

**2021-2022 Theatre Season
A Year of Unlikely Heroes**

**Blinn College Division of Arts, Kinesiology & Agriculture
Brenham Campus**

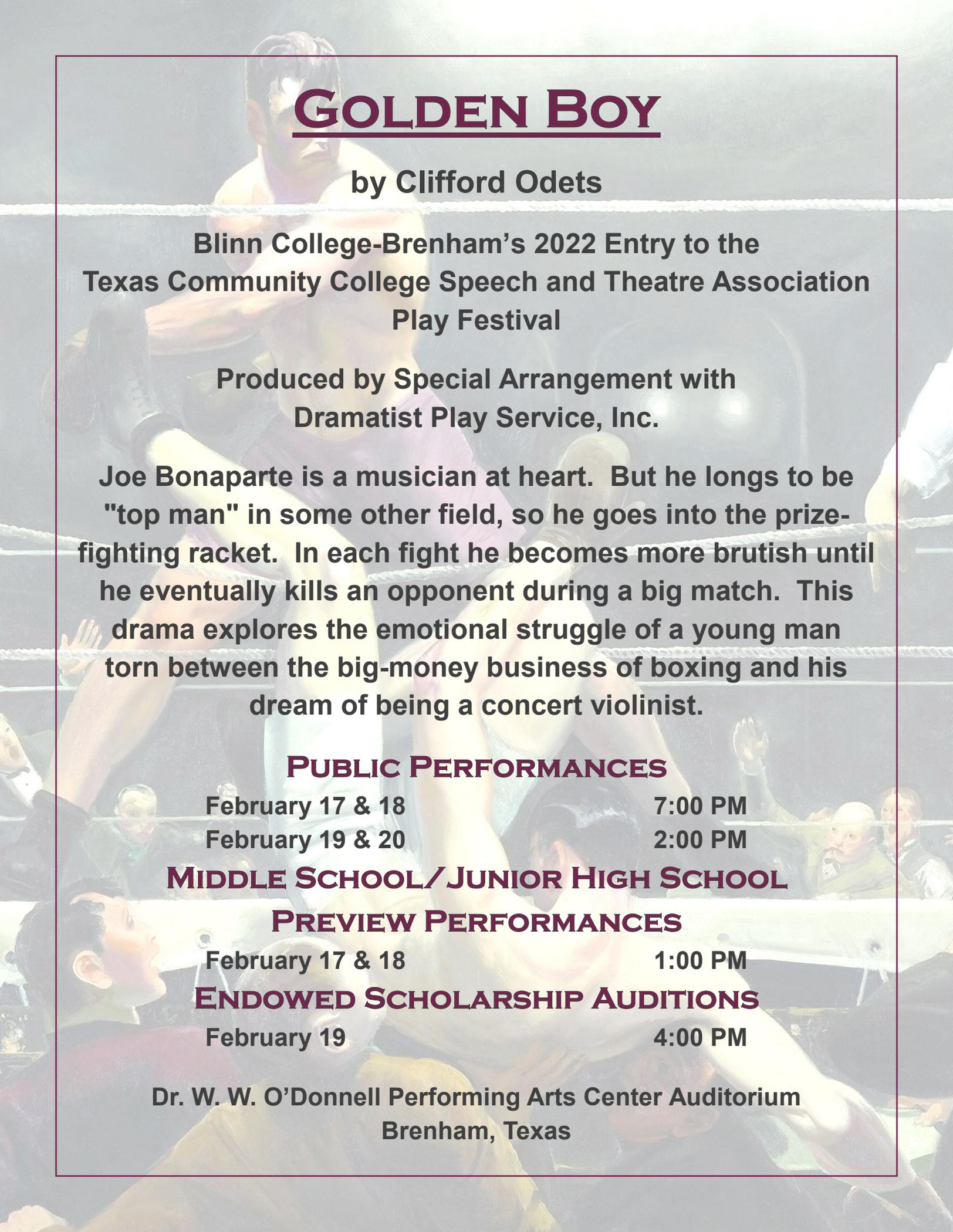
GOLDEN BOY

**by
Clifford Odets**

**Directed by Brad Nies
Technical Direction by Kevin Patrick
Costume, Makeup & Hair Design by
Jennifer Patrick**

RESOURCE GUIDE

This resource guide serves as an educational starting point to understanding and enjoying Clifford Odets' *Golden Boy*. With this in mind, please note that the interpretations of the theatrical work may differ from the original source content.



GOLDEN BOY

by Clifford Odets

Blinn College-Brenham's 2022 Entry to the
Texas Community College Speech and Theatre Association
Play Festival

Produced by Special Arrangement with
Dramatist Play Service, Inc.

Joe Bonaparte is a musician at heart. But he longs to be "top man" in some other field, so he goes into the prize-fighting racket. In each fight he becomes more brutish until he eventually kills an opponent during a big match. This drama explores the emotional struggle of a young man torn between the big-money business of boxing and his dream of being a concert violinist.

PUBLIC PERFORMANCES

February 17 & 18

7:00 PM

February 19 & 20

2:00 PM

MIDDLE SCHOOL/JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

PREVIEW PERFORMANCES

February 17 & 18

1:00 PM

ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP AUDITIONS

February 19

4:00 PM

Dr. W. W. O'Donnell Performing Arts Center Auditorium
Brenham, Texas



CLIFFORD ODETS

Born in Philadelphia to Romanian-Jewish immigrants in 1906, Clifford Odets was raised in the Bronx, New York. Considered a somber young man, Odets dropped out of Morris High School to pursue an acting career. His stage work, however, was not impressive. Odets' career changed in 1935, when he received critical acclaim as a playwright for his first play, *Waiting for Lefty*. He continued writing dramas, and his popularity led to offers from Hollywood to write screenplays. After returning home to New York from writing his first screenplay, Odets began working on *Golden Boy*. Unlike the political plays he was known for, *Golden Boy* focused on his own personal struggle between being an artist and making money. Odets was admitted to Cedars of Lebanon Hospital in Los Angeles to undergo treatment for stomach ulcers. During surgery, Odets' doctors discovered that he had metastatic stomach cancer. After being told goodbye by friends and family, Odets passed away on August 14, 1963.

THE WORLD OF GOLDEN BOY

THE GREAT DEPRESSION

Clifford Odets' play takes place during one of the worst periods in American history; the Great Depression. Americans enjoyed an era of prosperity during the 1920s, but this economic boom came to a sudden end in 1929. The crash of the stock market, combined with the failure of the Bank of the United States, sent American into an era of economic devastation. In 1935 the unemployment rate soared, and many people lost their homes. In 1937 the economy went back into a second recession, and unemployment numbers reverted to where they had been in the early 1930s.

TROUBLE OVERSEAS

Trouble abroad set forth ominous events, as fascists rose to power in Europe. In 1935 Nazi Germany built up its military and passed laws against Jewish people. In addition, Italy invaded Ethiopia, and efforts by the League of Nations to calm these aggressions were futile.

THE NEW DEAL

President Franklin D. Roosevelt took dramatic steps to restore hope to the nation. In 1935 he introduced signature programs such as Social Security and the Works Progress Administration (WPA) to help the millions who found themselves unable to earn a living wage.

BOXING IN THE 1930s

During the Depression, professional boxing and baseball became the two most popular sports. In an attempt to make money, managers and fans alike gambled on idolized prizefighters. In some cases, professional fights were fixed by managers and gangster racketeers to ensure the outcomes paid off financially. In short, boxing was a very profitable business. The fights were risky, the crowds were hungry for blood, and the fans would find ways to scrape together whatever money they could to watch a live fight, especially if it promised to be a good one.



JOE LOUIS VS. MAX SCHMELING

Two of the most talked about fights in the 1930s were the bouts between Joe Louis and Max Schmeling. Schmeling, a German, took the first match in 1936, and Louis, an American, won the second match in 1938. Seen as a contest between representatives of the United States and Nazi Germany, the two fights came to embody the broader political and social conflict prevalent during the time. Louis' performance in the fights made him one of the first true African-American heroes in the United States.

ART VERSUS MATERIALISM

The most prevailing theme throughout Odets' play is the struggle Joe Bonaparte feels between his musical talents and his ability to win in the boxing ring. This struggle is emphasized when others ask Joe if he can actually make a living by playing the violin. Joe's father, while supportive of his son's musical ability, is convinced that his son will never be a millionaire. This idea illustrates the fact that art and financial success do not always go hand in hand.



The decision to pursue boxing is a difficult one for Joe. This is apparent as, when he begins boxing, Joe holds back in order to avoid hurting his hands. When his father goes to visit Joe's manager to find out how he is progressing as a boxer, he is told, 'We want to make your boy famous. A millionaire. But he won't let us. He won't cooperate.' The phrase, 'a millionaire,' echoes Mr. Bonaparte's earlier comments when discussing his son's future.

FEMALE BOXING IN THE 1930s

Although boxing is usually seen as a predominantly male sport, women have been taking their place in the ring as early as the late 1700s. While boxing grew more popular at the turn of the century, the idea of women taking part was considered highly controversial. By the 1920's, however, women from Ireland and Germany that were trained to box came to America, thus setting the stage for several women's world championship matches. Such American female fighters as Emma Chambers and Aurelia Wheeldin, who toured the continent with their three-rounds boxing show, brought this form of entertainment to the masses during the Great Depression. As such, the sport saw women taking on such roles as entertainers, fighters, managers, and trainers throughout the 1930s and 40s.

MA COPLEY, BOXING MANAGER

Boxing managers and promoters are generally thought of as being glib alpha males. But in Belfast, England in the 1930s, one well-known manager couldn't have been any different from the stereotype. Growing up managing her family's traveling circus, Clara 'Ma' Copley opted to build a career on Belfast's thriving boxing trade. She used a vacant lot to host boxing shows that took place three times a week in a large pavilion known as 'Ma's Tent.' Her boxers were inexperienced young men hoping to start a boxing career. While she tolerated no nonsense from any of the men who worked for her, she was known for slipping a little cash to any boxers who were down on their luck.

HEY, TEACHERS!

Please review the following rules with your students to assure that all audience members enjoy the show!

1. Be on time by being in your seat 10 minutes before the performance is scheduled to begin. Latecomers will be seated at the discretion of the theatre and in locations chosen by the theatre.
2. Remain seated until intermission and until curtain calls are completed. If an emergency requires leaving your seat, please remain outside the theatre until allowed to return by the theatre's staff.
3. Finish and/or discard all food and drinks before entering the theatre. Please be respectful of others by disposing your trash.
4. Silence or turn off all electronic devices, including cell phones, beepers, and watch alarms. You are encouraged to share your theatre experience via social media, but you must refrain from sharing or texting during the performance. The glow from all media is easily discernable in the dark theatre and is distracting to your neighbors and the actors.
5. Video and flash photography of live performances is not allowed. Actors will generally be available for photographs after the show.
6. Please refrain from talking during the performance.
7. Your courtesy is much appreciated as it allows for the ultimate experience of theatre productions for all our patrons.

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