

# PAPER MILL PLAYHOUSE

## **AUDIO DESCRIPTION NOTES – GUN & POWDER**

These description notes were provided by Janet Zoubek Dickson, audio describer, and will be shared in advance of scheduled audio-described performances.

*Gun & Powder*: the book and lyrics are by Angelica Chéri with music by Ross Baum. The scenic design is by Beowulf Boritt, the costume design by Emilio Sosa, the lighting design by Adam Honoré and sound design by Connor Wang. The music direction is by Austin Cook; the choreography by Tiffany Rea-Fisher; the show is directed by Stevie Walker-Webb.

There will be a 15-minute intermission. The setting is Texas, 1893; confederate paraphernalia is displayed during this production. Some antiquated racial language will be used. Gunshots and visible firearms will be featured throughout. Theatrical haze, fog, sparks, and strobe effects are featured in this production.

The story recounts the “mostly true” legend of Mary and Martha Clarke: Black sisters who, passing for white, go to extraordinary lengths to help pay off their mother’s sharecropping debt. Starting in the field of the Billingsley cotton plantation, the sisters soon embark on a wild west journey. Armed with their mother’s gun and a powder puff to aid in their disguise, they move from town to town to stake their claim as legendary outlaws.

## **SCENERY**

As you enter the theater, the show curtain is down. The proscenium is framed with orange filigree (ornamental tracing) over black. In the center of the top of the proscenium is filigree with an eagle in the center. At the top of the curtain are two black semicircles. The left says “GUN and the right says “POWDER. In the center, in a diamond shape, is an ampersand joining the two. The letters are large and orange.

Under the words “Gun & Powder” are two large orange circles and silhouettes of the faces of Mary and Martha Clarke. They face each other, Mary on the left holding a powder puff, and Martha on the right holding a smoking gun. Below the silhouettes is a scalloped black banner, with the words “The Legend of Mary & Martha Clarke” in orange. At the bottom is another black banner, a map of old Texas with “Texas” in orange on the left and the flag of Texas with “1893” below it in orange.

The outside of the proscenium is framed in a filigree design, interwoven lines that have a lacy look. As the musical opens, a man plays drums as “the Kinfolk” sing, moving to the Billingsley

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Cotton Plantation with vertical lines of cotton from back to front. The background shows rolls of tumbleweed with a dark, stormy sky above. The background will light up in different colors, purple, blue, orange, white.

We move through scenes at a train station where the travelers sit on suitcases waiting for the train, to a teller's booth at a bank, to a Confederate auction and then to the Boneyard Saloon. Occasionally, large flats that span the height of the stage will slide in from left and right, meeting center, to cut the depth of the stage in half to facilitate transitioning between locations.

Two large wooden units make up the saloon. The wood is dark and rustic. In the center is an arched entrance to the saloon stage, draped with a scarlet red velvet curtain. The arch is framed with gold filigree. The left unit has stairs leading up to a second level, open for guests to watch the show. Mirror unit on the right, with stairs next to the stage leading up to an open second level - both levels are framed with a dark wooden railing.

In the next scene, the units are turned around to create a hotel suite. Below the railed second levels are open rooms, two on the left and one on the right. Each room has a red curtain and a gold curtain tied together in the middle on each side of the room. On the right, in the living room is a Victorian settee with dark curved ornamental wood and beige tufted seat and back. In the room to your right is a gold-covered round table; a suitcase next to it.

A nighttime picnic under a full moon is next. To the left is a white wrought iron bench. On the ground to the right is a green and white squared blanket.

In another scene, there is an outline of a church, its steeple rising to the skies.

## CAST & CHARACTERS

**The Kinfolk** are a group of Black women and men who act as a Greek chorus in this musical. Their songs are commentaries on what is happening, and they will wear various outfits.

**Tallulah Clarke**, mother of Mary and Martha Clarke, is played by Jeannette Bayardelle. She is a Black woman of medium height. She wears a light blue blouse over a brown skirt, with a brown and white horizontally striped apron. Her dark hair is arranged on top of her head.

**Mary Clarke** is played by Ciara Renée, a tall light skinned Black woman. She has dark hair in braids falling down her back. She wears a pink long-sleeved blouse over a pink ankle length skirt with tiny pleats at the hem.

**Martha Clarke**, Mary's twin, is played by Liisi LaFontaine. She is a light skinned Black woman with dark braids falling down her back, slightly shorter than Mary. She wears a white blouse over a mint green ankle length skirt with tiny pleats at the hem.

They both wear long, full brown aprons and carry burlap bags to start. Throughout the show, the sisters will wear a variety of blouses and ankle length skirts. As they leave Marlin, Texas, they will forgo the braids for letting their hair down their backs or putting it in a chignon on top of their heads. Their costumes run from light colored skirts, blue and pink and white horizontal stripes. For Martha, a blue dress with fringe and then to a red ankle-length skirt and white blouse with a vest with a white background and darker horizontal stripes. For Mary, a white blouse and brown skirt with a muted white band around the bottom.

**Jesse Whitewater** is played by Hunter Parrish. He is thin white man, 5' 7", with dirty blond hair, a scruffy beard, and sideburns. He wears a three-piece gray suit, with the jacket coming to his thighs.

**Elijah**, Jesse Whitewater's assistant, is played by Aaron James McKenzie. He is tall Black man with milk chocolate skin and an athletic build. His face is slightly angular with high cheek bones, moderate sized eyebrows, and larger sized nose and lips. He is in his late 20's and has short curly hair with a part on the right side in alignment with his temple. He is first seen in a white shirt, black pants with black suspenders and then changes to a light brown suit.

**Sissy and Flo**, played Aurelia Williams and Zonya Love respectively, are Jesse Whitewater's housekeepers. Sissy is a tall, African-American woman with medium-brown skin, ample build, and dark brown hair in a rolled up-do. Flo is a shorter Black woman of ample build, with a similar rolled up-do for her dark hair. They wear uniforms of dark gray with white cuffs and collar and ruffled full white aprons.

**Fannie Porter**, a saloon performer, is played by Katie Thompson. She is a tall, full-figured white woman with dark orange hair pulled atop her head with a long curl hanging down the back and over her shoulder. She wears a knee-length, layered, emerald-green saloon dress with small tassels along the bottom hem, matching green fingerless opera gloves, short heels, and a gold necklace draped across her décolletage.