

Chapter 1 : Tambourines to Glory Broadway @ Little Theatre - Tickets and Discounts | Playbill

Tambourines to Glory is a gospel play with music by Langston Hughes. It tells the story of two female street preachers who open a storefront church in Harlem.

The metaphor starts with the realization of the double use of the tambourine. First, the musical instrument is used as an inexpensive and simple accompaniment to street-corner singing, a way to help attract a crowd and keep that crowd involved. Essie and Laura are women on the edge. They live in tight quarters on a tight budget. What more could they need? And with this, the two women, whom Hughes patiently describes as two different sides of a similar coin, set off to convert their neighborhood. Their motives may have been somewhat related to each other at the beginning of their venture but as the story develops, it is their expanding differences that stretch them far apart, inevitably forcing their connection to snap. Essie is a pious woman, innocent and full of love. And when she sings, people stop to listen and eventually join in. Essie is the musical side of the tambourine. Her rhythm is smooth and steady. And the songs she sings are soothing and uplifting. She makes the people around her want to forget their troubles, turn their hearts to God, and believe. Sinners repent, and the psychologically wounded begin to heal. As musical as Essie is, she is like the tambourine in another way too. She needs to be played. She sits all day, alone in her apartment, doing nothing to better herself. She is lonesome but does nothing to ease that pain. She misses her daughter, but does not work toward bringing her child to her. She just sits in a corner and collects dust. Someone needs to pick her up, turn her around, and pump the music out of her. Laura is the motivator. No matter what she does, she is always asking someone to help her. It is not that she is incapable of taking care of herself, but she is better at prompting others to nourish her. She sleeps with men who buy her presents. And when she begins to preach, it is not redemption of lost souls that she is seeking. She preaches to make people believe that in giving her money they will be saved. Laura is manipulative and uncaring and hollow. Whereas Essie is open and honest, Laura always has a scheme. Laura is the tambourine turned on its head. They listen to Laura and think they are hearing the music of God talking to them. In gratitude for inspiring them, they dig into their pockets when Laura passes through the crowd with her concave tambourine, and they do their best to fill it up. At first, only nickels and dimes drop into the tambourine. The more Laura gets, the more she wants. There is one big difference, however, between a real tambourine and Laura. They start out with one tambourine and one bible. So why does Hughes use the plural form? What other tambourine is he referring to? Maybe he uses the concept of more than one tambourine to exemplify the differences in the two main characters, anticipating the eventual split between Essie and Laura at the end of the novel. And if this is so, then his meaning of glory more than likely reflects two different definitions. Glory for Essie implies The entire section is 1, words. [Unlock This Study Guide Now Start your hour free trial to unlock this page Tambourines to Glory study guide and get instant access to the following:](#)

Chapter 2 : Tambourines to Glory

Tambourines to Glory introduces you to an unlikely team behind a church whose rock was the curb at th and Lenox. Essie Belle Johnson and Laura Reed live in.

His first, *Not without Laughter*, was published in , almost thirty years earlier. It tells the story of two women, the religious Essie Belle Johnson and her conniving friend Laura Reed, who open a storefront church in Harlem. Essie sincerely wants to use her beautiful singing voice to bring people to God, and hopes to make enough money through the church to bring her daughter up from the South to live with her. But Laura wants only the money, which she uses for gambling, drinking, and attracting young men. The novel is rich with the spoken and sung voices of the African American community of Harlem, and derives its humor from the lively and generally appealing scoundrels who twist religion and morals for their own earthly gain. Hughes had written a musical play version of *Tambourines to Glory* in , and he changed the story only slightly to create the novel. His unusual middle name had been the birth name of his mother, a teacher. His father was a lawyer and businessman. Hughes grew up mainly in Lawrence, Kansas, a lonely child drawn to reading and writing. His first poem, "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," was published in the June issue of the magazine *Crisis*, edited by the sociologist and political leader W. After a year at Columbia University in New York , Hughes took simple jobs, traveled around the world, and continued to publish poems. He returned to the United States in , already recognized as one of the most talented young African American poets in the movement known as the Harlem Renaissance. Hughes thrived in the atmosphere of Harlem, soaking up jazz and blues music, leftist politics, and racial pride. Within the next six years he would graduate from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania and publish two highly regarded collections of poems, *The Weary Blues* and *Fine Clothes to the Jew* , and a novel, *Not without Laughter* . Through the next twenty-five years Hughes published more poetry, some of it rather radical politically, as well as plays, short stories, essays, and a weekly newspaper column. His writing explored and celebrated the African American experience, often incorporating musical elements and themes. Throughout this period, Hughes won writing contests and received fellowships and grants to help support his work. Although he was an important and respected writer, Hughes never enjoyed financial security until the late s, when he wrote the lyrics for a successful musical theater production. For the first time, he was able to own his own home. He hoped to repeat that success in with a new play, *Tambourines to Glory*, which he rewrote and published as a novel in . However, the novel did not sell well and the play lost money. By the s, with a new Civil Rights movement led by a new generation of men, African Americans regarded Hughes more highly as a historic figure than as a writer of significant new work, although he continued to publish. Hughes died of congestive heart failure on May 22, , in New York City. His last poetry, about civil rights , was published after his death.

Plot Summary Chapter 1 *Tambourines to Glory* is divided into thirty-six chapters, each a separate scene with its own title. The first, " Palm Sunday ," is the longest at six pages, and it introduces the main characters, the setting, and the idea that triggers the plot. On a Palm Sunday in Harlem, two friends are reminiscing over their younger days when they attended church occasionally. Both are about forty, living in one-room kitchenette apartments in a run-down building, and barely getting by on welfare. Essie dreams of having enough money to bring her daughter Marietta up from Virginia to live; Laura thinks only of the next drink, the next bet on the numbers, and the next man. Playfully, they discuss opening a church and getting rich off the collection plate. As they sing a hymn they are uplifted for a moment, and Essie is moved to strengthen her relationship with God. Chapters 2-5 The next morning, Essie tells Laura that she really intends to start a church. She believes that God will answer their prayers, and that he has already touched her life. Laura is willing, though she sees the church only as a way to get money. They agree that when the weather is warm they will buy a Bible and a tambourine and start praising on the street corner. Laura will preach, Essie will sing, and they will use the tambourine to keep time and to gather collections. Chapters 6-8 With a tambourine from the Good Will Store, the Reed Sisters, as they call themselves, offer their first worship service at the corner of th Street and Lenox. The two dozen people who stop to hear them are moved enough to join in the singing, shout "Amen," and throw some change in the tambourine. They think she can

help them, and she wonders whether it is true. Chapter 9 The church is a success. Laura tells the crowds that "since God took my hand, I have not wanted for nothing. She is so energetic and rhythmic that she draws in more people. Although Laura does not like sharing the spotlight, she sees that letting Birdie Lee stay with them is good for business. Like many chapters, this one is sprinkled with snatches of lyrics from the hymns sung by Essie, Laura, and Birdie Lee. Chapters 10–13 As autumn begins, Essie, Laura, and Birdie Lee find a three-room apartment to house their church. The first convert in the new location is Chicken Crow-for-Day, a lifelong gambler, drinker and womanizer. His conversion draws others. She is still uneasy about the church. She can see that she and Laura are doing some real good in the lives of other people, and she herself feels more energetic and engaged than ever before. But she knows that for Laura it is all just a scam. Essie wonders whether they are truly serving God. Buddy is handsome, sophisticated, flashy and young, and Laura is flattered and excited to be seen with him. Before long, Buddy spends most nights with Laura, and has gotten her to go along with a plan to sell tap water as blessed Holy Water from the Holy Land. Essie and Laura will never meet him, but he will do favors for them and look for ways they can help him as well. Media Adaptations The novel *Tambourines to Glory* was adapted by Hughes from his own musical play of the same title, with songs by Jobe Huntley. Music from the play was recorded in on *Tambourines to Glory: The original recording was Folkways album FG* Chapters 16–18 Marty gets Essie and Laura an apartment on the ninth floor of a new building overlooking the park, jumping them ahead of all the people on the waiting list. Essie is more uncomfortable than ever with Buddy and Marty in the picture. She refuses to accept any of the proceeds from the holy water, so Laura uses it to buy a Cadillac. Chapters 19–20 Almost a year after the church began, it is the largest independent church in Harlem, and has outgrown its quarters. Marty arranges for Laura and Essie to take possession of a condemned theater that could never pass a fire inspection, and the Tambourine Temple is born. The new church seats a thousand people, and has a marquee where Laura can enjoy seeing her name in lights. Essie has been studying the Bible and reading other religious books. She is a true believer, and she hopes that Laura will start to believe also. Chapters 21–28 Marietta arrives to live with her mother and Laura. She is sixteen, innocent and lovely, and Buddy is attracted to her immediately. Marietta is also courted by C. Meanwhile, Marty has Laura begin a new practice of calling out "lucky texts" from the Bible, and slyly encouraging the congregation to bet on those numbers during the week. To keep suspicion off Laura and Buddy, Buddy pretends to be converted during a service, but Essie sees through him. As Laura adds a fur coat and a chauffeur to her lifestyle, she and Essie grow farther apart. Finally, Essie and Marietta move to a small house of their own in the suburbs, coming to town only for services. Chapters 29–35 Just before a service one night, Laura notices a hundred dollars missing from her purse. She confronts Buddy, who admits without remorse that he has taken it and savagely tells her that she would be too old to hold his interest without her money. When the body is found, Essie is suspected, and Laura joins in accusing her. Eventually Birdie Lee testifies to having witnessed the crime, and Laura confesses. Before the police take her away, she moves all her cash into the church bank account. Essie preaches and sings, praising God, and shakes the tambourine to the glory of God. She had followed God in her younger days, but since then she "backslid, backslid, backslid. She grabs the tambourine, sings a song of praise, and shakes the tambourine "so well that the whole corner started to rock and sway, feet to patting, hands to clapping. Birdie Lee is a faithful member of the church, helping with the scrubbing when they move the church into the apartment, and joining in the rejoicing when Crow-for-Day is converted. Birdie Lee saves Essie from prison and makes up for all her past sins by promising to testify once more and tell what she saw. He is in his first year at City College, studying chemistry, and is sweet and polite if a little dull. When Marietta comes to Harlem, he is the natural one to court her. As the two fall in love, C. By the end of the novel, the two are engaged to be married. Chicken Crow-for-Day Chicken Crow-for-Day—tall, thin, and aged sixty-five—is the first person converted after the Reed Sisters open their church indoors. By his own account, he has been a life-long sinner, who spent his time drinking, gambling and chasing women. Dramatically, as he announces his salvation before a crowd, he pulls a pistol and a knife out of his pockets and flings them through the window into the street. With the support of the congregation, he apparently does change his life. Crow-for-Day stays with the church as it grows, eventually earning the titles "Brother" and "Deacon. She came up North from Richmond, Virginia, years ago,

and has been trying ever since to get together enough money to bring her daughter to live with her. Essie does not have much education or many skills, and she is passive, prone to sitting and staring at the wall in "long, long, very long pauses," but she has a beautiful singing voice. When she and her friend Laura start to joke about starting a church as a way to raise money, Essie thinks and prays about it and makes a sincere connection with God. She and Laura do form a church, with Laura preaching and Essie singing, and they make a success of it. Even before she decided to pray, Essie lived a quiet life. She did not drink or gamble or chase men. Her only close tie was with Laura, who lived quite a different life. For five years, Essie and Laura have been neighbors and friends, sharing scraps of food and looking after each other in spite of their differences.

Chapter 3 : Tambourines to Glory | www.nxgvision.com

Arena Players' Tambourines to Glory is directed by Alexis M. Skinner and features several songs penned by Hughes himself in this production. The Arena Players, located at McCulloh Street since , is the oldest continuously operating African American community theatre in the United States.

Chapter 4 : Tambourines to Glory (Play) Plot & Characters | StageAgent

Tambourines to Glory is a short novel—barely one hundred pages in the Collected Works of Langston Hughes edition—yet it is divided into thirty-six chapters, several just over a page long. Most of the chapters are self-contained, small glimpses into brief moments in the lives of the characters.

Chapter 5 : Tambourines to Glory Essays and Criticism - www.nxgvision.com

Tambourines to Glory introduces you to an unlikely team behind a church whose rock was the curb at th and Lenox. Essie Belle Johnson and Laura Reed live in adjoining tenement flats, adrift on public relief.

Chapter 6 : Tambourines to Glory - Wikipedia

Tambourines to Glory (Play, Original) opened in New York City Nov 2, and played through Nov 23,

Chapter 7 : Tambourines to Glory | Revolv

Tambourines to Glory in Baltimore, MD. A musical comedy and gospel play with music by Langston Hughes.

Chapter 8 : Arena Players Incorporated events, shows, and tickets

About Tambourines to Glory. Finally available in trade paperback, Langston Hughes's breezy parable of good and evil, friendship and betrayal, is an unforgettable portrait of s Harlem and two women called to the pulpit for very different reasons.

Chapter 9 : Tambourines to Glory (Audiobook) by Langston Hughes | www.nxgvision.com

Tambourines To Glory is a musical play written in In , Hughes turned the play into a novel. In , Hughes turned the play into a novel. The story centers on two female preachers who open a storefront church in Harlem.