

Crumbs From the Table of Joy

By Lynn Nottage

Directed by Shannon Graham

PLACE: Brooklyn 1950

ACT 1 – Prologue - Winter
The Crump living room in Brooklyn

Intermission – 15 minutes

ACT 2 – Prologue - Spring
The Crump living room in Brooklyn

Epilogue - Summer

CAST

Ernestine Crump – Jessica Lane

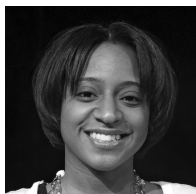
Ermina Crump – Alex Calhoun

Godfrey Crump – Stephen Claybrooks

Lily Ann Green – Kenya Cole

Gerte Schulte – Kimberly Weaver

The CAST



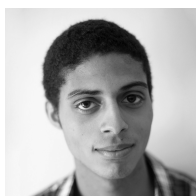
Jessica Lane (Ernestine Crump)

This is Jessica's fourth production with UAHuntsville Theatre. She will be graduating this summer with an English major and double minors in philosophy and theatre. Jessica previously appeared on stage as Ronnette in *Little Shop of Horrors*. She was Assistant Director for *The Country Club*. She also performed in *Autobahn* last fall. She is an active member of the theatre organization Alpha Psi Omega. Jessica would like to thank Shannon Graham and David Harwell for working with her over the years.



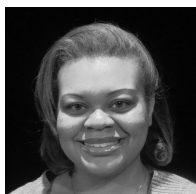
Alexis Calhoun (Ermina Crump)

Alexis is a native of Birmingham, AL, and a sophomore pursuing a dual major in nursing and Spanish at UAHuntsville. Although theatre has impacted her life in various ways, this is her first performance. She is excited about and grateful for *Crumbs From the Table of Joy*. Her ability to relate to her character has allowed her to develop a deeper love for theatre.



Stephen Claybrooks (Godfrey Crump)

Stephen studied art here at UAHuntsville. He has also been active in UAH Theatre having appeared in *Suburbia*, *Couples Counseling Killed Katie*, and *The Little Shop of Horrors*. He is very excited to be involved in this production. Stephen would like to thank his friends and family for their support and Shannon for giving him this opportunity.



Kenya Cole (Lily Ann Green)

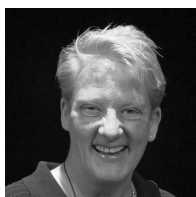
Kenya, a native of Florence, AL, graduated with a BS in biology from UAHuntsville in 2004. She is currently working toward a second Bachelors here in business administration. This is her first play, but she hopes that there will be many more to come. She would like to thank Shannon for casting her in the play and giving her this great opportunity. She would also like to thank her acting teacher from UAH, Mr. Clint Merritt, and her family for their support.



Kimberly Weaver (Gerte Schulte)

Kimberly is a senior pursuing a degree in English. This is her second show at UAHuntsville, having also appeared in *Autobahn* in fall 2010. She would like to thank Shannon, Melissa, David, Dr. Gill, and the cast for the great experience. She would also like to thank her friends for their love and support and for bearing with her as she worked out her German accent.

The PRODUCERS



Shannon Graham – Director

Shannon has been Directing shows at UAHuntsville since 2006. She studied Theatre at the University of Montevallo and UAB. Presently she is pursuing her Masters in English at UAHuntsville, and is so close to graduation—she can taste it! She is very grateful for all of the opportunities she has had to work with the students and those from the community who have participated in the productions.



Melissa Schumacher – Assistant Director

Melissa graduated from UAHuntsville last spring with a BA in psychology and a minor in theatre. As an undergrad, Melissa was very active in theatre. She was a member of Alpha Psi Omega and appeared in several shows including *All in the Timing*, *Anton in Show Business*, *Couples Counseling Killed Katie*, and *The Country Club*. She would like to thank Shannon Graham and David Harwell for this wonderful opportunity.



David Harwell – Set and Lighting Design

David is the assistant professor of theatre at UAHuntsville. He received his BFA in theatre at the University of Montevallo and his MFA in scene design from the University of Illinois, Champaign/Urbana in 1991. After many years of professional theatre in NYC, Boston, and regionally, he is happy to be back in Huntsville, his hometown. He started UAH Theatre in 2005 and serves as its director.



Johnna Doty – Sound Design

A graduate of the University of Montevallo in music, Johnna earned a sound design Master's from Boston University in 1994. She has worked professionally in NYC and regionally and was an assistant professor at the City University of New York - Borough of Manhattan Community College. A native of Florence, Alabama, she now resides in Huntsville. This is her sixth sound design for UAHuntsville Theatre.



Ian Hunter - Costume Design/Hair and Make-up

This is Ian's first year officially assisting with UAHuntsville Theater. He is currently pursuing a degree in mathematics and biology with career goals in biostatistics. He has a broad range of theatrical cosmetology experience, mainly from his recreations of movie and political icons. Many thanks go to his family for allowing him the opportunity to explore his dreams and set his own goals.



Dr. Glenda E. Gill – Dramaturge

Glenda E. Gill is a well-published theatre historian who holds a BS in English from Alabama A. and M. College, an MA in English literature from the University of Wisconsin (Madison), and a PhD in theatre and English from the University of Iowa. Dr. Gill taught two years in a local high school and forty years in college. She has spoken at more than fifty venues nationally and internationally, held a Rockefeller, four National Endowment for the Humanities summer grants, a Smithsonian Fellowship, and a Roothbert. In 2009, she taught theatre courses at UAHuntsville.

Production STAFF

Director:	Shannon Graham
Assistant Director:	Melissa Shumaker
Set and Lighting Designer:	David Harwell
Sound Design:	Johnna Doty
Sound Board Operator:	Heather Bossard
Costume Design/Hair and Make-up:	Ian Hunter
Light Board Operator:	Alex Wilson
Dramaturge:	Glenda Gill
Graphic Designer:	Susan Altman
Props:	Melissa Cavins and Heather Bossard
House Managers:	Kara Walzel and Sonia Fowler
Ushers, Set, Light and Paint Crew:	CM122 - Theatre Appreciation class
Public Relations:	Marcy Bonebright and Jonathan Curtis
Administrative/Tickets:	Donna Lamp

Special THANKS

Delois Smith – VP for Diversity
Will Hall – UC Director
Glenn Dasher – Dean of Liberal Arts
Julie Early
Sarah Cure – The Huntsville Times

Notes on the PLAY

Synopsis

Recently widowed Godfrey and his daughters, Ernestine and Ermina, move from Florida to Brooklyn for a better life. Not knowing how to parent, Godfrey turns to religion, and especially to Father Divine for answers. The girls absorb their new surroundings, but not necessarily religion. Lily, Godfrey's sister-in-law, shows up from Harlem, having promised her sister that if anything ever happened, she'd look out for the girls. Lily, while fascinating to her nieces, stands for everything Godfrey dislikes: communism, sexual freedom, and the fight against racial discrimination. As the racial and social issues of the late 1950s escalate, personal issues between Lily and Godfrey explode, prompting him to walk out. A few days later he returns with a new wife—a white German immigrant, Gerte. With Godfrey immersed in religion, Lily claiming to be a part of the new revolution, and quiet, stoic Gerte coming from the horrors of Germany, life in the household gets heated.

Historical Context

Crumbs From the Table of Joy is a memory play. Godfrey, the widowed protagonist, a baker, leaves Pensacola for Brooklyn in 1950. This was a period of great social upheaval. Senator Joseph McCarthy searched for communists under every theatrical flat. Paul Robeson lost his livelihood and Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, their lives. Television evolved. Amos 'n' Andy, a stereotypical portrayal of black people, was on the radio as well.

One per cent of African-Americans attended mainly segregated colleges. Ernestine finishing high school was a rarity. It was the era of complete segregation in the South—transportation, water fountains, rest rooms, taxis, churches, country clubs, swimming pools, schools, cemeteries, hospitals, hotels, motels, and restaurants.

Many African-Americans believed the North and West would offer better opportunities than the South. Godfrey Crumb and his two teen-aged daughters, Ernestine and Ermina, like six million others, fled the South in an often futile search for better lives. Isabel Wilkerson in *The Warmth of Other Suns* observes: “In 1950, blacks in the North and West made a median annual income of \$1,628,” or about one-third less than recent mainly Eastern European immigrants (418).

Nottage continues the tradition of portraying miscegenation on the stage: Langston Hughes's *Mulatto*, Alice Childress's *Wedding Band*, James Gow and Arnaud D'Usseau's *Deep Are The Roots*, Eugene O'Neill's *All God's Chillun Got Wings*, Lillian Smith's *Strange Fruit*, and Howard Sackler's *The Great White Hope*. Miscegenation laws in the South are well known, but the North had them as well. Punishment ranged from imprisonment to castration.

Resistance to these and other laws came in the form of communism, embraced by Aunt Lily. Further, this was an era in which women's rights were unheard of. No respectable woman smoked in public or went into the liquor store in the South. Like Lily, we were brainwashed by advertisements and social disapprobation to straighten our hair to look white.

While this play is about African Americans, the universal condition of struggle for identity, love, dignity and economic independence speaks to the human condition.

The Real Father Divine

From Chaucer's Pardoner to Sinclair Lewis's Elmer Gantry, the religious charlatan in history and literature has been generally vilified with few, if any, good qualities. However, Father Divine (circa 1876-1965) has gone down in history as a man who did a great deal of good. He is also a controversial figure in a number of ways. He declared that he was God. He served time in prison. But he fed thousands during The Great Depression for twenty-five cents a meal in Harlem. He also founded the International Peace Mission Movement. In 1942, the movement relocated to Philadelphia, PA.

Those who believed in "Sweet Father" surrendered all their material possessions and worked without pay; in exchange, Father Divine provided food and shelter. Believers who did not live in any of his communal "Heavens" were encouraged to spend money only on essentials, and then give their remaining income and assets to the Peace Mission. (Owen Dodson in *Divine Comedy* has his Apostle conduct Shedding of the Earth Meetings where lonely women give The Apostle the deeds to their homes. Dodson also emphasized the seductive church music and the new names the women get such as Sweet Cora once they come to live with the Apostle.)

In 1946, (after the death of his first wife who was black), Father Divine married Edna Rose Ritchings, a twenty-one year old white Canadian who became Mother Divine.

Godfrey is mesmerized by Father. Some question whether Father Divine practiced the celibacy he preached. What is important in this play is to realize that he has cast a mighty spell on Godfrey who lives by Father's every word, even to having a sexless marriage with a German woman, Gerte, which she accepts. To make fun of this in 2011 is easy, but to be skeptical is an error in judgment. Godfrey and many others like him truly believed in Father Divine and gave up everything to be with him. In 1950, Father was in poor health and in decline, but his powerful influence on Godfrey guides much of the thinking of this play.

- Glenda E. Gill

Who is LYNN NOTTAGE

Lynn Nottage, Playwright

Winner of a 2005 Guggenheim, a 2007 MacArthur Fellowship, the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 2009, and the Steinberg Prize for Playwriting in 2010, Lynn Nottage, an African-American woman, is a major playwright of the 21st century.

Born in Brooklyn in 1965, she graduated from Brown University and the Yale School of Drama. Nottage won an OBIE for *Fabulation*, or the *Re-Education of Undine*. *Crumbs From the Table of Joy* (1995) garnered two NAACP Theatre Awards for Performance. She is arguably best known for her play, *Intimate Apparel* (2003), about an illiterate black seamstress in 1905 New York City who falls in love with, marries, and is betrayed by an illiterate black shyster, although a Jewish man loves her as well. *Ruined* (2008) captivated audiences and won the Pulitzer Prize in 2009. It dramatizes the plight of women of the Congo surviving civil war.

Her plays have been produced by the prestigious group, The Acting Company, and Crossroads Theatre, Playwrights Horizon, Manhattan Theatre Club, Second Stage Theatre, Yale Repertory, The Goodman, The Guthrie and many others. This is the first time that UAHuntsville Theatre has performed her work.

- Glenda E. Gill

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