into hiding. When they were discovered in 1944 Otto was taken to Westerbork then Auschwitz-Birkenau where he was separated from his family. This is the last time he saw them. When Soviet troops were close Otto was too weak to travel and ended up in the sick bay. He was liberated on January 27, 1945. After he gained his strength back he returned to the Netherlands hoping to find his family. He learned of their death, but was given Anne's diary which was saved before the SS could get it. Otto ended up reading and then publishing it so the world would know what happened to them. He died on August 19, 1980.

Emmett Till

Emmett was born on July 25, 1941, in Chicago, Illinois. He was the only son of Mamie and Louis Till. He lost his father at the age of four and caught polio at age six. He grew up on the south side of Chicago. He was a happy child who loved to pull pranks and have fun. In the Summer of 1955 Emmett was excited to take a trip to Mississippi. He grew up hearing so many stories that he wanted to see it for himself. Before he left his mother warned him about the differences between living in Chicago vs. Mississippi, Emmett understood. The number of known lynching's in Mississippi were the highest in the country between the years of 1882-1950 coming to a total of 655. With Leflore County where Emmett was lynched had 49 reported lynching's, making it the county with the highest body count. On August 24th Emmett and his cousins went to Bryant's Grocery and Meat Market to buy candy. Carolyn Bryant was minding the store alone that day when Emmett went in. There are many versions of what happened that day. Bryant accused Emmett of whistling and grabbing at her. Four days on August 28th after visiting the store Emmett was awoken by J.W. Milam and Roy Bryant. He was taken to a shed, killed, and thrown in the Tallahatchie River. Emmett's swollen and disfigured body was discovered three days later.

Mamie Till

Mamie Till was born an only child in Mississippi in 1921. When she was around one years old her family moved to Argo, Illinois. She was the first African American to make A honor roll and the fourth to graduate from her high school. At the age of 18 she met Louis Till, they got married not to long after; both were 18. Her only child Emmett was born 9 months later. Mamie and Louis separated two years later. Louis being unfaithful and physically abusive. Mamie eventually getting a restraining order, then taking him to court for violating it. She took him to court so many times that he was forced to choose between joining the Army or going to jail. He choose the Army. In 1945 Mamie received word that he was killed while serving in Italy. Mamie put Emmett on a train to Mississippi in the summer of 1955. She warned Emmett of the differences of life down south. In August she learned of her sons disappearance and then murder. Once the body was found she insisted on her son being brought back to her in Chicago. She insisted on having the lid up at the funeral showing the world what was done to her son. Mamie went to the trail of the murderers and watched as they were acquitted. Mamie then dedicated her life to telling the world about the hate that killed her son. She died on January 6, 2003.

Translation of the Mourners Kaddish:

Glorified and sanctified be God's great name throughout the world which He has created according to His will.

May He establish His kingdom in your lifetime and during your days, and within the life of the entire House of Israel, speedily and soon; and say, Amen.

May His great name be blessed forever and to all eternity.

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EMU Multicultural Student Services Mission Statement

The mission of Multicultural Student Services is to increase awareness, cultivate inclusiveness and mutual respect of diversity and multicultural aspects of African American, Hispanic, Asian and Native American people throughout the community.

Multicultural Student Services provides an inviting environment for multicultural students at EMU. We embrace the African Proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child." We provide a place for students to develop and grow through mentoring each other, spending time together and planning and implementing programs for the campus and greater community, with the goal of affirming and celebrating diversity. Welcome to "The Village."

The office and student clubs offer annual campus wide programs and encourage the EMU and greater community to participate. Some of our offerings include: Black History Month, Latino Heritage Month, Latino Student Banquet, Town Hall on Race, Alfombra, Chapels and Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration, along with other cultural activities and various service opportunities in the greater Harrisonburg area throughout the year.

The MSS office also provides support and advocacy to American students of African, Hispanic, Asian and Native American descent (AHANA). Additionally, with guidance from staff, students are empowered to succeed academically, culturally, socially and spiritually. We assist students in recognizing, cultivating and actualizing their potential to thrive and succeed at EMU and beyond. This is accomplished through student run organizations such as the Alpha and Omega Dancers for Christ, Black Student Union, Latino Student Alliance, and, EMU Gospel Choir and most recently the addition of EMU's first fraternity, Kappa Alpha Psi, Fraternity, Inc. These clubs are advised by the director and multicultural student adviser of MSS and serve as a venue for cross-cultural experiences for the entire EMU and greater community. The communities benefit from opportunities to partake in our positive, welcoming and diverse community. For more information see emu.edu/studentlife.

Multicultural Student Services

The Multicultural Student Services office serves students who have been historically under-represented and marginalized in our country. Their presence helps enrich the campus and fosters cultural connection into daily campus life. We provide them with tools and resources to enhance their sense of belonging and help them successfully navigate the complex challenges and opportunities they may encounter during their time at EMU. Additionally, we strive to build connections with campus and community constituencies who work with and on behalf of Multicultural students to collaborate on areas of mutual concern; and strengthen cultural understanding across areas of difference, including cultural background, language, and all areas of identity. Multicultural Student Services provides educational opportunities and cultural programs that encourage members of the entire campus community to expand their cultural and global competencies.

