

Father Comes Home From The Wars Lighting Design Concept by J. Mitchell Cronin

Against a night sky as dark as pitch, faint stars dimly sparkle and form the recognizable constellations as old as they sky itself. They have held their familiar shapes since the dawn of mankind, playing vital roles in our stories, mythologies, and navigation. One prominent cluster has stood out throughout our collective history and taken many names; “Big Bear”, “Ursa Major”, “The Drinking Gourd” now points our most desperate souls toward something that can seem as unattainable as the stars themselves- freedom.

In the darkness, the spark of a small flame springs to life behind the rickety walls of an indistinct cabin which barely stands out from the surrounding darkness and marks the beginning of another day in the life of an American slave. The Chorus Leader emerges through the vague shape of a skewed doorway and examines the horizon line as it slowly reveals itself with an almost imperceptible blue glow of the coming sunrise, the warm glow of his lantern flickers defiantly against the early morning mist. A work-weary hand holds itself against the growing horizon as a second chorus member enters with his own lively lantern and hangs it from a hook on the cabin wall while pale lavender glow slowly grows across the sky throughout the scene. As the final star rises into the sky and forces out the last remnants of the night, its guidance is clear- Hero will go to war.

Among the tattered trunks of an unnamed forest in the heart of Confederate territory, three men rest while *Passing the Time* in the sweltering Summer sun as it near its zenith. Sharp shadowy shafts cut through the clearing, entrapping the men in the tense situation as cannon fire approaches from the distance and eventually envelops the area in a thin smoke and fills the air with a sense of fire and danger before the groups part ways.

Our trilogy concludes in the same place that it began, although war has ravaged the land and its inhabitants. The sun is nearing the end of its odyssey across the sky and will soon yield the darkness back to the guiding stars that our freedom-seekers will follow North. The late afternoon sun glares ominously down on the farm, painting the sky with streaks of scarlet and apricot which blanket the area in a smoldering amber glow. In conclusion to our celestial arc, the sun sets just as slowly as it rose and culminates into a single shaft of sunlight that beckons Ulysses and Odd-See offstage leaving us in almost total darkness, except for a single set of stars which point us to freedom.