



**celebrate Pride!**

candles CIVIL UNION jewelry  
 stickers gifts, t-shirts, hats, hammocks  
 pillows, soap  
 books

peace justice store

Open Seven Days • 863-8326 • 21 Church Street, Burlington





Psychoanalysis Pastoral Counseling  
 Individuals & Couples Jungian orientation

9 Center Court River Road,  
 Northampton MA Putney VT  
 413-584-2442 802-387-5547

Janet Langdon, Mdiv, NCPsyA

jliesl@sover.net



**Robin N. Kitay, REALTOR®**  
 Exclusive Buyer Agent  
 Licensed in New Hampshire and Vermont

86 Newport Road, New London, NH 03257  
 393 Hanover Center Road, Etna, NH 03750

Office: (603) 526-2022  
 Toll Free: (800) 725-4224  
 Cellular: (603) 304-9295  
 Fax: (603) 526-2092  
 robin.kitay@buyersresource.com



"Serving homebuyers in the community with pride."

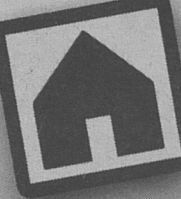
**Hardwick Chiropractic**  
 54 School Circle  
 East Hardwick, VT 05836  
 802-472-3033  
 www.bgivernmont.net



**Montpelier Chiropractic**  
 58 East State Street  
 Montpelier, VT 05602  
 802-223-2967  
 www.bgivernmont.net

Gentle, Effective Health Care

**Dr. Grace Johnstone**      **Dr. Rick Eschholz**



**EFI EASTERN FUNDING INC**

SERVING THE VERMONT AND NEW HAMPSHIRE COMMUNITIES' REFINANCE AND MORTGAGE NEEDS.

120 So. Main Street  
 West Lebanon, NH 03784

NH (1) 888.238.0228  
 VT (1) 877.768.5326

**Linda MacCoy**  
 Mortgage Originator

# Ch - ch - changes

## Kevin McAteer looks at Tony Kushner's Broadway musical Caroline, or Change as literature.

"I have an S&M relationship with deadlines," Tony Kushner, the Pulitzer-prize winning playwright, admitted to a packed audience earlier this year during his visit to Middlebury College. "It's like we're all in this kind of leather bar, suffering together," he joked. "I'm trying to get out of it now."

Kushner, who may be self-flagellating when it comes to deadlines, has no problem with being prolific, or in reaping awards – his latest coup is *Caroline, or Change*, the Broadway musical that won two Tony Awards after being nominated for six. The Broadway debut of *Caroline, or Change* arrived on the heels of the film version of his award-winning play *Angels in America, Parts I & II*, which aired on HBO to critical acclaim.

Kushner admitted, "I'd like to work more methodically – not make coffee, clean the apartment, not read e-mail or *The New York Times* but to sit down with a glass of water and write for an hour – to disengage the part of my brain that says: this is horrible." As with much of Kushner's more popular work, there is little to find horrible in the original Broadway cast recording of *Caroline, or Change* (2004, Hollywood Records).

Writing the lyrics to a musical has been Kushner's longtime dream. Knowing this I decided to read the lyrics first, without listening to the recording. The dialogue, almost entirely sung, is classic Kushner: each word has some role in seamlessly connecting scenes and yet, at the same time, tackles multiple issues – race, class, religion, politics. The writing in *Caroline, or Change* seems even tighter and quicker than some of his earlier work. Perhaps this was a necessary tactic to assist musical collaborator and composer Jeanine Tesori.

*Caroline, or Change* tells

the story of Caroline Thibodeaux, a 39-year-old, divorced black maid working for a Jewish family in New Orleans. The first scene opens in November 1963, when President Kennedy was shot and the Civil Rights Movement was actively pushing its agenda forward. Caroline spends much of her time in the basement (a rare luxury for a New Orleans home) where she does the laundry. Noah, the young son of the family for whom Caroline works, befriends Caroline. His stepmother is scolding him for leaving change in his pockets (it's a temptation for "the help" to steal). Caroline returns the money, but then the stepmother insists she keep it to teach Noah a lesson about his bad habit. This simple conflict provides a rich resource of possibilities and additional layers of conflict for Kushner to build this remarkable play.

The production, of course, is threaded through with Kushner's sharp humor. In the first act his father offers young Noah, who can't seem to keep the extra change he has already, an additional allowance, if he would help Caroline with the groceries – something he would probably do willingly without pay. Noah is not fooled by dad's hidden agenda: he thinks Noah should save the extra money to buy a chemistry set, just like Dad wanted when he was young. "Buy buy buy buy buy!" Noah shouts back at his father, along with his own shopping list: "Bubblegum cigarettes / sea monkeys / comic books / Barbie Doll dresses on the sly!"

The play features the two stratified family structures: the white, well-intentioned liberal, upper middle-class family; and the black maid who works for them all day only to go home to face the realities of raising her own three children. Kushner's lyrics connect the two families' common struggles, leaving the listener wondering who is better off.

Emmie, Caroline's daughter – played by Tony Award winning actress Anika Noni Rose – offers an alternative perspective for her mother, who struggles with the obedient-maid role. After learning of Kennedy's assassination, Emmie tells her mother, "Say he do *stuff* for us, / get our vote, he just ignore us, / same old story, mama, same tired old lie. / ... I ain't got no tears to shed / for no dead white guy"

Meanwhile, young Noah, who is mourning the early death of his mother, struggles to find reasons to love his father, whose own grieving has weakened his relationship with his only child. Very early in the first scene Kushner establishes young Noah's admiration for Caroline: "the President of the United States / ... Caroline, who's stronger than my dad!" For Noah, Caroline is more of a mother-figure than his stepmother and certainly the leading adult figure in his life. Upon learning of Kennedy's death he asks her, "What're you gonna do now / that President Kennedy's dead? / Now you're the only President in the United States." Loss is a predominant theme throughout the script, and Kushner uses it to eloquently tie the stories of the two families together.

The *Caroline, or Change* soundtrack features compositions that embrace Kushner's lyrics, richly wrapping them together. Although I have yet to see *Caroline, or Change* performed on stage, the combination of Kushner's powerful writing and Tesori's elegant musical choices offers a visual richness that makes me feel as though I were seated at the Eugene O'Neil Theater watching this story of America in the 1960s unfold. ▼

*Kevin McAteer has his own S&M relationship with deadlines in Bristol.*