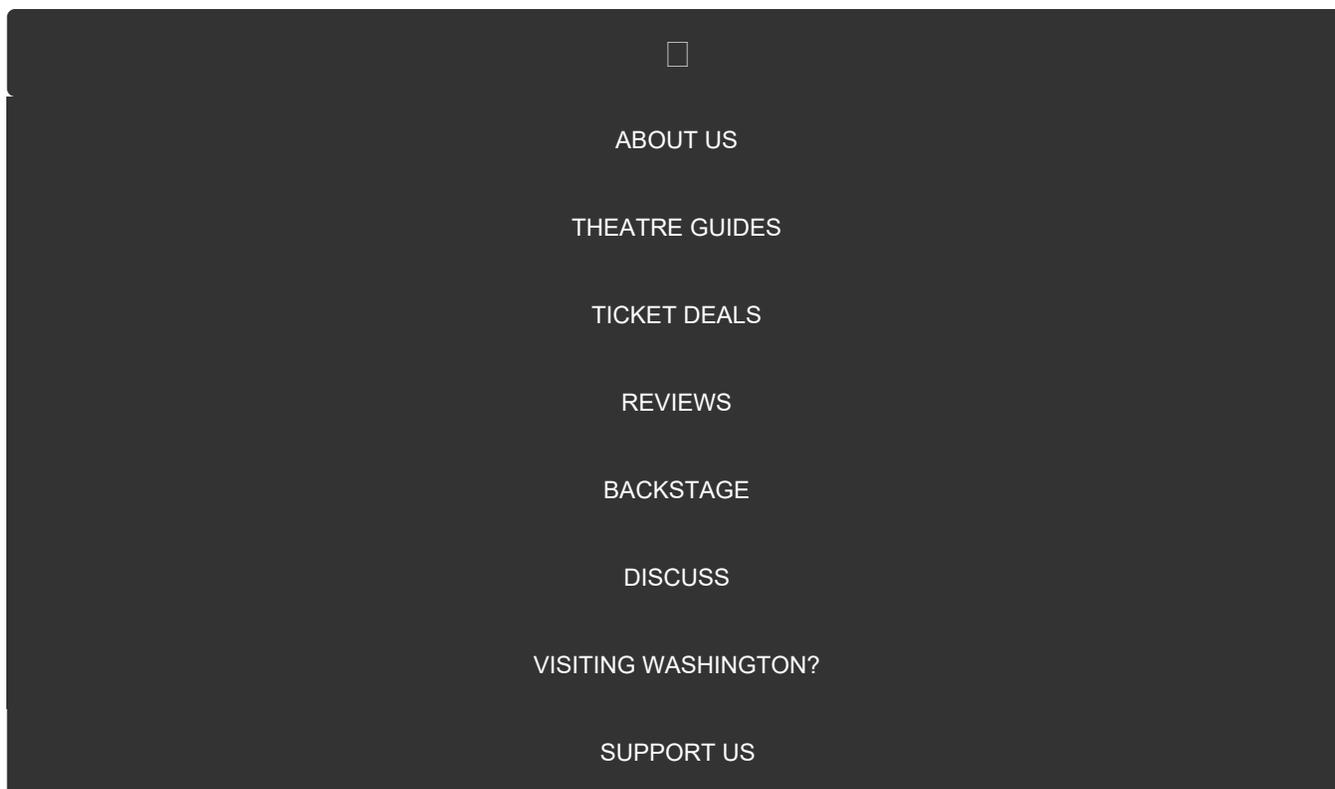




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# How to Win a Race War: How The Klunch will take on white supremacy fiction

September 5, 2018 by [Kate Colwell](#) — [Leave a Comment](#)

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How can liberal activists diminish the power of the Alt Right, a rebranded digital army of white

supremacists whose influence manifests in real domestic terrorism? For starters, they can plumb white nationalist literature for the origins of racist conspiracy theories, and then make a satire with music about the products of those imaginings. At least, that's what [The Klunch](#), a [local theatre collective](#) named after the slang word for being engrossed, and founded by playwright Ian Allen, plans to do about it.

According to The Klunch website, white supremacist fiction has proliferated in the years since Timothy McVeigh named William Pierce's *The Turner Diaries* as inspiration for his brutal 1995 bombing of a federal building in Oklahoma City.

Allen, who wrote and directs [How to Win a Race War](#), knew he needed a music director to turn three distinct but connected plays into a three hour and twenty minute production, so he hired actor, teacher, a cappella singer, and budding director **Anderson Wells**. DC Theatre Scene spoke with Wells on what made his jaw drop about the production, and why he refuses to give spoilers.

### **What is the role of music in telling this story?**

**Anderson Wells:** The show is a parody of fanfiction. We look into the world white supremacists have idealized. The songs help push the satire even harder. Think Forbidden Broadway if Forbidden Broadway was doing a jukebox musical. These songs, parodies of well-known songs with new lyrics, are there to energize the story and make it more accessible to people. In addition to being a familiar latch, the songs also invoke relevant time periods.

### **What the heck is white supremacist fan fiction?**

No spoilers. Come see the show! We'll put excerpts of it on projectors and in our programs so people can learn where these outrageous views come from.



Anderson Wells, Music Director for *How to Win a Race War*

## How does the music change between the three plays set in three different centuries?

In the first play, we feature hip hop and R&B. The second play is more 90s music, rock and grunge. In the third, we included more folksy, feel-good music. Without giving too much away, we are sampling songs from Ludacris, the Sex Pistols, and The Beatles.

*“ Our production gambles without apologizing. There’s a purpose behind all of it. I’m hoping people will see that.*

## Are these three plays connected in any way?

The trajectory of actions of the first time period leads us to the world that takes place in the second play, then the third. There are characters within all three plays that share similar names. But they change ages, their involvement in activist movements, and actors. Every actor is playing different characters in every play to give them a range to work with.

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### How to Win a Race War

at DC Arts Center

September 21 – October 20,  
2018

[Details and tickets](#)

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### How does this play align with your mission as a theatremaker?

I’m an African-American male. I openly identify as homosexual. That means that every breath I take is essentially political. I want to make sure I’m educated enough to give voice to as many stories from as many people as

possible. I want to understand where they stand, and to step outside of my own experiences. I’ve opened my eyes to this white supremacist way of thinking, and we felt strongly that it needed to be brought to light.

## How did this production challenge your ideas of theatre?

This production is a huge risk, not just in the political world, but also especially in the world of theatre. We cast a show with a dozen white men. In a world where I’m trying to work on projects with people of color and people who do not identify as male, that was a jaw-dropping choice to me when I first learned about it. But it’s important, when telling these stories, for the actors portraying white supremacists to be white men. And to counter the white cast, we made sure we had a diverse production team.

Our production gambles without apologizing. There's a purpose behind all of it. I'm hoping people will see that.

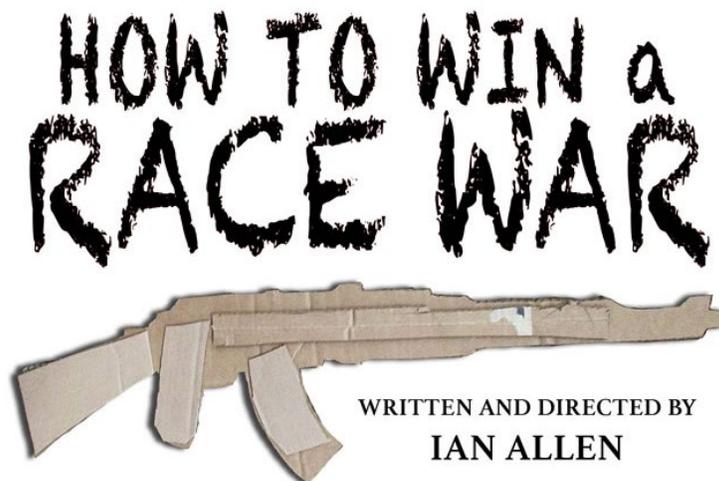
Ian Allen has not been shy about his liberal point of view throughout his research into white supremacy. He has written pieces for [The New York Times](#) and [The Nation](#), and appeared on [The United States of Anxiety](#) podcast. What sort of reception has The Klunch seen from this spotlight?

This production pulls no punches. It's in your face. We have already experienced some backlash. We planned on that. There are not many pieces of theatre that push buttons on purpose and keep pushing forward regardless of strong opinions.

On the other hand, in his article for *The New York Times*, Ian mentions a few of the writers of the fanfiction. Those writers have been running with that article as publicity. It's interesting to see how both sides of argument are using this. We've been laughing and crying about it.



Ian Allen, writer, playwright and Artistic Director of The Klunch



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**Why is this production important to a Washington, D.C. audience in 2018?**

In a lot of ways, those of us on the liberal side feel the extremity of the conservative or bigoted side. It's important to understand how dangerous some points of view can be. Given our really tense political climate in 2018, the more people who can educate themselves about all sides of the coin, the better.

This play parodies stories that are actually being written from perspectives that are real. When you see it, you will think it outrageous, offensive, ludicrous (not to be confused with the artist, Ludacris!). But regardless of what you think, they are based on works in existence, and we have to bring attention to that.

If you come with an open mind, it will be a very fun show. Between the music, ridiculous stories, and the talent, it can be very enjoyable and eye opening.

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*How to Win a Race War*, written and directed by Ian Allen. Starring Brett Abelman, Grant Collins, Tony Greenberg, Matty Griffiths, Craig Houk, Will Low, Matthew Marcus, Darren Marquardt, Connor Padilla, James Radack, and Ned Read. Voice performances by Christopher Henley and B. Stanley. Produced by Ian Allen, Kate Debelack, Sara Cormeny, Pete Miller. Assistant Direction and Music Direction by Anderson Wells. Set and Lights by David C. Ghatan; Associate Set and Lights by William Spencer. Props by William Spencer. Sound by Adrian Fontainebleau. Costumes by Mei Chen. Assistant Costume by Dominic Hardy. Video Design by Christopher McKenzie. Stage Management by Amanda Williams.



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## About Kate Colwell

Kate Colwell is a professional writer/editor who has explored all manner of what you can do with a B.A. in English since graduating from the University of Virginia in 2012. Following her grand stage debut as a Pick-a-Little Lady in eighth grade, she has reveled in watching plays almost as much as she relishes writing them. In her free time, you can find her cooking and baking in brazen defiance of recipe books. Follow her on Medium: <https://medium.com/@katecolwell>

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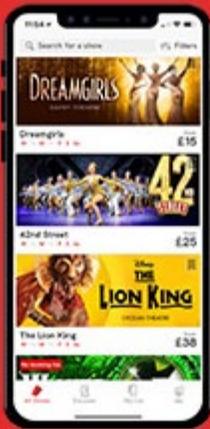
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