



# ‘Master Harold’ at KCAT play revisits Apartheid

## KANSAS CITY ACTORS THEATRE

Kansas City Actors Theatre

The current production on City Stage, produced by Kansas City Actors Theatre, “Master Harold and the Boys” takes the audience to 1950 in South Africa, and gives a glimpse into life under Apartheid.



Brian Paulette/Kansas City  
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The story takes place in a small tea shop, located in Port Elizabeth, South Africa. The story revolves around two African workers in the tea shop and Hallie, a. k. a. Harold. After school, on a rainy afternoon, Hallie enters and sees there has been no business due weather conditions. Sam and Willie, to fill their spare time, practice ballroom dancing, specifically the Fox Trot, for an annual competition that approaches.

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Ballroom dancing represents perfection, order, discipline, placement, deportment, restraint, and peace. Those characteristics come into play as Sam has mastered them. Willie struggles to grasp some, but Hallie has never learned those concepts. None of those characteristics reside in young Hallie's world. Hallie is young, privileged, and white.



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"Master Harold" and the boys looks at the concept of white privilege in the Apartheid world of South Africa. Hallie's upbringing slowly surfaces as the play uncovers his past through stories and memories of his early years. The audience learns of Willie's struggles to find his balance and move forward in his quest to win a ballroom dance cup.

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The story, a one-act play, is really a character study of individuals from opposing worlds. Director Gary Heisserer selected a strong cast for this production. The cast is led by Walter Coppage who has yet to find a role he cannot master. He is flanked by two younger thespians, Arthur Clifford, who continues to build his KC resume; and Kalif Gillett, a recent MFA graduate of UMKC Theatre.



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The trio works beautifully together. Sam delivers knowledge to the others by way of his action both past and present. Willie continues to learn the life lessons; Hallie struggles to understand. Arthur Clifford presents a really good take on the character of a stubborn, spoiled, rich-kid who seems to possibly have a Oedipus-complex. He detests his father and wants him to remain hospitalized.



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Kalif Gillett appears an outwardly friendly man with dreams and a goal, but with women, he's abusive. His character represents chaos with hope and direction of order. He's a work in progress. Gillett does a nice job of this multi-faceted character.

"Master Harold and the Boys" played almost 350 performances on Broadway in its initial run. For a drama, that's not a bad run. The show, though is somewhat dated being set in 1950 and in a society Americans do not know. Racial conflict exists. This is another version, just in another country. The prevailing message: In all cases, racial discrimination needs eradicated.



Brian Paulette/Kansas City Actors Theatre

Athol Fugard's play is creatively staged by Kansas City Actors

Theatre and directed by Gary Heisserer. The creative team for this journey into Apartheid is: Marisa Tejeda, assistant director; Jordan New, costume designer; Gary Moby, scenic designer; Jonathan Robertson, sound design, Kris Carked, lighting designer; Deborah Morgan, properties designer; Kyle Dyck, technical director; Sarah M. Oliver, production manager; Shelley K. Jidd, choreographer; Tracy Salter, dialect coach; Adam M. Fuller, stage manager; Morgan Lynn Starrett, assistant stage manager; Page Stalls, wardrobe mistress; Matt Sambac, director of marketing & development; Carolyn Wheeler, house manager.

[Bob Evans](#) | KC Applauds



“Master Harold and the boys” runs Sept. 11 – 29 on City Stage at Union Station. Tickets, dates, times, prices, and more information can be found on the [Kansas City Actors Theatre website](#).

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