

BEYOND THE SCORE

ISSUE FIFTEEN



CREATING
CONVERSATIONS:
THE EDITOR'S
PERSPECTIVE

BE PART OF
THE CHANGE

DIVERSITY IN
THEATER

A CLOSER LOOK AT MUSICAL THEATRE

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DIVERSITY IN THEATER



A photo from *The Wiz* which hit Broadway in 1975 and won several Tony Awards including Best Musical. *The Wiz* features an all-black cast starring in a re-imagined look at *The Wizard of Oz*. Click on the photo to see "Ease on Down the Road" from *The Wiz Live!*



Creating Conversations:

The Editor's Perspective

Dear Readers,

Over the past fourteen issues we have discussed productions, composers, choreographers, and performers who shaped theater into what we know now. The Golden Age, especially, brings so much excitement and new ideas to the world of musical theatre. While this time in history created some of the most beloved shows we know now, we were faced with a lack of diversity in performers.

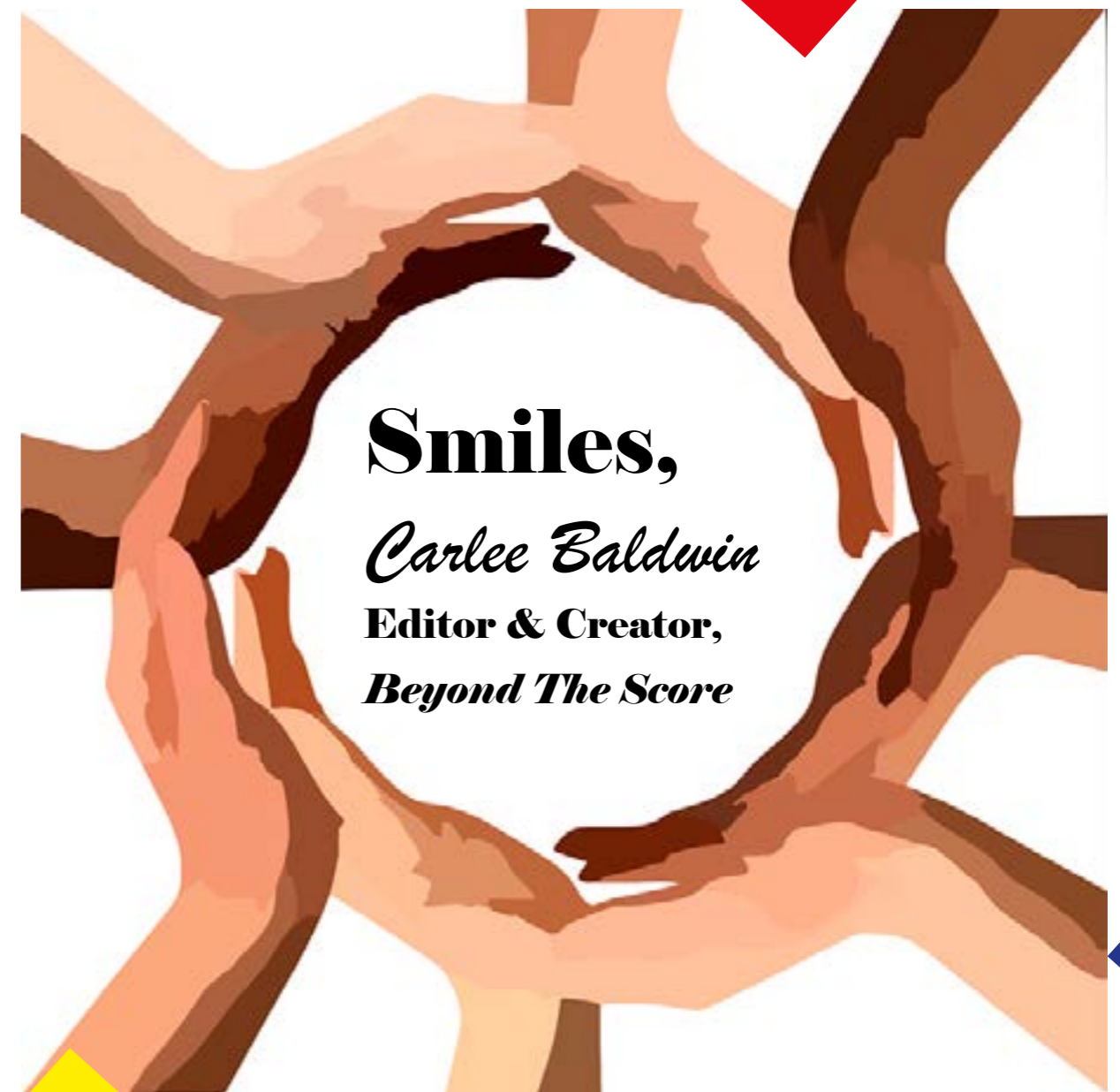
As a person of color, I recognize these issues firsthand. I was not given many opportunities as a youth to perform because I didn't look like any of the characters traditionally seen on stage. I even had instructors tell me that I'd never be able to perform because of my race. I look back on these experiences now with a lot of gratitude, even though it was hard. How could I be thankful when someone was hurting my feelings based on my looks? I'm thankful because it made me a stronger person and more aware of the issues. Those tough times have given me the strength to stand up for more diversity and be an advocate for myself.

As time has moved further and further away from The Golden Age of musical theater, more directors, composers, and performers are standing up for more diversity. There have been some musicals from The Golden Age that have been and are being revived with diverse casting choices. Though change is evident, there is still so much we can do to make sure it keeps happening. There are still many obstacles people of color are faced with in the performing arts.

My first piece of advice for anyone that wants to stand up for more diversity is to create conversations with others. If you have a question, ask it! Don't be afraid to reach out to someone you trust if there is something you don't understand. The best thing we can do is educate ourselves so we can be more aware of those around us.

I understand how tough of a conversation this can be. However, the more we talk about it, the more change that will happen, and the more opportunities will open up.

This issue is very different from what you are probably used to reading from me. Nevertheless, I felt it important to address this topic and express my thoughts and hopes for a better, more diverse theater community.



Our very own Janine Sobek Knighton, the creator of *jsk stories*, was the literary advisor and dramaturg at Arena Stage in Washington D.C. In 2010, a new interpretation of *Oklahoma!* premiered. This was a production unlike any seen before because of the diverse casting. Let's read what Molly Smith, the director, had to say about this production, thanks to Janine's discovery and research of Oklahoma in 1907.

Be a Part of the Change



“Janine Sobek, who is our wonderful dramaturg here and our literary advisor, found that *Oklahoma* in 1907 was extremely diverse. If you look back to 1897 when the Great Land Rush happened, everybody was there. The Asian people were there. (Native Americans) who had had their land taken away from them were there. White people were there. African American freed blacks were there. So in really taking the play to Washington D.C. 2010, I wanted the play to be cross-cultural because that's where we are as modern society.”

- Molly Smith, Director

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