



## Study Guide 2019-2020



# My Lord, What a Night

By Deborah Brevoort

Florida Standards

### Language Arts

LAFS.910.RL.1: Key Ideas and Details  
LAFS.910.RH.1: Key Ideas and Details  
LAFS.1112.SL.1: Comprehension and Collaboration  
LAFS.1112.RL.1: Key Ideas and Details

### Theater

TH.912.F.2: Careers in and related to the arts  
TH.68.S.1: The arts are inherently experiential  
TH.68.S.3: Artists learn to master techniques

**PG-13**

Language, Violent References

Most appropriate for Grade 8 and up. Children under 5 will not be admitted to the theater.

# My Lord, What a Night

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# My Lord, What a Night Introduction

Educators:

Thank you for taking the time out of your very busy schedule to bring the joy of theatre arts to your classroom. We are well aware of the demands on your time and it is our goal to offer you supplemental information to compliment your curriculum with ease and expediency.

Please take a moment to explore our website at [orlandoshakes.org/education](http://orlandoshakes.org/education) for the following ways to add to your curriculum.

- “On your feet “ activities to energize students
- Shortened Shakespeare scripts that range from 60 – 120 minutes long that are perfect for school productions
- Study Guide Spotlights for quick reference to the standards addressed in each production

We look forward to hosting you at the Lowndes Shakespeare Theater. Additionally, should you wish to bring our Actor/Educators into your classroom, we will work around your schedule. Feel free to contact us at Orlando Shakes should you have any questions or suggestions on how we can better serve you. We are always learning from you.

Thank you for your tremendous work in nurturing our audiences of tomorrow.

Anne Hering  
Director of Education

Brandon Yagel  
Education Coordinator



# My Lord, What a Night Enjoying Live Theater

## Theater is a Team Sport

The **Playwright** writes the script. Sometimes it is from an original idea and sometimes it is adapted from a book or story. The Playwright decides what the characters say, and gives the Designers guidelines on how the play should look.

The **Director** creates the vision for the production and works closely with the actors, costume, set and lighting designers to make sure everyone tells the same story.



Sound Designer -  
Britt Sanducky  
Photo: Rob Jones



Stage Manager -  
Stacey Renee  
Norwood  
Photo: Rob Jones

The **Actors** use their bodies and voices to bring the author's words and the director's ideas to life on the stage.

The **Designers** imagine and create the lights, scenery, props, costumes and sound that will compliment and complete the director's vision.

The **Stage Manager** assists the director during rehearsals by recording their instructions and making sure the actors and designers understand these ideas. The Stage Manager then runs the show during each performance by calling cues for lights and sound, as well as entrances and exits.



Costume Designer -  
Denise Warner  
Photo: Rob Jones

The **Shop** and **Stage Crew** builds the set, props and costumes according to the designer's plans. The Stage Crew sets the stage with props and furniture, assists the actors with costume changes and operates sound, lighting and stage machinery during each performance.



Creative Team of The Merry Wives of  
Windsor  
Photo: Rob Jones

The **Front of House Staff** welcomes you to the theater, takes your tickets, helps you find your seat and answers any question you may have on the day of performance.

The **Theater** is where it all takes place. Orlando Shakespeare Theater In Partnership with UCF is the only professional, classical theater company in Central Florida, reaching students and audiences in the surrounding eight counties.

## Mission:

To enrich our community with engaging professional theater, inspiring educational experiences, and thought-provoking new plays.

# My Lord, What a Night Enjoying Live Theater

## The Actor/Audience Relationship

The Audience is the reason Live Theater exists. At Orlando Shakes, we cherish the Actor/Audience relationship, the unique give and take that exists during a performance which makes the audience an ACTIVE participant in the event. The actors see the audience just as the audience sees the actors, and every, laugh, snuffle, chuckle and gasp the audience makes effects the way the actor plays his next moment. We want you to be engaged, and to live the story with us!



Photo: Rob Jones

There are certain Conventions of the Theatrical Event, like, when the lights go down you know that the show is about to start, and that the audience isn't encouraged to come and go during a performance. Here are some other tips to help you and your classmates be top notch audience members:

- Please make sure to turn off your cell phones. And NO TEXTING!
- Please stay in your seat. Use the restroom before you take your seat and stay in your seat unless there is an emergency.
- Please do not eat or drink in the theater.

## Talkback

After the performance, the actors will stay on stage for about 10 minutes to hear your comments and answer any questions you have about the play and the production. We'd love to hear what you felt about the play, what things were clear or unclear to you, and hear your opinions about what the play means. This last portion of the Actor/Audience Relationship is so important to help us better serve you and enrich your artistic experience.

Consider the Themes and Key Questions above and ask yourself:

1. What Key Questions did the play answer?
2. Do you agree with everything the play said about these themes?
3. How did the actors, directors, and designers all address these themes?
4. What opinion did the artists bring to the process, did those opinion change throughout the process (designing, rehearsing, performing) and how did that impact their work?

My Lord, What a Night  
About the Play  
Meet the Playwright

**Deborah Brevoort** is a playwright and librettist from Alaska who now lives in the New York City area. She is an alumna of New Dramatists, one of the original company members of Perseverance Theatre in Juneau, Alaska and a co-founder of Theatre Without Borders, a group of individual artists dedicated to international theatre exchange.



She is best known for her play *The Women of Lockerbie*, which won the Kennedy Center's Fund for New American Plays Award and the silver medal in the Onassis International Playwriting Competition. It was produced in London at the Orange Tree, off-Broadway at the New Group and Women's Project and in Los Angeles at the Actor's Gang. It is produced all over the US and internationally. Published by DPS and No Passport Press, the play has had over 600 productions to date and is translated into nine languages.

Courtesy of [deborahbrevoort.com](http://deborahbrevoort.com)

# My Lord, What a Night

## About the Play

### Characters

#### **Albert Einstein**

The German-born theoretical physicist who developed the general theory of relativity. He fled Nazi Germany and settled in Princeton NJ where he was offered a position with the Institute of Advanced Study at Princeton University. (Jewish; Age 58.)

#### **Marian Anderson**

One of the most celebrated singers of the 20th century. She performed on concert stages around the world, but suffered discrimination at home in the United States. (African American; age: 41)

#### **Abraham Flexner**

Head of the Institute of Advanced Studies at Princeton University, he recruited Einstein to be a fellow at the Institute. (Jewish. Age: 60's)

#### **Mary Church Terrell**

A civil rights activist and suffragist who worked tirelessly to put an end to racial prejudice. One of the early foot soldiers of the civil rights movement, she helped plan Marian Anderson's historic concert at the Lincoln Memorial in 1939. (African American; age 60's but with the energy of a 30-year old.)

# My Lord, What a Night

## About the Play

### Summary

On April 16, 1937, in Princeton, New Jersey, the great African-American singer Marian Anderson gave a concert at the McCarter Theatre, and was denied a hotel room at the town's Nassau Inn. Albert Einstein, who was then teaching at Princeton's Institute for Advance Study, attended the concert, and gallantly offered Anderson the guest room in his home. Anderson accepted.

The play, directed by Kel Haney, begins with Einstein (Joel Leffert) and Anderson (Erika LaVonn) arriving in Einstein's gloriously cluttered abode, with books stacked haphazardly, everywhere, and the waste basket surrounded by crumpled pieces of paper. There's a big hole in Einstein's sweater, and his hair is a wild mop. Anderson looks like a creature from another planet, with her elegant dress and coat, big jewelry and fur stole.

Einstein is still angry at the "indignity" she suffered. Anderson says she's used to it; she's just surprised it happened in Princeton. Einstein says Princetonians aren't unenlightened, they're just rich.

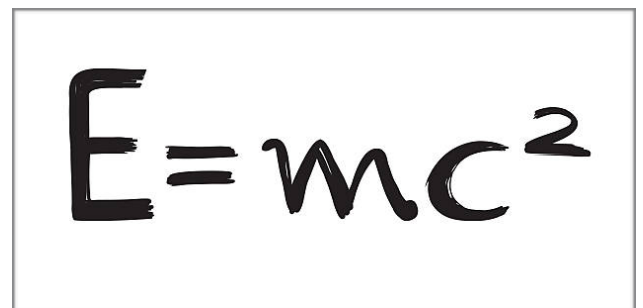
Einstein's a teetotaler ("alcohol is a recipe for stupidity, and we humans are stupid enough"), but offers her tea, and some of his prized Swiss chocolate.

Their friendly conversation is interrupted by reporters on the lawn, and the arrival of Institute for Advance Study head Abraham Flexner (Mitch Greenberg), who suggests that Anderson stay at "the colored YMCA," to avoid a scandal. Anderson seems to be open to that suggestion, but Einstein insists she stay.

Things are further complicated by the arrival of NAACP member Mary Church Terrell (Lizan Mitchell), who has suffered through her own outrageous racist incident in Princeton earlier this night, and argues that Anderson should use what happened at the Nassau Inn to rally the public behind the anti-discrimination cause. Anderson resists; "singing is my contribution," she says.

And so the four go back and forth, debating the best course of action. Even Flexner, the most unsympathetic character, is given a chance to explain himself, saying that a controversy could result in decreased donations to the Institute, and the smaller his budget is, the less he can do for Jewish scholars, like Einstein, trying to flee Europe, with World War II looming.

Eventually, Anderson decides to stay, and grants Terrell's request to sing a song: the spiritual, "My Lord, What a Morning." It's a tough assignment for LaVonn, since Anderson is such a legend, but she pulls it off, and her warm, uplifting performance becomes the play's emotional peak.

A hand-drawn equation, E=mc^2, is displayed within a rectangular border. The letters are written in a thick, black, brush-stroke style. The 'E' is on the left, followed by an equals sign, then 'm', and finally 'c' with a superscript '2'.

# My Lord, What a Night Activities

After watching the play, choose a character that you particularly enjoyed to **modernize**.

Imagine that this character is living in our modern day and in our society and answer the following questions. You may be COMICAL, but be sure to ACCURATELY represent your character's traits. You will be evaluated on creativity and EVIDENCE of your understanding of the plot and character.

1. What songs would be on his/her playlist?

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2. What would Marion order from Amazon?

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3. What phone would this character have? apple, Samsung, other?

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4. What entertainment apps would they have? what are they watching on Netflix? who do they watch on youtube if they do? whats on their Spotify playlist?

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5. What social networking apps do they have? are they on Facebook? are they on instagram? what do they post, selfies or photography?

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6. What is in their amazon shopping cart? do they have prime?

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7. What does their online dating profile look like? what in their bio? Whats their pick up line?

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# My Lord, What a Night Activities

## ***Write a Review***

Explain to students that the director's job is to take the words on the script from the printed page to the stage and bring them to life. Explain that theater critics review shows and publish their opinions. For [AmericanTheatreCritics.org](http://AmericanTheatreCritics.org), critic Sherry Eaker wrote, "My point of view was that it wasn't the theatre critic's place to tell the playwright what he or she should be doing; instead, the critic should focus on what is already there and explain either why it works or why it doesn't work."

After seeing the production, have each student write a review of Orlando Shakes' production. The review should include one paragraph each for:

- Introduction – What did you watch, where and when, and maybe, why?
- The script – Did you like the writing, the story, the characters? Why or why not?
- The acting – Did you believe and care about the characters as portrayed? Why or why not?
- The design – Did you like the set, costume and light designs? Why or why not?
- The staging – How did the director stage the violence? Was it effective?
- The audience – What ways did the audience respond to particular moments?
- Conclusion – What will you remember about this performance?

If you wish, send your reviews to us at: [anneh@orlandoshakes.org](mailto:anneh@orlandoshakes.org)

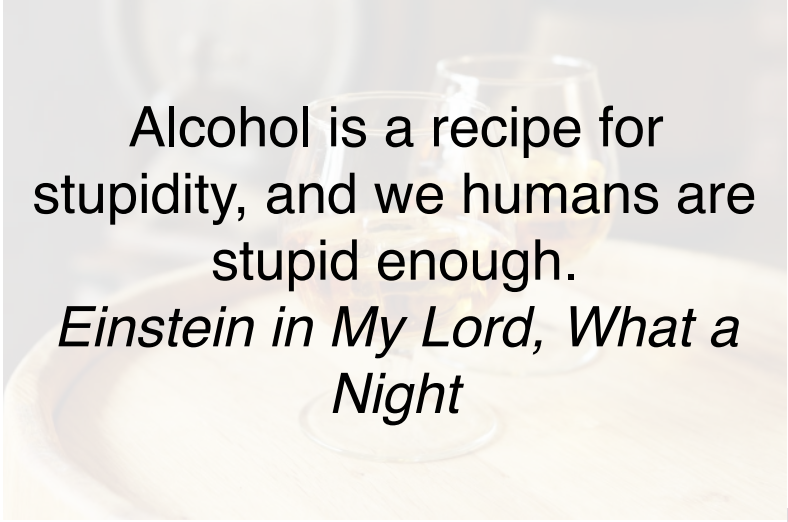
We'd love to hear your opinions of our show!

Read more: [How to Become a Theater Critic | eHow.com](http://How to Become a Theater Critic | eHow.com)



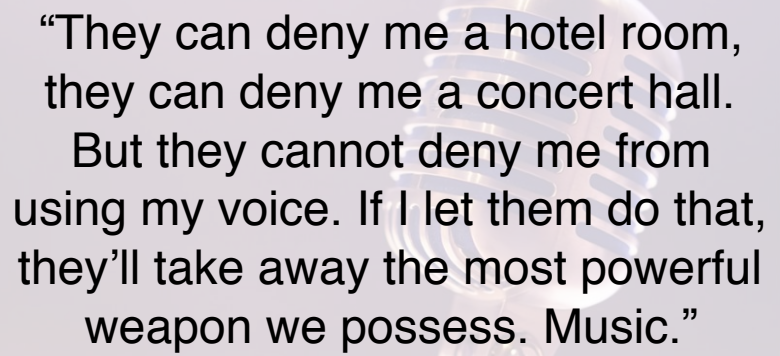
## My Lord, What a Night Discussion and Themes

Discuss the following quotes. Do you agree or disagree? Do your peers feel the same way?



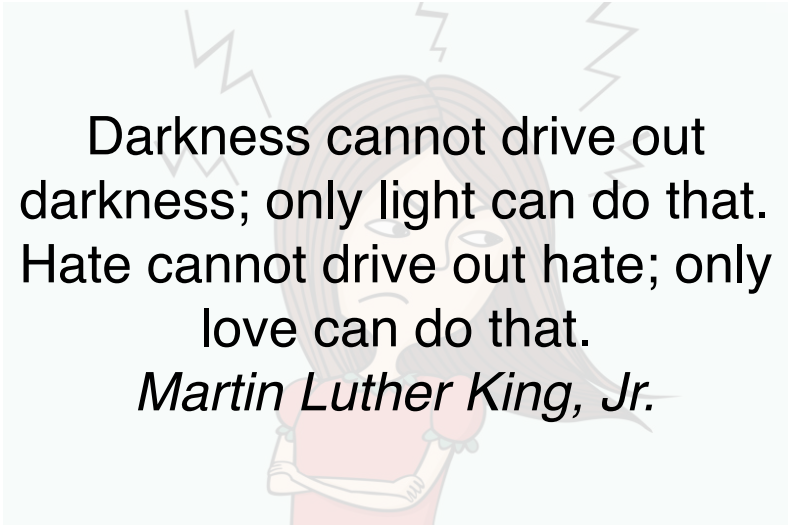
Alcohol is a recipe for stupidity, and we humans are stupid enough.

*Einstein in My Lord, What a Night*



“They can deny me a hotel room, they can deny me a concert hall. But they cannot deny me from using my voice. If I let them do that, they’ll take away the most powerful weapon we possess. Music.”

*Marian Anderson*



Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.

*Martin Luther King, Jr.*