

Workshop Reading of IN TONGUES produced by the Pacific Conservatory Theater in...



PACIFIC CONSERVATORY THEATRE



IN TONGUES



A violent femmes Musical

Music & Lyrics
Gordon Gano

Book
Matthew C Williams & Debra Barsha

VIOLENT FEMMES were one of the most successful alternative rock bands of the 1980's, selling over nine million albums by 2005. Their self-titled debut album became the first and only album in Billboard history to enter the charts as a platinum album, eight years after its release. Violent Femmes formed in 1981 as an acoustic punk band playing on the streets of Milwaukee. Their main influences at that time were Gene Vincent and the Blue Caps and the Velvet Underground. They were rejected for an audition by a local nightclub and set up outside a Pretenders gig. Chrissie Hynde asked them to open that night's show. This gave the early Femmes a publicity boost, which led to them being invited to play in NYC supporting Richard Hell. A rave review in the New York Times led eventually to a record deal, which in turn spawned worldwide touring. Their eponymous first album became the first and only album in Billboard history to enter the charts as a platinum album, eight years after its release. The Femmes became a mainstay of festivals, clubs, and theaters in over 20 countries worldwide in the ensuing three decades. MTV's "Unplugged" show was inspired by the Femmes, although they never actually appeared on it. Their raw sound and honest lyrical perspective has been cited as an influence by artists as diverse as Pink, Keith Urban, The Smiths, The Pixies, John Cusack, Mark Morris and Wim Wenders. The band released their first album in sixteen years, *We Can Do Anything* in March of 2016 with new drummer Brian Viglione of the Dresden Dolls. Violent Femmes toured last summer with the Barenaked Ladies and recently appeared on "The Late Show with Stephen Colbert" to promote the new album.

SYNOPSIS

A plantation owner named Elijah endeavors to hide his bi-racial son, Bliss, in a local Shaker society to keep him safe from his abusive uncle and co-owner of the plantation, Jeb. The ruling Shaker Eldress, Anna, states that Bliss must adopt the Shaker life of celibacy and service to God if he is to remain. Bliss agrees and is welcomed into the communal family of Shakers. His sanctuary is jeopardized, however, when he falls in love with a Shaker girl named Allison. Their romance propels Allison's overly protective sister, Hanna, to take drastic measures in an attempt to save her sister from carnal sin. Bliss and Allison must decide to either separate or be released into the outside world, where Jeb awaits to reclaim Bliss as his slave.

CHARACTERS

BLISS, Elijah's son, mixed race, appears African-American, early 20's.

ELIJAH, a white plantation owner owner, mid to late 40's

ALLISON, Anna's daughter and a Shaker sister 20's.

HANNAH, mixed-race- appears African-American, Allison's half sister, early 20's

ELDRESS ANNA, an African-American Shaker eldress, 50's

SOLOMON, a Shaker brother, late teens-early 20's JEB, Elijah's brother and plantation co-owner, 50's

ELDER JONAS- Shaker Elder, 50's

SHAKER WOMEN - (six) , Early 20's- 40's

SHAKER MEN - (six), Early 20's - 40's

PLACE

A Shaker village in South Union, Kentucky and a neighboring plantation.

TIME

1860

GORDON GANO (Composer/Lyricist) was born in Connecticut to actor parents Norman and Faye Gano. The family moved to Oak Creek, a suburb of Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1973. His father, an American Baptist minister, opened a church in Oak Creek. Rev. Gano, an accomplished actor, formed a community theater group in Oak Creek, and Gordon appeared in many of its productions, notably "Sing Out Sweet Land" in 1976. His father played guitar, and exposed his son to a wide array of musical genres, including country and western, show tunes, and gospel. Gano formed Violent Femmes in Milwaukee in 1980 with bassist Brian Ritchie and drummer Victor DeLorenzo, in which he was a guitarist, lead singer, and songwriter. They soon developed an enthusiastic following thanks to songs such as "Blister in the Sun", "Kiss Off" and "Add It

Up" (all from their self-titled debut album). The band experimented with a variety of sounds over the course of their career, such as country and western (*Hallowed Ground*) and pop-rock (*The Blind Leading the Naked*). During a Violent Femmes hiatus in the late 1980s, Gano formed a gospel-punk group called The Mercy Seat with vocalist Zena Von Heppinstall, bassist Patrice Moran, and drummer Fernando Menendez. They toured internationally for two years and released a self-titled album in 1987 on Warner Music Group's Slash Records. The album was re-released digitally in 2009 on Wounded Bird Records. Gano released his first solo album in 2002, titled *Hitting the Ground*. He shared vocal duties with various artists including Lou Reed, They Might Be Giants, Mary Lou Lord, PJ Harvey and John Cale.

DEBRA BARSHA (book/musical arranger/musical supervisor) won the Jonathan Larson Award for the score to *Radiant Baby*, (Public Theater) directed by George C. Wolfe. Composer credits: *Songs From an Unmade Bed* (NYTW), *Cookin'!* (Amas), *Sophie* (JRT), NBC's *Policewoman* Centerfold soundtrack, and her two one-woman shows *Go To Your Womb* and *A Womb With a View* (CAP21/Cherry Lane Theatre). Barsha originated roles and was the music director for the original off-Broadway companies of both *Tony 'N' Tina's Wedding* and *Charles Busch's Swingtime Canteen*. She also served as music director for the Steven Sater/Serj Tankian world premiere of *Prometheus Bound* (ART - dir. Diane Paulus). Her songs have been recorded by: George Clinton, Jackie Mason, Marty Balin and Rebecca Luker. She conducted Karen O's psycho opera *Stop the Virgens!* At St. Ann's Warehouse and at the Sydney Opera House. Barsha wrote the vocal arrangement on the Yeah Yeah Yeah's single *Sacrilege*, and Awolnation's single *I Am*. She also arranged the vocals for the album of Orange Is The New Black's star Lea DeLaria. Her new musical *A Taste of Things to Come* was produced at the Bucks County Playhouse in February. Currently, Debra is the associate conductor for Broadway's Tony award winning musical, *Jersey Boys*.

