

Finding Your Freedom at Syracuse Stage
By Dawson Carbonaro and Cara Weaver

Kyle Bass takes us on a journey through history, intertwining fact and fiction to create the complex character that is Harriet Powell. With one room and four characters, *Possessing Harriet* will make the audience feel fully immersed in the sequence of events. Directed by Tazewell Thompson, the play tells the story of a fugitive slave and her interactions with one household, leaving everyone teary eyed and inspired.

The performance of *Possessing Harriet* on October 19th was not only opening night, but the world premiere. The audience was transported to Peterboro, New York in the year 1839. The story unfolds in the attic of the Gerrit Smith estate. This set, which was beautifully laid out, physically did not change but seemed to transform with each conversation and change of mood. Not only do the characters play off of the set itself, their actions also correspond with the lighting changes. The lights change intensity to create emotional connection, dimming during the heavier scenes. Thompson directs in a way that naturally includes the physical aspects of the set.

The show runs only 90 minutes, having no intermission. However, those 90 minutes are filled to the brim with every emotion the audience could imagine. Going into the show predicting a dramatically-driven piece, the audience will be delighted as Bass exceeds expectations by mixing in comedic elements. The humor relieves tension without taking away from the heavier topics presented. Societal boundaries are tested, pushing limits and opening minds. The audience leaves the theater with new found respect for views different than theirs.

As the curtain drops, *Possessing Harriet* is not a play to soon be forgotten. The quality of the performance showcases the talents of both the cast and crew in bringing the story of Harriet Powell to the stage. This is a show that should not be missed. Buy a ticket today and find out what your freedom feels like.