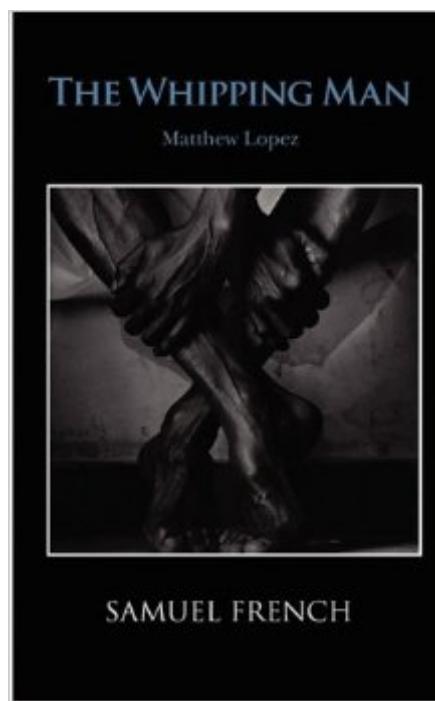


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The Whipping Man



Synopsis

Drama / Characters: 3 male It is April, 1865. The Civil War is over and throughout the south, slaves are being freed, soldiers are returning home and in Jewish homes, the annual celebration of Passover is being celebrated. Into the chaos of war-torn Richmond comes Caleb DeLeon, a young Confederate officer who has been severely wounded. He finds his family's home in ruins and abandoned, save for two former slaves, Simon and John, who wait in the empty house for the family's return. As the three men wait for signs of life to return to the city, they wrestle with their shared past, the bitter irony of Jewish slave-owning and the reality of the new world in which they find themselves. The sun sets on the last night of Passover and Simon - having adopted the religion of his masters - prepares a humble Seder to observe the ancient celebration of the freeing of the Hebrew slaves from Egypt, noting with particular satisfaction the parallels to their current situation. But the pain of their enslavement will not be soothed by this tradition, and deep-buried secrets from the past refuse to be hidden forever as the play comes to its shocking climax. The Whipping Man is a play about redemption and forgiveness, about the lasting scars of slavery, and the responsibility that comes with freedom. "A mesmerizing drama." - Peter Filichia, Newark Star-Ledger "A cause for celebration. Mathew Lopez has come as close as any author could to producing a microcosm of the genesis of a wide range of today's Black American males." - Bob Rendell, Talkin' Broadway "I can see why director Lou Bellamy chose this play for Penumbra, whose most famous alumnus is playwright August Wilson. In its complex welter of issues, in its interior explorations...The Whipping Man is Wilsonian." - Rohan Preston, Minneapolis Star-Ledger "Succeeds with an uncanny maturity in using sharply drawn characters and rich metaphor to wrestle Wilson-like with epic American issues of race, religion, and responsibility. Someone must succeed Wilson; it might as well be Lopez" - Tim Gihring, Minnesota Monthly

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The last day of the Civil War was on the first night of Passover. What better day to celebrate the freeing of slaves in the south than to commemorate the freeing of the Jews from Egypt? The irony and horror of the former black slaves of a southern Jewish family observing the seder with the son of their former(as of that day) is central to this fine play.

The play was well written and very thought provoking. We actually used it as a springboard for discussion at our family Passover celebration. I'm glad that it was taught in my son's school. They did a lovely project with it, that I'm happy to share with other readers. The students were asked to describe the symbolism in a standard seder plate; in the Whipping Man seder plate; and then to create a seder plate using their own family heirlooms and explain the symbolism regarding their own choices.

I found this play to be quite moving! The characters are engaging and the situation gripping and unique. Whatever your own faith or wherever you see yourself, this play can speak to you.

This is a Great Play, I'm planning on using it for a paper project in my Design class next year, so I'm glad it will be easy for the students to get a hold of copies.

What a well written play! The gradual and continual stream of revelations shared by these characters is a masterful construction.

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