DOCUMENTARY THEATRE: PEDAGOGUE AND HEALER

WITH THEIR VOICES RAISED

by

Kathryn M. Morris

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This dissertation was prepared under the direction of the candidate’s dissertation advisor, Dr. Richard Gamble, Department of Theatre and Dance, and has been approved by the members of her supervisory committee. It was submitted to the faculty of the Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters and was accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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ABSTRACT

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The beginning of the new millennium finds documentary theatre serving as teacher and “healer” to those suffering and in need. By providing a thought provoking awareness of the “other,” it offers a unique lens with which to examine the socio-political similarities and differences between various cultures and ethnicities in order to promote intercultural understanding. Documentary is also used by teachers, therapists, and researchers as a tool for healing. By sharing personal stories of trauma and illness with others who are experiencing similar difficulties, emotional pains are alleviated and fears are assuaged.

Documentary theatre has expanded in definition from the “epic dramas” of German playwrights Erwin Piscator and Bertholt Brecht during the height of the German Weimar Republic to the recent “verbatim” scripts of playwrights such as Anna Deveare Smith, Emily Mann, and Robin Soans.
The dramaturgical duties of the playwright along with the participatory role of the audience have grown in complexity. In verbatim documentary the playwright must straddle a fine line between educating and entertaining while remaining faithful to the words of the respondents as well as to the context in which they were received. The audience, by responding to questionnaires and by engaging in talk-back sessions, plays a pivotal role in production. Documentary serves as an important vehicle for informing and inspiring audiences from all walks of life.

In 2010, researchers Dr. Patricia Liehr of the Christine E. Lynn School of Nursing at Florida Atlantic University and Dr. Ryutaro Takahashi, Vice Director of the Tokyo Metropolitan Institute of Gerontology, approached me to create a documentary based on their combined interviews of Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima survivors. The resultant script, With Their Voices Raised, is included as an appendix to this dissertation as an example of the documentary genre and its unique capacity for research dissemination. With Their Voices Raised not only conveys the memories and fears of the survivors, but in its conclusion reveals how these victims of war have elected to live their lives in a quest for peace- choosing “hope over hate” in a shared world.
DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this manuscript to the Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima survivors, who so generously shared their stories. May we never forget their bravery and forever keep their message of peace in our hearts.
DOCUMENTARY THEATRE: PEDAGOGUE AND HEALER

WITH THEIR VOICES RAISED

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INTRODUCTION

Beginning with the ancient Greek playwright Phrynichus who penned *The Capture of Miletus* in 492 B.C.\(^1\) and extending to recent authors such as Robin Soans and his verbatim play *The Arab-Israeli Cookbook* (2004),\(^2\) documentary theatre traditionally has been considered a vehicle for learning. Documentary playwrights, capable of exploring cultural similarities and differences such as those discovered in the oral histories of the ancient Greeks, are the arbiters of “truths.” Stories and experiences told from different perspectives within the diegesis of the verbatim script aid in underscoring events as they were witnessed, often calling upon memories and emotions as though they were recently experienced. By critically revisiting history with the intention of educating, documentary theatre possesses the ability to bridge divisiveness by promoting cultural awareness and understanding.\(^3\) Through the telling and retelling of personal historical

\(^1\) Herodotus, *The History*, trans. Henry Clay (Buffalo: Promethius Books, 1992), 362. Phrynichus based his play “The Capture of Miletus” on a series of events that had taken place recently during the Persian War. When the play was first performed, the audience was so “horrified” that they had been re-exposed to an unpopular conflict, that they “burst into tears, fined him one thousand drachmas, and refused to let him produce the play again.”

\(^2\) Robin Soans, *The Arab/Israeli Cookbook* (London: Aurora Metro Press, 2004). Robin Soans wrote *The Arab/Israeli Cookbook* after conducting interviews with people from various cultures and ethnicities during his visit to the West Bank, Gaza, and Israel in 2003. He often met his subjects in cafés or in their homes where they not only shared their stories but their favorite recipes.

\(^3\) Liehr et al., “Translating Research Findings to Promote Peace: Moving From ‘Field to Forum’ With Verbatim Theatre,” *Advances in Nursing Science* 36, no. 3 (July-September 2013): 163-164.
accounts, the documentary format serves to provoke, inspire, and ultimately, as Mark Fearnow suggests, aid the healing process.4

This dissertation, an historical and dramaturgical study of the documentary genre, is divided into two sections. Part I examines the history of documentary theatre, from its basis in the dramatic epic productions of the past to the “theatre of fact” and verbatim documentaries of today. The dramaturgical processes required to move from “page to stage” are reviewed. Because of documentary’s inclination to teach and “to restore to well-being”5 those in attendance, audience participation will be discussed. Part II focuses on the history of the United States and Japan’s involvement in World War II’s Pacific Theater. A study of the dramaturgy involved in creating With Their Voices Raised, a documentary based on the testimonies of World War II survivors, is included. Because of the personal nature of the survivor’s eyewitness accounts, Part II differs in tone, style, and format from Part I.

Part I Chapter 1 discusses the definition of documentary theatre and its evolution from “epic drama” to “verbatim.” Documentary’s historicity and expanding contributions to theatre and society in general during the last half of the twentieth century are reviewed. Erwin Piscator and Bertolt Brecht’s “epic” or Total Theatre; Hallie Flanagan’s Federal Theatre Project under the Roosevelt administration’s New Deal; Martin Duberman’s 1964 documentary play, In White America; and continuing to present day documentarian Anna Deveare Smith and her plays Fires in the Mirror (1991) and Twilight: Los Angeles,


1992 are recognized as seminal turning points in the constantly evolving documentary process. Also addressed is the resurgent interest in documentary theatre at the beginning of the new millennium. Documentarian Gary Fisher Dawson contends the genre has gained such significance in the second half of the twentieth century that an entirely new “period of expression in documentary theatre is currently underway in the United States.”

Part I Chapter 2 examines the dramaturgical duties of the playwright as determined by the documentary format, along with the participatory role and assumption of the theatre audience. Aristotle’s teachings of the dramatic form, Adolph Lessing’s lessons on dramaturgy, Erwin Picato and Bertholt Brecht’s theories on epic theatricality, continuing to present day experimentations in non-linear plot formations are discussed. These examples reveal that the playwright’s functions and obligations are in a constant state of fluctuation, reinvention, and renewal.

Audience responsibilities have expanded exponentially. No longer considered a silent observer, the spectator is now presumed to be an active participant. By participating in talkbacks, filling out questionnaires, reading program notes and materials, or by simply engaging in the performance as conscientious observers, audience involvement is valued and is now considered to be a major part of the production process. It becomes the audience member’s responsibility to interpret what is being presented in order to understand. Documentary, therefore, serves not only as a valuable tool for

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reporting and clarifying historical events, but as an important vehicle for educating, informing, and inspiring audiences from all walks of life.

Due to recent technological advances involving computers, cell phones, internet access, instant messaging, film, photography, faxing, etc., communities placed in the most isolated and remote areas of the globe are capable of spreading information and relating their stories and histories worldwide. Events currently unfolding in the Ukraine, Middle East, and elsewhere are displayed by millions of users on Internet websites such as Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, Skype, and others. To many, these politically charged events or happenings are considered theatre. As Paul Woodruff implies, “there is an ethical reason to practice the art of watching. Part of our need to watch theatre grows from our need to care about other people.” Theatre is “necessary” in that it is “culturally universal.”

Part I Chapter 3 discusses the didactic and restorative powers of the documentary genre. Brazilian educator Augusto Boal (1931-2009) promoted theatre as a means to educate the poor and impoverished in his native country. He valued the “dialoguing” that drama generated, and concluded that theatre, if appropriately used, could prove to be therapeutic by healing divisions and promoting change. British educators were quick to adapt Boal’s dramaturgy into their classroom settings and consequently programs such as Drama in Education (DIE) and Theatre in Education (TIE) have become mainstays of the

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8 Ibid., 13.
British educational system. Boal’s theories, outlined in *Theatre of the Oppressed*, have since influenced and appreciated a worldwide audience.

Documentary and verbatim theatre not only educate, but when traumatic events are witnessed and presented as fact, the audience empathizes, and through *understanding*, “unresolved wounds” have the potential to heal. By re-visited some of the ancient healing rituals practiced and presented through the medium of theatre, we discover that *theatre* and *healing* share a long and varied history. Shamanism, cathartic healing, drama therapy and communal storytelling are discussed and explored. Today “theatre for healing” addresses topics that are of most concern to those who are most vulnerable. Subjects concerning racism, sex and gender issues, drug abuse, and other socio-political issues which up until this century were rarely addressed, are now “out front,” on stage, and wide open for discussion. *Greensboro: A Requiem* (1996) by Emily Mann, *Arab-Israeli Cookbook* (2004) by Robin Soans, and *The Laramie Project* (2006) by Moises Kaufmann are three recent examples of verbatim plays dealing with issues of major concern.

Jon McKenzie, assistant professor of interface design and multimedia at the Philadelphia University of the Arts understands that the act of “performance” in the last half century has permeated numerous disciplines cross-culturally.9 Extending beyond the usual stage setting where theatrical performance is expected to be critically analyzed,

… presentational forms associated with theatrical performance have been transformed into analytical tools, generalized across disciplinary fields, and reinstalled in diverse locations. Anthropologists and folklorists have studied the rituals of both indigenous and diasporic groups as performance, sociologists and

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communication researchers have analyzed the performance of social interactions and nonverbal communication, while cultural theorists have researched the everyday workings of race, gender, and sexual politics in terms of performance.\textsuperscript{10}

As a case in point, in 2010, researchers Dr. Patricia Liehr of the Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing at Florida Atlantic University, and Dr. Ryutaro Takahashi, Vice Director of the Tokyo Metropolitan Institute of Gerontology, approached me to compose a documentary script based on their combined interviews of Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima survivors. It was because of their foresight and shared interests in the fields of nursing and gerontology, coupled with the desire to extend their research to a broader public forum, that the presentation proved possible. The resultant script, \textit{With Their Voices Raised}, is added to this dissertation as Appendix A.

Dawson contends that the purpose of documentary theatre is in “learning about, recalling, interpreting, or responding to a historical moment.”\textsuperscript{11} It also has been recognized by researcher Thomas Michael Croak that documentary “can be responsive to urgent social and political issues and can serve as a valuable tool for the historian studying the time, places, and people which the genre portrays.”\textsuperscript{12} Historian George Innes further explains, “Traditionally the stage has been seen as a mirror of the world.”\textsuperscript{13}

With these statements in mind, Part II Chapter 4 revisits events leading up to, and including, the bombings of Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima. Because background

\textsuperscript{10} McKenzie, \textit{Perform or Else}, 8.

\textsuperscript{11} Dawson, \textit{Documentary Theatre}, 19.


\textsuperscript{13} C.D. Innes, \textit{Erwin Piscator’s Political Theatre: The Development of Modern German Drama} (Cambridge: University Press, 1972), Intro. 1.
information is pertinent to the documentary, *With Their Voices Raised*, as well as to understanding where the subjects represented are based in their experiences, a greater awareness of historical fact is necessary. The cultural similarities and differences between Japan and the United States, beginning with Commodore Mathew Perry’s expeditions to Japan in the late 1800s and extending to the 1952 San Francisco Peace Treaty, from which Japan emerged as “an independent and permanently unarmed nation with the United States as its designated guardian,”¹⁴ are explored.

Part II Chapter 5 discusses the dramaturgy involved in writing and producing the script, *With Their Voices Raised*. Even though theatre’s didactic and restorative powers have been well documented in both classroom and clinical settings, only recently has theatre been recognized as a tool for disseminating health research. By re-addressing the narratives of the survivors in Dr. Patricia Liehr and Dr. Ryutaro Takahashi’s clinical studies through the stage productions of *With Their Voices Raised*, their research was able to reach a much broader and more receptive audience.

Stories filled with surprise, pain, sorrow, remorse, acceptance, determination, and final pleas for peace are revisited and apprehended. By liberating the survivors’ experiences from the page of the journal to the theatrical stage - embodied through the actors’ facial expressions, movements, and gestures and through the grain, timbre, and texture of their voices - their heartfelt testimonies are not only experienced, but also believed.

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PART I. LESSONS IN THE HISTORY, DRAMATURGY, AND REMEDIAL POWER
OF THE DOCUMENTARY GENRE

Chapter 1

Documentary Theatre: Evolution from Drama to Verbatim

All revolutions in art, said someone, are a return to realism. Given that most art-forms, in the hands of metropolitan elites, tend to drift away from reality, what could be more bracing or healthy than occasionally to offer authentic news of overlooked thought and feeling? Isn’t it the noblest function of democracy to give a voice to the voiceless? And where better than in a medium whose genius is for sustaining scrutiny? What a welcome corrective to the cosy art-for-art’s sake racket which theatre all too easily becomes!

— David Hare, “David Hare… on factual theatre”

Documentary theatre’s definition has grown during the last half of the twentieth century to include “… docudrama, verbatim theatre, reality-based theatre, theatre of witness, tribunal theatre, nonfiction theatre, theatre of fact…”15 and most recently, “applied theatre.” Although these definitions are as complex, varied, and diverse as the scripts on which they are based, one characteristic they all share in common is the desire to remain truthful to the subject being represented. But over time, even that representation may change.

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Searching for the ‘Real’ on the World Stage

When discussing historical drama, Herbert Lindenberger argues, “What we accept as ‘real’ differs widely from age to age.” Historical events that are considered well-known fact and exist “within the consciousness of the audience” have often been construed or made to “fit” according to the times. For example, the personae of historical figures have a tendency to be altered once time has intervened and the luster of “image” has worn away. Without witness or documentation, one’s memories and perceptions of persons and events are subject to change.

Scottish educator and filmmaker John Grierson (1898-1972) first defined documentary as “the creative treatment of actuality.” Grierson’s basic principles of recording documentary included: observing and selecting situations based on every day experiences; employing the original participants as actors with the understanding that stories taken from “raw” events are more original and therefore more interesting; and encouraging spontaneous gestures and movement. He realized that if these principles were carefully met, observed documentary would be capable of recording “intimate knowledge.” He further adds, “You photograph the natural life, but you also, by your juxtaposition of detail, create an interpretation of it.”

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17 Ibid, 2.


19 Ibid., 146-147.

20 Ibid., 148.
Personal interpretation also applies to the term “docudrama,” which describes dramas that are based primarily on reality but not necessarily on fact. In his book *True Stories?* Derek Paget discusses some of the difficulties encountered when separating fact from fiction. With the proliferation of the documentary genre readily found in all modes of presentation such as television, movies, theater, etc., he feels that the definition of the term “documentary” is open to debate. What separates truth from fiction and what exactly is the public to believe? He answers by stating “facts do not lie” and a piece’s “documentariness” or “discourse of factuality” separates the real from the imagined. True theatre of fact or testimony relies on primary sources of documentation such as eyewitness interviews, documents, newspapers, letters, diaries, photographs, and film.

According to William Stott, there are two forms of documentary; one that “gives information to the intellect” and one that “informs the emotions.” Recorded facts, such as those found in historical archives and congressional records, are considered “impersonal” documentations. Accounts recorded in family films, photograph albums, diaries, journals, scrapbooks, and taped recordings, however, are “personal” and are therefore capable of stirring emotions. According to Stott, the “human document” is considered “a lesson in living …an event that shows what life is like; an epiphany that

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22 Ibid., 4.

strips reality bare.”24 “We understand a historical document intellectually, but we understand a human document emotionally.”25

Although these forms are intrinsically different, they both remain grounded in fact. “This is how documentary - of both kinds - works. It defies comment; it imposes meaning. It confronts us, the audience, with empirical evidence of such nature as to render dispute impossible and interpretation superfluous. All emphasis is on the evidence; the facts themselves speak…”26

Bill Nichols in Blurred Boundaries suggests an epistemological shift in the reporting of documentary during the last quarter of this century. Because of man’s global and complex interest and inquiry into “information about the historical world surrounding us…our hunger is less for information in the raw than for stories fashioned from it….We hunger for news from the world around us but desire it in the form of narratives, stories that make meaning, however tenuous, dramatic, compelling, or paranoid they might be.”27 He suggests that the historiographical lines between truth and representation within the narrative are becoming blurred. “Stories offer structure; they organize and order the flux of events; they confer meaning and value. But stories are not a phenomenon occurring naturally. They are themselves a product of history and culture.”28

24 Stott, Documentary Expression, 16.
25 Ibid., 8.
26 Ibid., 14.
28 Ibid.
In an effort to separate fact from fiction, a blurring of boundaries occurs, and the search for truth becomes contested. “History and memory intertwine; meaning and action, past and present, hinge on one another distinctively. Documentary and fiction, social actor and social other, knowledge and doubt, concept and experience share boundaries that inescapably blur.”

Personal testimonies are particularly subjective in that they focus on lived past events rather than principles and theory. “Truths” such as these are questioned and the personal becomes political. As Nichols finds, “The “I” of testimonials embodies social affinities but is also acutely aware of social difference, marginality, and its own place among the so-called Others of hegemonic discourse.”

Historical events related through personal testimony may carry less authority than those steeped in fact; however, these same events are capable of being heightened and illuminated by personal eyewitness accounts.

Comparisons can be made between documentary photography, film, and theatre in that they all share a desire to remain faithful to their subjects. In *Documentary: The Margins of Reality* Paul Ward discusses the importance of documentary to film:

[Documentary films]… offer a glimpse of a ‘hidden’ or obscured history and how particular types of dramatized documentary material can help to revive neglected (or suppressed) historical events. If the role of documentary is to assert things about the world we inhabit (and this includes the world of the historical past), then such films have a vitally important part to play, in the ways that they draw out and amplify some of the underlying tensions and sensibilities of the times they depict.


30 Ibid., 8.

Famous 1930s Dust Bowl photographer Dorothea Lange’s black and white photographs produced the same affect. They documented the life and times of the depression and were considered harbingers of truth. Biographer Linda Gordon explains:

[Lange’s] …commitment to seeing derived not only from artistic openness but also from refusal to pass by uninvolved. The effort of sight fused…with a sense of responsibility to understand and act on the world….She believed that an imagery of democracy could contribute to an active democratic citizenship….The responsibility she felt was not to provide solutions to problems…but that documentary photographs should ask questions, not provide answers.\footnote{Linda Gordon, \textit{Dorothea Lange: A Life beyond Limits} (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1956), xxiii.}

All forms of documentary rely on “truths” that not only confront but also involve the spectator, providing him/her the opportunity to respond accordingly. The “plastic” arts such as sculpture, painting, and photography are capable of capturing persons and events for posterity, while the very nature of theatrical performance is short-lived. No two performances are the same. “Truths” revealed through performance remain in the hearts and minds of the attending audience and are therefore subject to change.

Dawson contends that truths embedded in documentary theatre “significantly adds to the importance of theatre art in learning about life.”\footnote{Dawson, \textit{Documentary Theatre}, xi.} Rustom Bharucha agrees:

Indeed, there is no one Truth. Rather, there are many possible truths - mutable, fluid, and above all, deviant - that have to be constantly \textit{produced} from the guts, the bodies and voices of actors. Given the transitory nature of theatre, truths are constantly breaking down; given its repetition, truths have to be reconstructed, re-lived. The paradox of truth-making in theatre increases when one acknowledges that theatre could be one of the most illusory places in the world, where it is legitimate to lie knowingly. And yet truth matters.\footnote{Rustom Bharucha, “Between Truth and Reconciliation: Experiments in Theatre and Public Culture,” \textit{Economic and Political Weekly} 36, no. 39 (September 29-October 5, 2001): 3763.}
Chekov once stated that “the purpose of the theatre is not to provide the solutions, but to state the problems more clearly.” Documentary playwright Robin Soans agrees, “For me, stating the problem more clearly isn’t just a case of asking interesting questions, it is also about widening the number and variety of people you listen to, to include people who traditionally haven’t been seen and heard in the theatre.” Everyone matters. “For me, someone is interesting if they widen our knowledge of the complexity of the human condition, and bring fresh insight into the situation we’re exploring.”

When discussing the similarities and differences between documentary and drama, Soans notes that documentaries are more political and therefore more challenging. “They are more than entertainment. In my view they should also be the vessel which houses the conscience of a nation; they should ask the difficult questions others would rather leave unasked.” The playwright chooses topics, usually highly political but historically accurate, which he feels are worthy of closer examination and exploration. Soans chose one such topic to explore in his verbatim production, Talking to Terrorists, which began as a compilation of stories collated from interviews of the perpetrators as well as the victims involved in terrorist activities. The underlying theme of Terrorists is to resolve conflict through peace and negotiation, rather than violence and aggression.

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37 Ibid., 34.

38 Ibid., 17.

By providing insight into opposing views through interviews and documentation, documentary theatre is uniquely capable of portraying all parties involved in conflicting situations equally. It provides the opportunity for various factions to come to a better understanding of the other’s viewpoint and position. By exposing “truths” and dealing with opposing issues head-on in the aspiration that bridges may be crossed and transgressions resolved, documentary theatre is deemed capable of tendering the olive branch in the hope of educating and healing.⁴⁰

Two German theatre practitioners who were intent on presenting “the real” onstage during the course of their lifetimes were director, Erwin Piscator, and playwright, Bertholt Brecht. Producers of epic productions concerning socio-political issues, Piscator and Brecht presented “the real” onstage through the incorporation of dramaturgical devices. Together they laid a foundation for documentarians to follow.

**Erwin Piscator and Bertholt Brecht’s Epic Theatre**

The directors of the Proletarisches Theatre must aim for simplicity of expression, lucidity of structure, and a clear effect on the feelings of a working-class audience.

> -- Erwin Piscator, *The Political Theatre*

With the learning play, then, the theatre begins to be didactic… The epic theatre is chiefly interested in the attitudes which people adopt towards one another, wherever they are socio-historically significant.

> -- Bertholt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*

Two men who influenced the way in which the public came to view theatre and who helped negotiate the path from drama to documentary during the middle of the twentieth century, were fellow Germans, director Erwin Piscator (1893-1966) and

playwright Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956). While leading playwrights of the period such as Chekov, Ibsen, and Strindberg explored naturalism and realism in order to satisfy the bourgeois audience who frequented their theatres, Piscator and Brecht were focused on politically charged theatre appealing to the proletariat. Intent on addressing political issues directly, they came to understand that theatre needed to change in order to be understood. Their experimentations in epic or “documentary” (a term that Brecht applied to the genre about the same time as filmmaker Grierson)\(^\text{41}\) provided the answer.

Germany’s Weimar Republic, which represented 20 years of political instability following the armistice of 1918 ending the First World War and continuing to the Nazi invasion of Poland in 1939 beginning the Second World War, proved to be a period of reflection, experimentation, and innovation in artistic circles across Europe. Experiencing cultural freedom for the first time, Germany became the creative epicenter for artists, musicians, actors, and playwrights. Theatre became a radical hotbed of experimentation “which questioned the premises of drama as well as the nature of society in the search for a valid relationship between art and the modern environment...”\(^\text{42}\)

Rather than produce theatre for pure entertainment or “art for art’s sake,” Erwin Piscator and Bertolt Brecht felt actors and playwrights needed to respond to unfolding events that were leading to and responsible for Germany’s political unrest. Aware of theatre’s unique ability to instruct and transform, they shaped a completely new form of theatre during this period of upheaval. At the close of the Weimar period, cognizant of Germany’s fast developing state of fascism and Hitler’s imminent rise to power, Piscator,


\(^{42}\) Innes, *Erwin Piscator's Political Theatre*, 12.
a devout communist now living and working in Moscow, and Brecht, a Marxist living in Berlin, chose exile in the United States.

**Erwin Piscator (1893-1966)**

Piscator, a former WWI infantry soldier who detested the war and his involvement in it, was determined to focus on theatre as an educational platform for political reform. Arriving in Berlin after the war in 1918, he travelled with other unemployed actors to perform in beer halls, industrial complexes, and town meeting centers in order to reach a working class audience. In Piscator’s words,

> When I got back to Berlin, matters had separated themselves out more clearly. Dada had become more malicious. The old anarchic attitude toward middle-class materialism, the rebellion against art and other intellectual institutions had become more extreme, had indeed almost taken the form of a political struggle… I too now had a clear opinion on how far art was only a means to an end. A political means. A propagandistic means. A pedagogical means….\(^{43}\)

In order to promote audience awareness and participation, Piscator incorporated the ideas of both the Dada inspired agitation/propaganda groups and the Soviet Blue Blouse “living newspaper” theatre troops into his productions. Through the use of political slogans and direct address, the performers purposefully aroused the audience into debate. Piscator’s signature techniques included placing actors within the audience in order to agitate- and concluding each performance with both actors and audience singing a rousing version of “The Internationale.” Despite their sparse utilitarian format, these first attempts at agit/prop performances proved successful and provided the basis for his later works.

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Piscator revolutionized theatrical production by incorporating mechanical and utilitarian stage devices into performance. His early efforts provided new models for playwrights and directors to follow and forced “a complete re-examination of drama’s function and the relationship of the stage to society.” His Politische Theatre, “a successful blend of didacticism and entertainment,” was to later influence theatrical groups in England and America such as; “The Theatre Union,” the “Group Theatre,” the “Federal Theatre Project,” and the counterculture experiments of the 1960s.

After starting several theatre companies that failed due to lack of finances and government intervention, Piscator formed the “proletarian Volksbuhne” theatre or people’s theatre of Berlin. In a collaboration comprised of other actors, directors, playwrights (including Bertolt Brecht, Leo Lania, and Felix Gasbarra), artists, and musicians, Piscator was successful in producing a controversial play based on Czech Jaroslav Hasek’s 1923 novel, The Good Soldier Schweik. Piscator’s methods of incorporating exposed mechanical devices such as ropes, placards, lights, film, and a series of conveyor belts depicting Soldier Schweik’s march through time were used throughout. Schweik became an instant hit among factory workers and bourgeoisie. With the success of The Good Soldier Schweik, Piscator’s “epic” or political theatre was recognized and accepted as a vibrant art form.

In 1925, Piscator and playwright Felix Gasbarra were commissioned by the German Communist Party (KPD) to present a play based on the history of the KPD for its Tenth Party Congress. Piscator responded with the groundbreaking production, In Spite

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44 Innes, Erwin Piscator’s Political Theatre, 4.

45 Stacy Jones Connelly, “Forgotten Debts: Erwin Piscator and the Epic Theatre” (PhD diss., Indiana University, 1991), 70.
of Everything. The title (Trotz Alledum! in German) was taken from a political slogan by Marxist martyrs, Karl Lliebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, who were executed because of their outspoken opposition to Germany’s political policies.

Due to the size of the auditorium (a 3,000 seat complex with three staging areas) and the make-up of its communist audience, Piscator was able to fulfill his desire to transform theatrical performance into political statement. Its communist inspired epic script contained German political events that occurred from WWI up to the deaths of Lliebknecht and Luxemburg in 1919. Piscator explained, “We planned on a grand scale. There were 2000 participants; twenty gigantic spotlights were to light up the natural arena, massive symbolic props would illustrate the separate passages.”

While remaining true to factual materials such as those found in KPD minutes, records, and newspaper articles, Piscator incorporated technological devices such as film, stage machinery, music, slide projectors, and placards containing newspaper headlines and political slogans. Of these, film proved to be most important and influential link to the historical events. The audience had lived through and seen this history as it unfolded, and the film flashbacks served to reinforce those memories. Piscator therefore, continued to incorporate these mechanizations or the “extratextual” into the documentary format throughout his career.

In Spite of Everything was in keeping with Piscator’s subsequent, if irregular, attempts to bring to theater the directness of “political speech, to transform representation

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46 Piscator, The Political Theatre, 91.

47 Favorini, Voicings, xix.
Because of its sheer size and scope, covering historical events which occurred over an extended length of time and which were based entirely on fact, *In Spite of Everything* proved to be a true “epic” production. Piscator responded to critics who felt the production more of a political statement than “entertainment” by arguing,

After all, what do I consider the essential point of my whole work? Not the propagation of a view of life through formal clichés and billboard slogans, but the presentation of solid proof that our philosophy and all that can be deduced from it is the one and only valid approach for our time….Conclusive proof can be based only on scientific analysis of the material. This I can only do, in the language of the stage, if I can get beyond scenes from life, beyond the purely individual aspect of the characters and the fortuitous nature of their fates. And the way to do this is to show the link between events on the stage and the great forces active in history.49

Piscator understood, “For the first time we were confronted with the absolute reality we knew from experience. And it had exactly the same moments of tension and dramatic climaxes as literary drama, and the same emotional drama.”50 As Favorini suggests, *In Spite of Everything* rightfully deserves its position as the “Ur-text of documentary theatre….”51

Piscator immigrated to the United States in 1938 where he successfully “helped to establish New York City as a major center for theatre education … when he organized and built the Dramatic Workshop and Technical Institute for the New School for Social Research in 1939.”52 He eventually directed over one hundred plays, even though he

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48 Favorini, *Voicings*, xix.


50 Ibid., 98.

51 Favorini, *Voicings*, xviii.

52 Dawson, *Documentary Theatre*, 60.
decided against staging politically charged communist propaganda for fear of United States reprisal and deportation back to Germany.

Piscator’s first attempt at an epic production in the United States was a play he had written based on Leo Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*. First performed in New York in 1942, *War and Peace* was a critical failure due to its darkly politicized subject matter, overly ambitious sweeping scope, and lack of optimism. During the period surrounding World War II, American audiences who had lost sons and loved ones serving in the military weren’t necessarily receptive to the epic format. They were more interested in theatre as a means of entertainment and escape rather than as a dais for debating socio-political issues. Richard Rogers in his autobiography, *Musical Stages*, remembers staging *Oklahoma! Carousel*, and *South Pacific* during the war years. “Then there was the fact that we were in the midst of a devastating war. People could come to see *Oklahoma!* and derive not only pleasure but a measure of optimism.…People said to themselves in effect, ‘If this is what our country looked and sounded like at the turn of the century, perhaps once the war is over we can again return to this kind of buoyant, optimistic life.’”53

Piscator returned to teaching drama at the Dramatic Workshop. Students such as Marlon Brando, Arthur Miller, Robert Penn Warren, and Tennessee Williams benefited from the techniques acquired under his instruction.54 Piscator’s teaching methods influenced the establishment of off-Broadway theatre companies such as The Living Theatre and set examples for The Living Newspaper’s Federal Theatre Project that followed. He was also responsible for initiating the concept of “Total Theatre” or theatre


54 Innes, *Irwin Piscator’s Political Theatre*, 204.
that involved not only the collaboration of author, director, stage manager, lighting personnel, set designer, and actors but the audience member as well. Piscator noted, “Collective effort is rooted in the very nature of the theatre. No other art form…relies so heavily on the existence of a community of like-minded people as does the theater.”

Not wishing to appear before the House Committee on Un-American Activity because of his past affiliations with the communist party, Piscator left New York for West Germany in 1951. He returned to the form of theatre that he considered most important- directing politically charged documentaries such as Hochhuth’s *The Deputy*, Kipphardt’s *In the Matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer*, Weiss’ *The Investigation*, and Berrigan’s *Trial of the Cantonsville Nine*, until his death in 1966.

Biographer C. D. Innes recognized Piscator’s contributions as “seminal in the development of new stage forms.”

…Piscator attempted to represent current events or recent history in a direct manner…His extensive use of mechanical aids drew notice to the balance between literary texts and theatrical performances…while his emphasis on recorded speech and documented fact focused attention on the author’s position in reducing him from an imaginative creator to an organizer of given material. This led to a reassessment of the part played by the audience….

According to scholar Stacey Connelly,

…the director was no longer just an interpreter of the playwright’s art, but an artist in his own right who created a play through his application of production elements. Consequently Piscator developed a new kind of playwright as well, one who looked upon the text as evanescent and evolving, subject to collective scrutiny, collaborative suggestions, and the director’s overriding political vision.

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57 Ibid.

58 Connelly, “Forgotten Debts,” 40.
Critic and historian Oscar Brockett suggests, “In pre-Nazi Germany, Piscator was the best-known practitioner of epic theatre, for only later did Brecht overshadow him and come to be considered the major exponent of the epic approach.”

Bertholt Brecht (1898-1956)

Prior to World War I Bertholt Brecht had been studying to be a physician, and for this reason, had been placed in a military hospital as an orderly during the war. A former actor, he entertained the troops by performing comedy sketches and mime. After his discharge from service, he gave up his career as a doctor and instead concentrated on writing expressionistic scripts that were unapologetically apolitical and noncommittal. His first play, Baal (1918), projected a nihilistic view of man and incorporated expressionistic rather than epic techniques. After being introduced to Marxism and to Piscator’s playwriting collective, Brecht’s attitude changed. He instead concentrated on theatre as a method of exploring societal problems instead of entertainment.

Even though Brecht’s and Piscator’s careers paralleled and intertwined in Germany, except for a brief stay at the New York “Workshop” after fleeing Germany in 1939, they never again worked on a project together. Unemployed in New York, Brecht moved to California where he found work writing movie scripts. Expelled from the United States after admitting his affiliation with the communist party in front of the House Committee on Un-American Activity in 1950, Brecht was unsuccessful in his attempts to persuade Piscator to settle with him in East Germany. Unlike Piscator who

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60 Connelly, “Forgotten Debts,” 88-89.
searched for “truths,” Brecht never wrote a documentary script based totally on fact. Even his biographical play, *The Life of Galileo*, was riddled with factual distortions. He was, however, instrumental in incorporating and expanding upon the dramaturgical techniques and epic format developed by Piscator.

Early in his writing career, Brecht wrote nearly two dozen theatre criticisms for the left wing Socialist paper, *Die Augsburger Volkswille*, at his home in Augsburg, Germany between the years 1919-1921. In “A Reckoning,” he describes the complacency of the German public and its willingness to be content with mediocrity in theatrical arts. “But supposing somebody tells the more intelligent spectators: You really must try to improve your theatre … they calmly answer: Ach, it’s good enough for Augsburg.” Brecht felt German theatre needed to undergo a “radical transformation” in order to shake up the establishment and fill the half-empty seats. Theatre based on an “ideological superstructure” became Brecht’s solution to resolving the problem.

As playwright, Brecht felt that by incorporating political theory into script the audience should not only be educated, but also transformed by what they saw and heard. Identifying with his predecessor, Piscator, Brecht’s intention was to contradict “illusion” found in realistic drama. By encouraging the audience to analyze and debate the play’s thematic content, and by requiring them to draw their own conclusions and respond accordingly, theatre was considered more than just entertainment. It was serving as a platform for contradiction and social change.

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62 Ibid., 4.

63 Ibid., 23.
According to Brecht’s collaborator, Elisabeth Hauptmann, Brecht hadn’t read Marx’s Das Capital until the late 1920s after several of his plays had been produced. A critical article in Schriften zum Theater written by Brecht during this period states: “When I read Marx’s Capital I understood my plays…It wasn’t of course that I found I had unconsciously written a whole pile of Marxist plays; but this man Marx was the only spectator for my plays I’d ever come across.”64 His scripts, thereafter, included Marxist based studies of the immoralities that Brecht felt prospered under capitalism.

While remaining socially critical, Brecht believed theatre also should strive to entertain. He used the analogy of a sporting event or circus as his definition of fun or “spass.”65 Similar in style to the early Italian street theatre vignettes of commedia dell’Arte and American vaudeville sketches, Brecht incorporated the use of “fractured mythos” or “theatre of interruptions” into his productions.66 He especially admired Charlie Chaplin after seeing him perform in The Gold Rush, a film produced by United Artists in 1925. Chaplin’s use of comedic gestures, limited expressions, and minimalistic acting styles were later integrated by Brecht into epic theater.67

Following Piscator’s example, Brecht felt that by establishing a political as well as experimental form of theatre by merging socialist ideology with revolutionary theatrical representation, theatre would prove more relevant. Rather than simply being entertained, the audience member was encouraged to interpret what was being presented.

64 Brecht, Brecht on Theatre, 23-24.
65 Ibid., 9.
from a personal standpoint. The purpose was not only to raise public awareness, but also to encourage social intervention. Spectatorship and audience reaction were of primary concern. Brecht encouraged the spectator to situate him/herself historically in an acutely judgmental position which he called “distantiation.” Brecht’s plays were intended to engage and educate the viewer, never providing answers, just producing thought.

Twentieth century philosopher, Walter Benjamin, discusses the importance of the “distantiated” audience found in Epic theatre and how it differs from the strained response resulting from drama and tragedy. In his lecture “The Author as Producer,” Benjamin separates the “bourgeois entertainer” or, as Brecht might describe, “the culinary,” from the progressive artist who sides with the revolutionary proletariat. “Epic theatre appeals to an interest group who does not think without reason.”68 Rather than be absorbed in mystery and illusion, its intent is pedagogical. When discussing the educational value of Epic form, theatre historian Mordecai Gorelik reiterates,

… all good drama - or the best in any drama, good or bad is didactic; and that this is true not only of the playscript; but of every element that goes into play production. This didactic quality …is what makes all the difference between a cultural medium and a mere device for idling away time.69

Through the reversal of roles, the actors become spectators and the spectators become willing collaborators. “An actor should reserve for himself the possibility of stepping out of character artistically. At the proper moment he should insist on portraying a man who reflects about his part.”70 With the help of a “narrator” who steps out of his


70 Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 155.
role to directly address the audience, a detachment from the proceedings onstage is achieved. This “distantiation” or alienation from prior events provides emphasis to the role and offers the audience member time to reflect and respond. The didactic play therefore, becomes a learning experience as much for the actor as it is for the audience. Each learns and “takes away” from the other.

In Epic theatre the audience no longer empathized with the hero as there was no hero to worship. Forwarding techniques such as lighting, mise-en-scène, dialogue, and staging to illuminate performance were rejected.\(^{71}\) “… [I]nstead of identifying with the characters, the audience should be educated to be astonished at the circumstances under which they function.”\(^{72}\) With no specific hero with whom to identify, a panorama of historical events covering large periods of time were represented.

Dramaturgical devices such as acting styles, placards, and quotes such as those found in Chinese and Russian theatres were employed. Complicated sets and scenery were abandoned and dialogue was kept to a minimum. Instead of hiding different modes of construction from view, mechanizations such as cameras, lighting, and set constructions were openly displayed. As Martin Walsh in *The Brechtian Aspect of Radical Cinema* understands, Brecht was intent on showing “the machinery, the ropes, and the flies, as does a sporting arena during a boxing match, and to make visible the

\(^{71}\) Stam, *Film Theory*, 147.

\(^{72}\) Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 152.
sources of light for that set.” 73 Similar to Piscator’s political theatre, there were no illusions.

Multiple effects such as “interruption,” “gesturing,” “alienation,” “distantiation,” and “making strange” were incorporated wherever possible in order to free the audience member from pre-conditioned phenomena. 74 Theatrical devices found in Chinese theatre such as; makeup, masks, symbols, music, costuming, and painted backgrounds depicting “abnormal events,” were used to alienate rather than involve the spectator. The “alienation effect” denoted “truth in acting” and depended on a great extent to the “lightness and naturalness of performance.” 75

Dropping the “fourth wall” to expose the audience permitted the actor to be watched without illusion. 76 The actor was encouraged to look at him/herself through mime and gesture. Brecht states, “Gest is not supposed to mean gesticulation: it is not a matter of explanatory or emphatic movements of the hands, but of overall attitudes.” 77 The “quotable gesture” was purposefully incorporated to instill an idea, break the flow of the narrative, and give the audience time to contemplate what was occurring onstage. 78

Acting devices such as “making strange” or self-observation prevent both the actor and the audience from becoming emotionally involved. The actor becomes the

74 Stam, *Film Theory*, 147.
75 Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, 95.
76 Ibid., 92.
77 Ibid., 104.
observer by distancing himself from the performance, acting in a somewhat subdued or economic tone without overreacting or “becoming heated.” As Brecht describes, “He acts in such a way that nearly every sentence could be followed by a verdict of the audience and practically every gesture is submitted for the public’s approval.” In order to separate emotion from political truth, Brecht’s initial intent was to concentrate on the message instead of the messenger.

Brecht recognized that his theories of aesthetics and ideology were readily adaptable to radio and film. Experimenting with all forms of entertainment, Brecht concentrated on different methods of presentation in order to dispense with illusion. Marc Silberman in Brecht on Film and Radio discusses the impact of Brecht on “media–specific modes of representation”: “… he was more interested in the challenges presented by the changing demands of technology and history, making the familiar strange … so that the audience perceives the principles governing reality and learns how to manipulate them.” By incorporating film footage of historical figures such as Stalin and Mao into stage productions such as Mother Courage, Brecht brought complex social theories to the forefront while distancing the viewer from the production. Film as a backdrop to the action onstage was used as a ploy to deliberately interrupt the mechanism, “a mechanism that demands that the audience sit up and reflect on its significance.”

79 Brecht, Brecht on Theatre, 93.
80 Ibid., 95.
81 Brecht, Brecht on Film and Radio, ix.
82 Walsh, The Brechtian Aspect of Radical Cinema, 6.
Favorini, in his anthology of documentary plays, *Voicings*, best describes the mechanical age and its ability to represent “truths” theatrically:

…technological developments in the reproduction of voice and image, along with advances in stage machinery, required the exploration of a new relationship between theater and reality. The rise of the modern newspaper; the availability of archives to historians and the raising of standards for the justification of historical description; the wide acceptance of the ideas of Comte, Marx, Darwin, and Spencer, who examined individual behavior in a context bound by social, economic, and physical laws; the embrace of the nineteenth-century scientific model of truth as fact supported by empirical evidence - all these exerted increasing pressure on the theater to represent reality concretely, precisely, and directly.\(^{83}\)

Bertolt Brecht and Erwin Piscator’s Epic theatre met and surpassed this challenge. Their experimentations provided a solid foundation for the documentary format and provided a direct path for others to follow. The mechanizations and theories they introduced proved paramount in the formation of a new theatrical genre. By employing new modes of presentation, allowing for audience involvement while remaining pedagogically oriented, Piscator and Brecht taught other directors how to direct, other playwrights how to write, other actors how to act, and other producers how to produce-revolutionizing the art of theatre.

**Hallie Flanagan (1890-1936): The Federal Theatre Project’s Living Newspapers**

The thirties were stirring times. They are usually referred to as the era of the great Depression. But I call them *the fervent years*. The fifteen million unemployed, the evictions, the breadlines, the “Hoovervilles” produced a panorama of despair, but most heartening as well as amazing was the fortitude with which it was faced. The Works Progress Administration, and, as part of it, the Federal Theatre, was our government’s response to this crisis.

-- Harold Clurman, *Uncle Sam Presents*

\(^{83}\) Favorini, *Voicings*, xviii.
Precipitated by the stock market crash of 1929 and the “Dust Bowl” which enveloped America’s fertile heartland, America’s Great Depression left tens of millions of Americans unemployed, dejected, hungry, and homeless. Of these none suffered more than those affiliated with the theatre, which even in the best of times was hard pressed to put many of its employees to work, “… for theatergoing is for most people a marginal activity, and one of the first to be dispensed with when the budget must be cut. All over the country theatre attendance had shrunk, hundreds of theatres had been forced to close their doors, and thousands of theatre workers were destitute.”

“In New York alone, the picture was bleak; roughly half of the city’s theatres were dark, Actor’s Equity estimated that upwards of five thousand performers were without work, and total unemployment in the theatre was thought to be as high as twenty-five thousand.”

As part and parcel of Franklin D. Roosevelt’s experimental New Deal, the Works Progress Administration was established under the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act (1935) to put unemployed and disadvantaged citizens to work. Under this umbrella fell the Federal Theatre Project, which became America’s first and last attempt to subsidize national theatre by employing thousands of laid off actors, playwrights, directors, stagehands, set designers, artists, and costume designers across the country. In addition to employing members of the theatrical community, the Federal Theatre Project provided the opportunity for ordinary citizens to see “good” theatre not only in cities such as New York and Chicago, but in small towns throughout America. By granting the public free admission or lowering the price of tickets to 25 to 50 cents on average, and holding

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productions in barns and empty storefronts to cut costs, theatre quickly became accessible to all Americans including those who never before had the opportunity to attend.

Works Progress Administration chief executor Harry Hopkins appointed Vassar College theatre instructor, Hallie Flanagan, as Director of the project. Flanagan’s appointment surprised those in New York’s theatre establishment, but to fellow Grinnell College contemporary Hopkins, she was the perfect choice. As an educator, Flanagan possessed the energy, experience, and creativity necessary to experiment with all forms of theatre and as Director, she understood it was her responsibility to put the unemployed to work while reaching out to the widest audience possible. “Like many of her contemporaries, she was also idealistic about the power of the arts to compel and humanize. She believed in the idea of a Federal Theatre and was excited about its potential to entertain and to instruct.”  

In 1926 Flanagan had received a Guggenheim Fellowship to tour and record what currently was happening in European and Russian theatre. In Russia she interviewed famous Moscow Art Theatre director Stanislavsky and was introduced to his student Vsevolod Meyerhold’s epic productions as well as the Russian Blue Blouse troupes’ Living Newspapers. After experiencing Meyerhold’s epic interpretation of Roar China! for the first time, Flanagan explained, “To find a production where ‘conception, execution, acting, and design were all a marvel of rightness’ restored her faith [in theatre].”  

Similar in style to the epic productions of Piscator and Brecht, Meyerhold’s

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Roar China! incorporated multiple stages in order to accommodate a large cast. Without curtains, footlights, or orchestra its stark theme “depicted Chinese coolies being exploited by British imperialists and American capitalists.” The background on which the action took place was a large ship whose sides were exposed on various levels, each level depicting scenes running simultaneously. Flanagan was impressed with not only the size and scope of the epic production, but with the quality and fluidity of the acting.

The Russian Blue Blouse “living newspapers” were equally impressive. Members of the Soviet workers groups stood on bare stages and read the latest news from the local newspapers to members of the proletarian audience who were cobbled by illiteracy. What began as small staged propaganda plays gradually transformed into theatrical events. The group members began wearing blue blouse costumes representing the workers in the audience and “soon they were putting on masks, changing their clothes, and shouting slogans into megaphones.” Most of the stage action was impromptu and the workers in the audience were encouraged to join in with shouts, slogans, and placards. The Blue Blouse Groups often traveled from factory to factory and town to town in order to bring theatre directly to the working class. Even though these government sponsored productions were laced with propaganda promoting communism, they were considered “entertainment” and, as such, were well received and attended.

Flanagan was later accused by American critics of culling ideas from Meyerhold’s epic plays as well as from the Russian Blue Blouse skits into Living

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88 Bentley, Hallie Flanagan, 71.
89 Ibid.
90 Ibid., 73.
Newspaper productions. In the introduction to *Federal Theatre Plays* she maintains that they were uniquely “American:”

Like all so-called new forms the Living Newspaper borrows with fine impartiality from many sources; from Aristophanes, from the *Commedia dell’ Arte*, from Shakespearean soliloquy, from the pantomime of Mei Lan Fang.... Although it has occasional reference to the *Volksbuhne* and the Blue Blouses, to Bragaglia and Meierhold and Eisenstein, it is as American as Walt Disney, the *March of Time*, and the *Congressional Record*, to all of which American institutions it is indebted.\(^{91}\)

In 1931 Flanagan and fellow Vassar contemporary Margaret Ellen Gifford had co-written a successful documentary entitled *Can You Hear Their Voices!* “Based upon a short story by Whittaker Chambers and drawing upon congressional transcripts, newspaper stories and magazine articles, the play effectively dramatized the plight of farmers radicalized by climate and the injustices of the capitalist system.”\(^{92}\) *Voices* proved so successful that the *New York Times* described it as “smashing propaganda,” while the magazine *New Masses* cited it “as the best play of revolutionary interest produced in this country.”\(^{93}\) Flanagan’s experience as actor, playwright, director, and teacher proved her a candidate worthy of the WPA position when it was offered by Hopkins in 1935.

President Franklin Roosevelt and First Lady Eleanor were equally responsible for the formation of the Arts Projects. They believed in the vitality of the arts and knew that many in the artistic community were unemployed and suffering. With the support and backing of the first family, the encouragement and support of WPA chief Harry Hopkins

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\(^{93}\) Bentley, *Hallie Flanagan*, 121.
and the other arts directors, Flanagan considered herself in good company. Journalist
Henry Alsburg was chosen head of the Writer’s Project; Nikolai Sokoloff, conductor of
the Cleveland Orchestra, as head of the Music Project; and American folk artist Holger
Cahill led the Arts Project. After meeting with her fellow contemporaries in Washington,
Flanagan understood the Theatre Project’s aim was to do more than hire unemployed
workers. A combined Federal Theatre was capable of becoming “part of a tremendous re-
thinking, re-building, and re-dreaming of America… a frontier against disease, dirt,
poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, and despair.”

The idea of a national federation of theatres was not new. In 1931 The National
Theatre Conference met in Chicago to formulate plans to combine forces. Five districts or
production centers were suggested with New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Boston, and
New Orleans chosen as central sites. Not shackled with a “profit motive” required of
mainstream theatres, conference attendees “believed the theatre had an important social
and educational contribution to make to American culture.”

Flanagan, with the aid of E. C. Mabie of the University of Iowa, incorporated a
number of the conference plans, such as the selected districts, into the Federal Theatre
Project. “Touring companies would play a circuit of smaller theatres, and university or
civic theatres in each of the regions would develop playwrights and conduct theatrical
research.” While it was the Project’s duty to provide wages to the unemployed by
charging small admission fees (though some community theatres had free admittance)


95 Ibid., 190.

96 Ibid., 191.
and by encouraging commercial sponsorships and donations, each community would be responsible for their own theatrical productions.

While adhering to Roosevelt’s New Deal policy of the three R’s - relief, recovery, and reform which provided humanitarian relief, the Federal Theatre Project also was focused on introducing as many citizens across the United States as possible to theatre. In Flanagan’s own words, “Was it not our function to extend the boundaries of theatre-going, to create a vigorous new audience, to make the theatre of value to more people?”

In order to reach this larger audience - the living newspapers, original plays by new authors, experimental plays, Negro plays, Yiddish plays, vaudeville, circus, and puppet theatre for children, as well as classical theatre, ballet, dance, and poetic dramas were included. “At its height, the Federal Theatre employed approximately 13,000 people in projects scattered over thirty-one states.”

Author Studs Terkel chronicles the Great Depression through survivor’s accounts and oral histories in his book *Hard Times*. He reveals a bleak but honest account of America in the thirties. “Ours, the richest country in the world, may be the poorest in memory. Perhaps the remembrances of survivors of a time past may serve as a reminder to others. Or to themselves.” One interviewee, a Broadway equity actor named Hiram (Chub) Sherman, recalls, “The Living Newspaper made for terribly exciting

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productions.”

He joined the Federal Theater Project in 1936 under the tutelage of actors John Houseman and Orson Wells, and had vivid memories of working on Marc Blitzstein’s *The Cradle Will Rock*, which exposed corruption in big business. Cast, crew, and audience arrived at the Maxine Eliot Theatre only to find it closed. According to Sherman, *Cradle’s* subject matter proved to be too controversial. “They wouldn’t admit the audience because of an edict from Washington that this was revolutionary fare. And we would have no performance. Somebody had sent down the word.”

Houseman and Wells weren’t deterred. The Jolson Theatre located a few blocks away hadn’t been booked in months and was readily available. The entire cast, crew, and audience marched up Broadway and Seventh Avenue to 59th Street, acquiring more audience members along the way. Because of bonding issues, Equity Actors’ were not allowed to perform on stage without permits. This required Blitzstein to play the piano and introduce the numbers while the actors stood and sang at their seats amid the audience. “It was a most exciting evening. The audience reaction was tremendous.”

Sherman later recalls having difficulty finding work after being labeled a communist. “I was horrified one morning to find that a Congressman from Kansas had stated in the Congressional Record that I was one of the seven Communists that dominated the Council of Actors Equity….I was so politically naïve, I wouldn’t know then how to go about joining the Communist party…. I wouldn’t know just how to do

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100 Terkel, *Hard Times*, 364.
101 Ibid., 365.
102 Ibid., 366.
Sherman was not alone. The actors, writers, artists, musicians, etc. subsidized by the government as part of the arts projects all found themselves under the scrutiny of congressional conservatives who considered the arts a “hot bed” for communists.

William Stott explains that even though all of the arts succeeded in documenting the thirties, “The Federal Theatre…made by far the strongest impact on the public mind.” Although they were a comparatively small cross-section of the Federal Theatre Project, the Living Newspapers proved uniquely influential by addressing public questioning with facts. By disseminating information found in magazine and newspaper articles, company bulletins, congressional records, U. S. Supreme Court decisions, and radio broadcasts such as March of Time, etc. “…this theatre went as far as any can in the direction of an objective drama of fact rather than fiction.” Flanagan, along with New York director Elmer Rice, created an entire “newsroom” staffed by editors, reporters, researchers, and copy editors who were responsible for uncovering the most recent events and reporting them with accuracy.

In an address to the Theatre Conference at the University of Iowa in 1935, Federal Arts Chairman Hopkins stated, “I am asked whether a theatre subsidized by the government can be kept free from censorship, and I say, yes, it is going to be kept free from censorship. What we want is a free, adult, uncensored theatre.” Despite Hopkins wish for “uncensored” theatre, the first Living Newspaper production, Ethiopia, was

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104 Stott, *Documentary Expression*, 105.


barred from the stage. Reporting on recent events that led to the stranding of a group of African singers and dancers in America, a Federal theatre editorial research team included speeches by Haile Selassie, Mussolini, and a radio transcript by President Roosevelt in the script.

After requesting Washington for permission to use Roosevelt’s recorded speech, Jacob Baker, advisor to the President, replied with an order: “This will direct that no issue of the living newspaper shall contain any representation of the head or one of the ministers or the cabinet of a foreign state unless such representation shall have been approved in advance by the Department of State…” Although Hopkins and Flanagan raised objections, Elmer Rice resigned his post as New York director in protest against the government’s intervention.

Despite the cancellation of Ethiopia, Living Newspaper playwrights and their scripts continued to inform the American public on such vital issues as the garment industry and working conditions in Pins and Needles, the plight of America’s farmers in Triple-A Plowed Under, consumers and electricity in Power, and the consequences and prevention of venereal disease in Spirochete.

**Triple-A Plowed Under (1936)**

*Triple-A Plowed Under* was written by Arthur Arent and the editorial staff of the Living Newspaper in order to illuminate the plight of the American farmer and Congress’ tepid response to their worsening conditions by formation of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration in 1933. True to epic form, the play contained twenty-six scenes based on news accounts and published statements. Written in terse staccato language accompanied

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by on-screen images, music, and narrative voiceovers through blaring loudspeakers, *Triple-A* became the first of its kind to demonstrate the Living Newspaper format.

The opening scene projects the Declaration of Independence as a backdrop to silhouettes of America’s Founding Fathers alongside a group of American farmers. Farm auctions, stock reports, and the use of a large thermometer depicting the rise in temperature are scenes informing the audience of the plight of the farmer. “*Triple-A Plowed Under*’s modification of agitprop techniques is not to produce greater “realism,” as Arent implies, but rather…to refine and concentrate the heightened (even melodramatic) representation of a specific reality; using the techniques of agitprop-direct address, short dialogue vignettes in quick succession, and the economical use of a kind of minimalist metonymy of props and set.”108 This is illustrated in Scene 10, Farm and City Families:

VOICE OF THE LIVING NEWSPAPER (over LOUDSPEAKER): As our economic system now works, the greater the surplus of wheat on Nebraska farms, the larger are the breadlines in New York City.

WORKER: We starve and they told us you had food in your fields.

FARMER: Food is in our fields but they told us you would not pay the cost of its harvesting.

WORKERS WIFE: We had no money.

WORKER: We starve.

FARMER: The wheat stands high in our fields.

FARMER’S WIFE: *Our* fields no longer.

WORKER’S DAUGHTER: Feed us.

FARMER’S FIRST SON: Pay us.

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WORKER’S FAMILY: Feed us.

FARMER: The wheat is better destroyed. I say, burn it!

FARMER’S FAMILY: Burn it! Burn it!

WORKER: Why?

VOICE OF GENERAL JOHNSON (over LOUDSPEAKER): Something is depriving one-third of our population of the God-given right to earn their bread by the sweat of their labor. That single ugly fact is an indictment under which no form of government can long continue. For slighter causes than that we revolted against British rule, and suffered the bitterest civil war in history.109

The final act of Triple-A, depicting workers and farmers uniting through commonly shared needs, became a rallying point in the Living Newspaper format. News events pertaining to the script’s subject matter were edited from newspaper headlines and radio broadcasts on a daily basis. These findings then were read by a narrator over loudspeakers to the audience after each production, in order to keep the play’s subject matter topically current as well as to underscore its relevance within the community.

Produced in New York in 1936 Triple-A provided a good first impression of the living newspaper even though its opening was not without controversy. The actors involved rebelled at appearing in “this swift pantomime, monosyllabic, factual document,” as they feared “it was not drama” and that “no New York audience would sit through it.”110 Flanagan and others who had been involved in the Triple-A project convinced them that they should be willing to experiment in new theatrical forms in order to put the unemployed such as themselves back to work. She also understood “that people


110 Flanagan, introduction, ix.
today are interested in facts, as proved by the enormous increase in circulation of newspapers and news sheets and by the *March of Time.*”

It also had been rumored that *Triple-A* was unpatriotic and therefore “un-American.” Audience members on opening night included such disparate factions as World War I veterans, the unemployed, season ticket holders, and the New York City police. When one unidentified audience member stood to sing *The Star Spangle Banner* during the first act he was ejected immediately. “These harassing circumstances, plus the fact that the production dealt with abstract economics, were not a good augury. But *Triple-A* proved hardy enough to survive all ill omens.” *Triple-A* productions soon opened in several major cities including San Francisco, Cleveland, Chicago, and Los Angeles, where it was publicly and critically well-received.

While giving testimony in front of Congress’ Appropriations Committee, WPA chairman Harry Hopkins responded to an attack by Congressman Bacon from Virginia denouncing *Triple-A* as “pure, unadulterated propaganda” and that “in an election year, it was important that taxpayer’s money, meant for relief should not be used for political purposes.” Defending the Living Newspapers in general, and *Triple-A* in particular, Hopkins advised the committee to first “go and see it” for “he believed that Federal

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111 Flanagan, introduction, ix.

112 Ibid., x.


Theatre propaganda directed toward a better life for more people was good propaganda for American democracy."\textsuperscript{115}

\textit{Power} (1937)

\textit{Power}, the next successful Living Newspaper production by Arthur Arent and staff, sold 60,000 tickets before its New York opening at the Ritz Theatre on February 23, 1937. The public had interest in what Hallie Flanagan described as “the struggle of the average citizen to understand the natural, social and economic forces around him, and to achieve through these forces, a better life for more people.”\textsuperscript{116} She considered the text of \textit{Power} more dramatic than most of the productions because of its content and style. Based upon the conflicts between private and public ownership of the utility companies, \textit{Power} focused attention on the ordinary consumer who was caught between the two.

Similar in format to other “Newspaper” productions, \textit{Power} included voice-overs, film, music, poetry, and newspaper articles. Symbolic props such as waterfalls, machinery, a pyramid of blocks which represented consumers at the bottom level and the holding company at the top, and a huge “light bulb” were incorporated. An offstage “loudspeaker” asked pertinent questions of the “little man” who represented the consumer. Witness Act I, Scene 3:

LOUDSPEAKER: What do you pay for electricity, Mister?

CONSUMER: Too much. Seventeen cents a kilowatt hour.

LOUDSPEAKER: What’s a kilowatt hour?

CONSUMER: I don’t know. That’s what it says on the bill…

\textsuperscript{115} Buttitta and Witham, \textit{Uncle Sam Presents}, 67.

\textsuperscript{116} Flanagan, introduction, x.
LOUDSPEAKER: You’re paying for it but you don’t know what a kilowatt hour is. How many ounces in a pound?

CONSUMER: Sixteen.

LOUDSPEAKER: How many quarts in a gallon?

CONSUMER: Four.

LOUDSPEAKER: How many inches in a yard?

CONSUMER: Thirty-six.

LOUDSPEAKER: But you don’t know what a kilowatt hour is?

CONSUMER: No, I don’t. What is it?

LOUDSPEAKER: Well - a kilowatt hour is - a kilowatt is a – eh - uh-

CONSUMER: Go on. I’m listening.

LOUDSPEAKER: (desperately): Isn’t there anyone who knows what a kilowatt hour is?

(Second front spotlight picks up ELECTRICIAN, up left, and follows him.)

ELECTRICIAN: I do.

CONSUMER: He’s the electrician.

ELECTRICIAN: Yeah, I was up there in the prologue, pullin’ them switches remember?

LOUDSPEAKER: Well, what is a kilowatt hour?

ELECTRICIAN: (calling, off): Hey Mike! Drop that work light. (The work light comes down.) Now light it up. Now when this thousand watt bulb burns for an hour that’s a kilowatt hour.

LOUDSPEAKER: (after a pause) Is that all?

ELECTRICIAN: That’s all... 117

The electrician is the most knowledgeable and therefore the correct one to respond to the question posed by the “loudspeaker.” He uses the light bulb as an onstage example in order to prove his point, educating the “little man” as well as the audience.

Scene 3 ends with a consumer searching for the “best” price:

CONSUMER: How much are your potatoes?

FIRST CLERK: Fifteen pounds for a quarter.

CONSUMER: Too high. I’ll go someplace else. (Crosses to second clerk.) How much are your potatoes?

SECOND CLERK: Twenty pounds for a quarter.

CONSUMER: Fine, I’ll take them.

(Light picks up two butchers. He crosses to first one.)

CONSUMER: How much are your pork chops?

FIRST BUTCHER: Twenty cents a pound.

CONSUMER: How much are your pork chops?

SECOND BUTCHER: Fifteen cents a pound.

CONSUMER: I’ll take ‘em.

(Light comes up on MANAGER of electric company…)

CONSUMER: How much are you charging me for electricity?

MANAGER: Seventeen cents a kilowatt hour.

CONSUMER: Too high. I’ll go someplace else. … Where’s the other fellow?

MANAGER: There is no other fellow.

CONSUMER: You’re the only one selling electricity in this city?

MANAGER: That’s right.

CONSUMER: And if I don’t get it from you I have to do without it?
MANAGER: That’s right. Would you like us to discontinue service?

CONSUMER (apologetically): Er-no-never mind! (Runs off.) Blackout.\textsuperscript{118}

The first act finishes with a procession of workers carrying torches and singing the TVA (Tennessee Valley Authority) song:

\begin{quote}
...Oh, see them boys a-comin’
Their Government they trust,
Just hear their hammers ringin’,
They’ll build that damn or bust!...\textsuperscript{119}
\end{quote}

Both \textit{Triple A Plowed Under} and \textit{Power} ended without conclusions because each were awaiting U. S. Supreme Court decisions.

In \textit{Power}, as indeed in \textit{Triple A Plowed Under}…existing American institutions ultimately withstand any counterhegemonic challenges from below; the pending decisions of the Supreme Court despite its members’ controversial resistance to the New Deal, hang over the end of both plays.\textsuperscript{120}

Despite its controversy, a review of \textit{Power} by critic John Mason Brown in a \textit{New York Post} article (April 5, 1937) read:

That the Federal Theatre has brought these newspapers to a high state of development is a fact no one can deny who has seen \textit{POWER} … It is one of the most telling propagandist offerings our stage has produced. It is as skillful as it is forceful, and can boast the exciting virtue of having perfected a novel dramatic form….Here is a performance which is part lecture and part history; which utilizes lantern slides, motion pictures and an amplifier to make its points; which resorts to vignette playlets as well as to statistics; which is as broadly humorous in its stylized manner as it is indignant throughout; and which, though it has little or nothing to do with the theatre of entertainment as we ordinarily encounter it, it is nonetheless theatrically exciting even in its most irritatingly partisan moments.

\textsuperscript{118} De Rohan, \textit{Federal Theatre Plays}, “Power,” 22.

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid., 69.

\textsuperscript{120} Kruger, \textit{The National Stage}, 167.
With regional theatres in place, Flanagan hoped that the Federal Theatre Project eventually would lead toward the development of an all-encompassing national theatre. She was especially interested in creating “a theatre conscious of the past, but adapted to new times and new conditions.” Addressing a first meeting of regional directors she noted:

We live in a changing world: man is whispering through space, soaring to the stars, flinging miles of steel and glass into the air. Shall the theatre continue to huddle in the confines of a painted box set?...The stage…must experiment - with ideas, with psychological relationships of men and women, with speech and rhythm forms, with dance and movement, with color and light – or it must and should become a museum product. In an age of terrific implications as to wealth and poverty, as to the function of government, as to peace and war, as to the relation of an artist to all these forces, the theatre must grow up. The theatre must become conscious of the implication of the changing social order, or the changing social order will ignore, and rightly, the implications of the theatre.  

Similar to Brecht and Piscator’s epic theatre, The Living Newspapers accepted this challenge. Stott described them as “white propaganda” intent on educating “the audience of the time on social issues,” and for this reason they proved to be “the biggest hits of the most popular project.” The Living Newspapers as well as other WPA Arts projects became “a sort of road map for the cultural rediscovery of America from within.” And while this was important in understanding the period that it represented, there was no actual documentation that best described what it was to be “American.” In Stott’s words,

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121 De Hart Mathews, *The Federal Theatre*, 42

122 Ibid., 42-43.


124 Ibid., 110.
If one pursued the documentary method and looked at facts in their full particularity, as though for the first time, one found no entity to call America. Instead there were regions, though again if one looked hard enough, the regions gave way and one had communities, which themselves became, on further scrutiny, classes, factions, groups. In short, documenting America turned up such an abundance of what one educator called “localized information” that no generalization with teeth or vigor held. Each town became so unique that the main thing that joined it with the next was the road.  

The Federal Theatre Project included people of all races, religions, and social demographics. Before the FTP was inaugurated there were only three well-established traditionally Black theatres in the United States. They included the Karamu Theatre in Cleveland, the Harlem Suitcase Theatre, and the Rose McClendon Theatre in New York. Before the Federal Theatre Project’s demise, twenty-two Black production sites were firmly established across the United States. Performances consisting of all-Black casts were attended by Blacks and Whites alike. Plays dealing with social issues such as *In Abraham’s Bosom, Haiti, and Big White Fog* were well received. In all, “their repertory embraced fifty-five plays, most of them new ones.” “The Negro units … were groundbreaking institutions in the American theatre whose influence and accomplishments are still being evaluated.” Barry Witham reported that Seattle’s Negro Repertory Theatre “was a monumental achievement” and “was the centerpiece of the Seattle unit and symptomatic of what was fundamentally forward looking and decent.

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125 Stott, *Documentary Expression*, 110-111.


about the whole New Deal enterprise.”

Flanagan recognized the significance of diversity in the multi-cultural units: “These plays showed rather the struggle of many different kinds of people to understand the natural, social, and economic forces around them and to achieve through these forces a better life for more people.”

Witham explains that the audience members attending the productions were as diverse as the cast and crew that staged them:

It was a national theatre not only because it was located in many states but because it aspired to reach out to a wider audience and to represent their experiences on the stage. Children, workers, Jews, Hispanics, and African Americans were all part of the vision and the demographics of the Federal Theatre.

In its short span, 1935-1939, Federal Theatre brought millions of Americans to theatre that mattered most - one that informed the public on relevant issues in order for them to act on this knowledge in an intelligent and meaningful way. John O’Connor explains, “… it is significant that the Federal Theatre Project did not equate entertainment with escape and that it chose to produce plays that challenged individual and institutional complacency.”

This “combination of education and exhortation was a hallmark of the Living Newspaper.”

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130 Witham, The Federal Theatre Project, 156.

131 Flanagan, Arena, 184.


134 Ibid., 179.
Flanagan’s Federal Theatre had accomplished its goals by employing those who were out of work and suffering while introducing theatre to new converts across the nation. Besides documentary, from *Macbeth* to *The Swing Mikado*, the Federal Theatre produced a surprising “repertory of plays unparalleled in variety, vigor, and brilliancy.”¹³⁵ At the close of the first season, the Federal Theatre Project found itself on sound financial footing. It “had done as good a job as the best Broadway producer. By now over 12,000 persons were working in 158 theatres in twenty-eight states, and playing to a combined weekly audience of a half-million.”¹³⁶ This was an astounding accomplishment considering the short amount of time Flanagan and the others had to initiate such a wide scale project.

Due to a change in America’s political landscape, the Federal Theatre’s demise was inevitable. Critics of the Theatre Project negatively labeled both artists and productions as promoters of communism. “And for many politicians - at both the federal and local level - they were a visible threat to America, especially American capitalism.”¹³⁷ “The Federal Theatre did not fail. It was stopped.”¹³⁸ An Act of Congress closed its doors on June 30, 1939.

The last of the Federal plays, appropriately titled - *Sing for Your Supper*, closed at the Adelphi Theatre in New York to the refrain,

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¹³⁶ Buttitta and Witham, *Uncle Sam Presents*, 73.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 5.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 4.
Ain’t it lucky, ain’t it swell  
I ran all the way home to tell  
I’m so happy it’s just like ringing a bell—  
Papa’s Got a Job!  

In a government pamphlet titled *What Was Federal Theatre?* written for the American Council on Public Affairs after Federal Theatre’s demise, Flanagan explains,

… 65% of productions were free for people who needed entertainment but couldn’t afford to pay for it - free to children in orphan asylums and hospitals, free to the aged in institutions, free to the unfortunate in insane asylums and prisons, in all of which places it was increasingly regarded as a valuable therapeutic, social and educational agency.  

… [H]ospitals, prisons and reform schools which at first received our companies very dubiously, have in the past two years come to regard this work as such a therapeutic a morale-building agency, that they pay other than labor costs.  

Despite their short duration, the Living Newspapers under the capable direction of Hallie Flanagan had accomplished what they set out to do. They not only lifted the morale of the unemployed but improved the economic and social circumstances of the average American family. They brought to theatre a concerned public from all walks of life who were interested in socio-political issues that most affected them. Audience members were educated on local and national affairs in order to make informed decisions at the ballot box, were better prepared to participate in discussions concerning mental and physical health issues, were better equipped on how to save and spend their money, and in the final analysis, came to a better understanding of one another and the issues facing them. Those attending found that they were not alone in their struggles and were empathetic toward others who were facing similar difficulties. Regardless of ethnic and

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141 Ibid., 10-11.
social status all were represented, including actors onstage, as well as members of the audience. The Living Newspapers proved to be a viable force in uniting various factions of the theatre attending public, and by bridging divisions among individuals as well as communities, documentary theatre afforded the unique opportunity to heal as well as to educate.

**Martin Duberman (1930-)**

They moved closer and closer. Somebody started yelling, “Lynch her!” Lynch her! ---I tried to see a friendly face somewhere in the mob--- someone who maybe would help. I looked into the face of an old woman and it seemed a kind face, but when I looked at her again, she spat on me.\(^{142}\)

--- Martin Duberman, *In White America*

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I, too, sing America.
I am the darker brother.
They send me to eat in the kitchen
When company comes,
But I laugh,
And eat well,
And grow strong.
Tomorrow,
I'll be at the table
When company comes.
Nobody'll dare
Say to me,
"Eat in the Kitchen,"
Then.
Besides,
They'll see how beautiful I am
And be ashamed---
I, too am America.

--- Langston Hughes, “I, Too Sing America”

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\(^{142}\) Words spoken by 15-year old Daisy Bates on her way to school in Little Rock, Arkansas, 1962.
The radicalism of the 1960s ushered in a new era of cultural politicization which ignited a marked interest in- and resurgence of- documentary theatre. Blacks, Chicanos, Indians, women’s and anti-war activist movements fueled the fire. These nefarious groups chose direct confrontation to get their voices heard, causing theatres of the “committed” to spring up in the streets of the cities and in the crossroads across America.

As C. W. E. Bigsby explains,

There were those for whom theatrical experiment was primarily a question of aesthetics, but increasingly there were others for whom the principal impulse was social and the distinction between aesthetics and ethics untenable. The theatre became an arena, a crucible, a public forum. It became a place where the shared components of experience could be identified and translated, at least at the level of imagination, into the beginnings of communal action. And if the theatre, which had its own traditions and its own constricting social assumptions, proved incapable of accommodating a new spirit of enquiry and revolt then there was always the street.  

In 1964 America was not only embroiled in the Vietnam War, but was forced to confront issues surrounding the Civil Rights Movement. During this period of unrest Martin Duberman, essayist, playwright, political activist, and professor of history at Princeton University, felt compelled to write his award winning play - In White America. In the preface to his book, Radical Acts: Collected Political Plays (2008), Duberman reveals that this period of upheaval in American history was an opportune time to record as objectively as possible the history of the Black race in the United States.

Recognizing the important connection between history and theatre, Duberman chose to chronicle the hardships endured by the African race in America through documentary, explaining,

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Historians and playwrights usually regard each other as engaged in separate enterprises. The former explores life in the past, the latter life in the present; the one employs the written word, the other the spoken word. Yet I’ve long felt that each might profit from incorporating some of the distinctive qualities of the other - by combining the theater’s emotional immediacy with history’s revelations about the diversity through time of human experience.144

Recording history through theatre was not an easy undertaking. He understood it was his “duty to try and reconstruct the past as impartially as possible” and felt “that the documentary format would successfully minimize any opportunity to introduce my own voice.”145 As playwright, he chose not to “embellish the script that did not come from a primary source … confining my own contribution to writing brief “bridges” between scenes.”146

Duberman suggests that when describing past events the historian is subject to not only the “fragmentary traces” of the evidence he has collected, but by his own biases and personal preconceptions.147 Every documentarian is plagued by “truths.” Personal experiences one encounters and remembers remain “real” and “even the most meticulous practitioners would inevitably select, omit, and emphasize certain aspects of the historical record over others.”148


145 Ibid., xii.

146 Ibid.

147 Ibid.

148 Ibid.
In a discussion of the definition and function of documentary photography, Linda Gordon reveals that artists as well as historians find it difficult to remain truthful and unbiased toward his/her subject. Gordon’s definition proves applicable to all of the arts:

There is no standard definition of documentary, but in photography, at least, it connotes both revealing the truth and promoting social justice….Historians and photographers choose what to include and exclude in the pictures they shape, frame their subjects so as to reveal, emphasize, relate, or separate different elements, and use interpretive techniques to do this. Some will argue, of course, that historians and documentarists have no business promoting their opinions, but that argument rests on the false assumption that it is possible to avoid doing so. History and documentary photography necessarily proceed from a point of view shaped by social position, politics, religious conviction, and the thousands of other factors that mold every human being. This does not mean that it is appropriate for historians or documentarists to shape their creations as they please, regardless of the evidence. They must try to limit their own biases and must never manipulate evidence or select only the evidence that supports their perspective.149

In his 1965 article, *The Limitations of History*, Duberman explains the difficulties historians face when reconstructing the past. While history is capable of describing events and past behaviors, it cannot “explain the personality strivings which underlie behavior,” and therefore it is far easier to reconstruct rather than account for the historical past.150 What was behind the personal history of the participants that informed their decisions? Unless there is a personal diary or daily journal available describing the reasons someone acted or responded in the manner in which they did, historians find it less difficult to report the “what” than the “why.” “As soon as we try to analyze the cause of any event, or its effect on other events, we face severe epistemological difficulties.”151

149 Gordon, *Dorothea Lange*, xvi-xvii.


151 Ibid.
It is difficult to learn lessons from past events for “no matter how much we learn of past revolutions, we will never be able to tell with certainty either how to avoid or how to produce one. There are too many variables through time; events are too embedded in their unique contexts to be readily interchangeable.”\textsuperscript{152} We can, however, be made aware of situations that have occurred in the past and consciously avoid them in the future. “Using history as a tool for analyzing continuing problems has both rewards and risks. The reward comes from the satisfaction of making the past relevant, making it resonate for our own times. The risk is that our histories will become obsolete as soon as the problems they are focused on cease to be of concern.”\textsuperscript{153} This is not dissimilar to the fate of the Living Newspapers, which lost their relevancy once the issues they addressed were resolved.

Duberman feels that because history is “the remembrance of the experience of others” that memory is extremely useful even “though likely to be partial, faulty, and distorted.”\textsuperscript{154} Memories provide a basis for future action, even when those memories are not based on viable truths. What man is conditioned to become is based on his and others past experiences as they are remembered. The act of recalling for purposes of understanding has the potential of becoming cathartic in that “…our very ability to free ourselves from the past will continue to depend on the extent to which we understand it.”\textsuperscript{155}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{152} Duberman, “Limitations of History,” 286.
\item \textsuperscript{153} Ibid., 287.
\item \textsuperscript{154} Ibid., 288.
\item \textsuperscript{155} Ibid., 289.
\end{itemize}
If historians rely purely on recorded information, history will not likely possess the ability to “engage” and therefore be more readily forgotten. On the other hand, descriptive or narrative history connects “the interior world of personality” to the reader.156 Because of its story-telling ability, narrative history possesses the capability to arouse and unite. This is why historians such as Herodotus who relate stories as remembered rather than as fact, “survive through time, while their “analytical” counterparts are ruthlessly and rapidly supplanted.”157

Duberman explains that,

Unless we are put in touch - in life and literature - with the felt experiences of others, our own feelings atrophy. We need to be more than rationally informed about feeling; we need to feel - to respond directly with our own emotions to those of others [...] the most profound experience available to us is the immediate sharing of the immediate feelings of our fellows.158

He adds that history should capture,

…those areas of private experience in the past to which our own feelings could most readily respond. To respond in this way is important not only as catharsis and communication, but also as a valuable adjunct to the learning process itself - at least to the kind of learning which leads to change and growth, rather than to the mere accumulation of data.159

Duberman felt that both theatre and history were in need of change, “…that historians are not communicating as well as they could, and that dramatists are not communicating as much as they might … that the deficiencies of history and theatre


157 Ibid., 296.

158 Ibid., 293.

159 Ibid., 293, 294.
might be lessened if each would pay some attention to the virtues of the other.”

The written word was not the first mode of communication available to the historian. In the beginning “historical records” were transmitted exclusively through the spoken word and “in that sense history began as theatre.”

In ancient civilizations, before the written word, theatre or “storytelling” was the only method of preserving history. Passing from generation to generation, the plots already were familiar to an audience who never tired of their retelling, as they found comfort in realizing their shared history. Lessons also were learned from the epic poets or “rhapsodes” who “drew on that same reservoir of stories about the distant heroic past, its great dynasties and wars …” and who “specialized in enthraling their audience and moving them to strong emotions - apprehension, compassion, sorrow…”

Recognizing the importance of theatre and its relationship to history and storytelling, Duberman felt all would be strengthened if combined, “not only to enrich historical presentation, but also to revitalize theatrical statement.” “Theatrical statement” in the 1960s was, as he understood, in dire need of revitalization. In periods of political turmoil and unrest such as these, theatre needed to reflect the times and change.


161 Ibid., 119.


Anti-war demonstrations, racially charged sit-ins, protest marches, and “happenings” sprang up on a daily basis across the country. Street “Theatres” such as these were,

…the variously called the theatre of the absurd, the theatre of revolt, the theatre of despair. The ugly, the empty, the irrational, the mechanical, the brutal, the apathetic - these are the dominant themes of contemporary theatre. And they may well be the dominant themes of contemporary life.\(^{164}\)

Change was swift and abrupt. Playwright Arthur Sainer describes in *The New Radical Theatre Notebook* what it was like to be a member of the theatrical community in the 1960s:

Everything came into question: the place of the performer in theatre; the place of the audience; the function of the playwright and the usefulness of a written script; the structure of the playhouse, and later, the need for any kind of playhouse; and finally, the continued existence of theatre as a relevant force in a changing culture…. We were trying to find a new way to express what we had begun to understand about character and society; we had to find a new way to express who we were becoming or who it was that we wanted to become as spectators, more responsible beings, not mesmerized by fictional creatures set in little jewel boxes carrying out their own lives; as writers, directors, and performers, beings who were more aware of the workings of our inner lives and more responsive to the social and political forces at work around us. We are still only at the beginning of that search.\(^{165}\)

Duberman felt theatre should not lose its relevancy as a vehicle for educating and informing; that it should not only be concerned with “what is” but with the possibility of what “might be.”\(^{166}\) “There is no inherent reason why drama cannot be an agency of amelioration as well as a voice of despair.”\(^{167}\) By concentrating only on the negative and

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\(^{164}\) Duberman, “Afterward,” 121.


\(^{166}\) Duberman, “Afterward,” 122.

\(^{167}\) Ibid., 123.
inflammatory, theatre in the 1960s was not fulfilling the need to point out its strengths and accomplishments in order to elicit positive change. In Duberman’s words, “…there is material in history which chronicles achievement and possibility…but we seem unable to use it; it may be a case of not being able to see the forest for the trees.” His answer was to “put more history on the stage.”

“...If history cannot be perfectly relevant, it can be partially so; if it cannot prescribe the future, it can conditionally guide the present; if it cannot recapture the feelings of men long dead, it can make at least a partial appeal to the feelings of men still living. History can do all these things-can, that is, if the historian decides that it must.” Duberman decided he “must” when he chose to confront the history of the Black race in the United States when he wrote *In White America* in 1964.

*In White America* (1963)

The 200-year old history of the Black race in America was a story that affected all Americans, whatever race, and was a story that desperately needed to be told. Not since The Federal Project had Black history been portrayed onstage. Duberman had concerns that because of his White background, he wouldn’t be trusted to record the history of the Black American culture in America unless he relied on facts. Facts recorded in documented materials such as diaries, owner’s slave manuals, court records and reports, newspapers, etc. would lend truth and authenticity to the presentation. As author and playwright, he felt facts based on resources such as these also helped to “minimize

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169 Ibid., 123.
subjectivity” and “restrict invention.” In his words, “Truth of fact has less durable relevance than truth of feeling, for a fact is rooted in a particular context, whereas a feeling, being universal, can cross time.”

The recorded history of the Black race was not without feeling or sentiment. On the contrary, it held dark truths and dark truths such as those found in court records, documents, or newspaper articles are filled with emotion. The hanging of a runaway, a slave auction held on a cement block in Charleston’s harbor resulting in the separation of families and loved ones, and the rapes and beatings of servants remembered and recorded should not be forgotten. In Duberman’s words, “here is a people who maintained their humanity while being treated inhumanly, who managed to endure as men while being defined as property.”

There are inherent difficulties in revisiting a past consumed with pain and degradation and for this reason many Whites as well as Blacks are reluctant to do so. “The revelations are painful, but they must be faced if the present is to be understood, and the future made more tolerable.” Duberman chose to confront the history of the Blacks onstage using documentary to:

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172 Ibid.
173 Ibid.
174 Ibid.
…combine the evocative power of the spoken word with the confirming power of historical fact. The spoken word is able to call forth the binding emotions of pity and sympathy. Men would feel, not merely understand, the Negro’s story. His experiences might thereby become our own, past reality might enter into present consciousness. The resulting compassion would be further validated by the documentary format.\textsuperscript{175}

In order to maintain authenticity, the play was presented exactly as recorded. Verbatim records were vitally important even though none were recorded in their entirety. “… but in editing I have not added or paraphrased except in those very few cases where a word or two was absolutely necessary for clarity or transition.”\textsuperscript{176} The cast consisted of three White and three Black actors (two men and one woman in each scenario). Various scenes were dramaturgically connected through the voice of a narrator or by refrains from well-known spirituals, poems, and verse sung by the actors and actresses. A cappella voices and guitar solos were incorporated as background music at the beginning and end of acts and scene changes. Stage settings were kept to a minimum while lighting was used for highlighting and emphasis. Costumes were composed of simple street clothes chosen by the actors and the set consisted of a plain black drop.\textsuperscript{177}

Undeniably, however, the spoken word was of primary importance.

Act 1 Scene 2 begins with excerpts from Alexander Falonbridge’s \textit{Account of the Slave Trade on the Coast of Africa} published in London in 1788. The deplorable conditions the Negroes faced during the voyage from New Guinea to America are described by the ship’s doctor:

\textsuperscript{175} Duberman, \textit{In White America}, preface.

\textsuperscript{176} Ibid., 8.

\textsuperscript{177} Ibid.
The wretched negroes are immediately fastened together, two and two, by handcuffs on their wrists and by irons rivetted on their legs. They are then sent down between the decks and placed in a space partitioned off for that purpose. They are frequently stowed so close as to admit of no other position than lying on their sides. Nor will the height between decks allow them to stand. …When the sea is rough and the rain heavy it becomes necessary to shut every conveyance by which air is admitted….The confined air produces fevers and fluxes which carry off great numbers of them. The floor of their rooms can be so covered with blood and mucus in consequence of the flux, that it resembles a slaughter-house….  

The WPA Federal Writers Project in the 1930s included interviews with former slaves. Originally published in 1945 by B. A. Botkin in *Lay My Burden Down*, their lives are shared in great detail in Act I Scene 6.

WOMAN: I recollects once when I was trying to clean the house like Ole Miss tells me, I finds a biscuit, and I’s so hungry I et it, ‘cause we never see such a thing as a biscuit… the driver he comes in and he grabs me and starts beating me with that cat-o’-nine-tails, and he beats me till I fall to the floor nearly dead. He cut my back all to pieces, then they rubs salt in the cuts for more punishment. Lord, Lord, honey! Them was awful days.

MAN: My white folks didn’t mind their niggers praying and singing hymns, but some places wouldn’t ‘low them to worship a-tall, and they had to put their heads in pots to sing or pray.

MAN: One thing what make it tough on the niggers was them times when a man and he wife and their children had to be taken ‘way from one another, sold off or taken ‘way to some other state. They was heaps of nigger families that I know what was separated in the time of bondage that I know what was separated in the time of bondage that tried to find they folkse what was gone. But the mostest of ‘em never git together again even after they sot free ‘cause they don’t know where one or the other is.

MAN: Slavery was tough time boss. You just don’t know how tough it was. I can’t ‘splain to you just how bad all the niggers want to get they freedom.  

In 1851 ex-slave Sojourner Truth stood unexpectedly at a Woman’s Rights Convention and offered her testimony. In 1881 her speech was first published in *History*  

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178 Duberman, *In White America*, 11.

179 Ibid., 20-22.
and Women’s Suffrage by suffragettes Elizabeth Cody Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Matilda Gage, and is recalled in Act 1 Scene 10:

Dat man ober dar say dat womin needs to be helped into carriages, and lifted ober ditches, and to hab de best place everywhar. Nobody helps me into carriages, or Ober mud-puddles, or gibs me any best place! And a’nt I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns and no man could head me! And a’n’t I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen ‘em mos’ sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother’s grief, none but Jesus heard me! And a’n’t I a woman?...

Den dat little man in black dar, he say women can’t have as much rights as men, ‘cause Christ wan’t a woman! Whar did your Christ come from? Whar did your Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had nothing to do wid Him.180

J. B. Sanborn in The Life and Letters of John Brown reports that on his way to the gallows after his failed attempt to free the slaves at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, John Brown handed the guard a last message (Act I Scene 12):

I, John Brown, am now quite certain that the crimes of this guilty land will never be purged away but with blood. I had, as I now think vainly, flattered myself that without very much bloodshed it might be done.181

The first Black regiment who fought in the Union Army of the Civil War in 1862 was comprised of ex-slaves who had earned the respect of their commanding officer, Colonel Thomas Wentworth Higginson. In his book, Army Life in a Black Regiment, Higginson reveals what it was like to be White officer in a Black regiment and the make-up of his recruits. This is portrayed in Act I Scene 13:

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180 Duberman, In White America, 29-30.

181 Ibid., 31.
Their religious spirit grows more beautiful to me in living longer with them. Imbued from childhood with the habit of submission, they can endure everything. Their religion also gives them zeal, energy, daring. They could easily be made fanatics, if I chose, but I do not choose. Their whole mood is essentially Mohammedan, perhaps, in its strength and its weakness. The white camps seem rough and secular, after this…

B. A. Botkin’s _Lay My Burden Down_ contains reminiscences of the slave’s first taste of freedom immediately following the Civil War, recalled in Act II Scene I:

NEGRO MAN: We was free. Just like that we was free. Right off colored folks started on the move. They seemed to want to get closer to freedom, so they’d know what it was- like it was a place or a city…

NEGRO WOMAN: A heap of people say they going to name theirselves over. They name theirselves big names. Some of the names was Abraham, and some called theirselves Lincum. Any big name ‘cepting their master’s name.

NEGRO MAN: They makes us git right off the place, just like you take a old hoss and turn it loose. That how us was. No money, no nothing.

What I likes best, to slave or free? Well, it’s this way. In slavery I owns nothing and never owns nothing. In freedom I’s own the home and raise the family. All that cause me worriment, and in slavery I has no worriment, but I takes the freedom.

In 1866 when the Republican Party gained control in both houses of Congress, Blacks were afforded the right to vote. This enraged southern Whites, which led to a major growth in the Ku Klux Klan. Violent acts against Blacks were reported and Klansmen who were caught as perpetrators went to trial. In Act II Scene 5,

PROSECUTOR: What was the purpose of the Ku Klux Klan? What were the raids for?

KLANSMAN: To put down radicalism, the raids were for. …

PROSECUTOR: Now, will you state to the jury what was done on these raids?

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182 Duberman, _In White America_, 34.

183 Ibid., 37-38.
KLANSMAN: Yes sir. We were ordered to meet at Howl’s Ferry, and went and whipped five colored men. Presley Holmes was the first they whipped, and then went on and whipped Jerry Thompson; went then and whipped Charley Good, James Leach, and Amos Lowell.

PROSECUTOR: How many men were on these raids?

KLANSMAN: I think there was twenty in number.

PROSECUTOR: How were they armed and uniformed?

KLANSMAN: They had red gowns, and had white covers over their horses. Some had pistols and some had guns.…Something over their heads came down. Some of them had horns on.

PROSECUTOR: What was the object in whipping those five men you have named?

KLANSMAN: The object in whipping Presley Holmes, was about some threats he had made about him going to be buried in Salem graveyard…They whipped Jerry Thompson at the next place; told him never to go to any more meetings; to stay at home and attend to his own business.…they whipped him (Charley Good) very severe; they beat him with a pole and kicked him down on the ground.

PROSECUTOR: What did they tell him?

KLANSMAN: To let radicalism alone; if he didn’t his doom would be fatal.184

Many Blacks went unprotected and were tortured. “From 1878 to 1915 over 3000 Negroes were lynched in the South—a necessary protection it was said against Negro rapists. Yet most lynchings were either for no offense or for such causes as “Insult,” Bad Reputation,” “Running Quarantine,” “Frightening Children by Shooting at Rabbits,” or “Mistaken Identity.”185

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184 Duberman, In White America, 45-47.

185 Ibid., 50.
Duberman’s *In White America* goes on to identify crimes and injustices committed against the Negroes throughout the 1940s and 50s. The script includes racially charged topics such as segregation at home and in the military, economic exploitation at the workplace, and segregation in schools throughout the United States. All are addressed and documented. In order to display a union of solidarity, the *Declaration of Independence* was read in unison by all of the actors at the conclusion of the play.

*In White America* was well-received by Blacks and Whites alike. Well-known Black playwright of the 1960s, Lofton Mitchell, remembers it as an “exciting venture.” “Martin Duberman…revealed Negro history in daring theatrical terms. He offered to theatre audiences a daring dramatic piece….”

The coveted Vernon Rice/Drama Desk Award was awarded to *In White America* as the best off-Broadway production of the 1963 season. It was later made into a television movie that furthered its exposure, insuring that a larger segment of the viewing public would be aware of the history of the treatment of Blacks in America.

It wasn’t until the late 1950s and early 60s when protests against segregation erupted into boycotts, sit-ins, marches, and voter registration drives. The NAACP evolved into an organized front and the voices of Black citizens were finally heard. Theatre was reflective of these events and as a result, a proliferation of talented Black playwrights came into prominence during this period. As established poet and playwright August Wilson in a 1966 speech titled, “The Ground on Which I Stand” states,

Ron Miller, Ed Bullins, Phillip Hayes Dean, Richard Wesley Lonnie Elder III, Sonia Sanchez, Barbara Ann Teer, and Amiri Baraka were among those playwrights who were particularly vocal and whose talent confirmed their

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presence in the society and altered the American theatre, its meaning, its craft, and its history. The brilliant explosion of black arts and letters of the 1960’s remains, for me, the hallmark and the signpost that points the way to our contemporary work on the same ground.  

Black authors were prepared to document their own experiences and discuss the myths and truths that separated them from recognition in the past. What ensued was a movement that “lay in a racially conscious, racially derived and racially directed theatre…It was urban in setting and tone, didactic in intent and self-consciously concerned with elaborating a pantheon of black heroes and villains.”

Author and playwright Lofton Mitchell sums the era of Black progress with a warning:

The theatre tomorrow will…remain much as it is today unless there is a real change in this society. The one hope is that those groups in the ghetto areas - the townships composed of poor whites, Puerto Ricans, and Negroes - will create drama as it was intended, as a living instrument that educates, communicates and entertains, an instrument that has a life commitment.

Critic Richard Gillman recognized that one of the main hurdles facing Black dramatists was the incipient attitude of the White audience member who brought his/her own set of prejudices and expectations to the theatre:

Negro suffering is not the same kind as ours. Under the great flawless arc of the Graeco-Roman and Judeo-Christian traditions we have implicitly believed that all men essentially experience the same things, that birth, love, pain, self, death are universals; they are in fact what we mean by universal values in literature and consciousness. But the Negro has found it almost impossible in America to experience the universal as such: the power after all, is conferred upon the individual, or rather conferred for him by his membership in the community of men.

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188 Bigsby, Beyond Broadway, 395.
189 Mitchell, Black Drama, 235.
Martin Duberman played a unique role in bridging “the community of men” with his production of *In White America*. Because of the nature of the times and the willingness of others to listen, he was able to participate in advancing a culture that had long been stagnant. By enlisting documentary as his theatre of choice he was able to relate the history of the Blacks in America with veracity and authority. The audience, composed of Blacks as well as Whites, was stunned by what it saw and heard. It learned about a culture that had long been mistreated and neglected; a culture that in the 1960s was in a state of change. Feelings were shared and conversations begun about what it was to be *Black in White* America.

**Anna Deveare Smith (1950-)**

Anna Deveare Smith, playwright, actor, director, and producer is one of the leading documentarians of the new millennium. Smith never has been afraid of approaching conflict head-on and, when recording seemingly unmanageable controversial events, takes care not to incite revolution but encourage *resolution*. This she does through documentary theatre. By weaving the stories and words of the participants into a chronological script that she herself acts out onstage, Smith’s aim is to present both sides of a confrontation fairly—without placing blame or judgment in order to educate. In Smith’s words, “I don’t think that I write with the intention of causing things to happen. I really write with intention of calming things down - certainly that’s the case with my most recent pieces, which were about riots [*Fires in the Mirror*, 1993 and *Twilight: Los Angeles*, 1994]. I didn’t go to Crown Heights or to Los Angeles with the idea of riling
things up. I don’t think I could have. Because I report on real life, and at this point, it takes care of itself.”

Without attempts at bias or interpretation, the people she interviews and the words they share are treated with respect and honesty. Smith is concerned with not necessarily what those interviewees have to say, but how, through words and inflection, they say it:

Words have always held a particular power for me…if I listened carefully to people’s words, and particularly to the rhythms, then I could use language to learn about my own time. If I could find a way to really inhabit the words of those around me…I could learn about the spirit, the imagination, and the challenges of my own time, firsthand.

Smith tells of her grandfather’s belief that, “If you say a word often enough, it becomes you.” This firmly held conviction has remained and influenced her throughout her career. “I was still a student at the time, but I knew even then, even before I had made a conscious decision to teach as well as act, that my grandfather’s words would be important.”

It is Smith’s desire not only to interview the parties involved, but to “get under their skin” by listening, observing, understanding, and ultimately sharing their experiences. Smith says, “My goal has been to find American character in the ways that people speak.” She does this by choosing her questions wisely, carefully editing, and


193 Ibid., xxiv.

194 Ibid.

195 Ibid., xxiii.
finally, through body gestures and tonal inflections, developing into these characters onstage. “She says it is not her job to like or dislike the people she interviews, but to love the characters she makes out of them.”

Dramaturgically, Smith follows a chronologically linear line, using words instead of actions to propel the story line forward. By relating the interviews sequentially, according to events as they unfold,

You get information about what happened before and what’s going to happen, and people cause action with each other through their words. And on a less obvious level, on a less literal level, there’s a visceral action that’s going on so that the words you hear in the theater don’t just go to your head, but they go into your whole system, and if there’s a catharsis it’s because the words get into you.

By confronting the audience dressed as each subject interviewed: wearing a hat, vest, chain, babushka, tattoo, dreadlocks, yarmulke, etc., her characters take on new meaning. Through the use of cards and placards, the audience is consciously made aware of each individual’s circumstance and their relation to the event. They are believed because what they are hearing and seeing are recorded verbatim and are based on fact. These participants, whose names and occupations Smith includes in the play and in the program, are mostly recognizable, having been documented and featured in newspaper headlines, television news, and court reports.

When discussing her solo documentary performances, Smith explains that she consciously makes “a decision not to reveal myself, not to use my own voice. But I think that if a person were to look at my work carefully or reflect on it, they would see that they

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learn a lot about me - mainly because they see me attempting to be someone else, and they see my failure as well as my success.”\(^\text{198}\) Jonathan Kalb suggests that “the fact that she was always visible beneath the intensely studied character surfaces was what gave the pieces their strangely persuasive texture. The ever-changing split in her persona assured spectators of the constant presence of a discerning editorial eye and selective, framing hand.”\(^\text{199}\)

**Fires in the Mirror (1991)**

Smith wrote the documentary play, *Fires in the Mirror*, in response to an incident that occurred in Crown Heights, Brooklyn in August, 1991. A car carrying a Lubavitcher Hasidic Rebbe was hit broadside by another vehicle that ran a red light. The Rebbe’s car, in turn, ran over a curb injuring a little Black girl while killing her seven-year-old cousin, Gavin Cato. That same evening, in retaliation, young members of a Black gang stabbed and killed twenty-nine year old Yankel Rosenbaum, a visiting Haisidic scholar from Australia, while he was walking alone to his apartment. Sixteen-year-old Lemrick Nelson, Jr. was arrested for the killing but later was acquitted of all charges in Rosenbaum’s death. The driver of the car that killed Cato, Yosef Lifsh, left the United States for Israel soon afterward. These incidents incited rioting in the streets of Crown Heights for days, polarizing both communities.\(^\text{200}\)

The Black and Jewish communities of Crown Heights had been fostering pent-up tensions long before these incidents occurred. As events on the streets and in the courts


\(^{200}\) Smith, *Fires in the Mirror* (1993), xliii-xliv.
unfolded, each side purportedly became increasingly dissatisfied with the courts, the police, and the mayor - as well as with each other, further extending the community’s polarization. As author Cornel West observes, “If one cannot trust people as citizens in the public sphere one must close ranks and trust only those in one’s tribe, and tribal strife in America is usually racial in content.”

When documentarian Anna Deveare Smith stepped in to record their stories, both sides were eager to comply in order to be heard. Smith doesn’t pretend to hide behind the characters she portrays. Instead she relishes the fact that she is a Black woman who is comfortable representing twenty-six characters of all persuasions in *Fires in the Mirror*. A White older Yiddish woman; a teenage member of the “hood;” an aging priest; the Australian brother of the slain student; the Reverend Al Sharpton; and Carmel Cato, the father of the slain child, are a few of the roles she interprets. Not unlike Brecht’s Alienation-Effect, “Smith does not wear make-up or manipulate lighting to appear to be the white woman she is portraying. In fact, Smith accentuates the difference - racial and other - between herself and her subjects. That a black woman is playing a white woman is part of the meaning of the piece.”

Smith begins her journey through the neighborhood of Crown Heights with the interview of Rabbi Joseph Spielman on November 12, 1991. Rabbi Spielman relates the events as they were revealed to him and as he understands them. He tells of the driver’s intention to aid the young child pinned under the car immediately after the accident, but

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was prevented from doing so by the crowd on the street who beat him, requiring stitches to his scalp and face. He tells of the passengers in the car, their call to 911 and of their fear when their phone is stolen, and being taunted by screams of “Kill all Jews” and “Heil Hitler.” Three EMS ambulances and three police cars respond immediately while an 

Hasidic ambulance follows. Because of the potential for more beatings and involvement from the mixed crowd, the police send all but one of the passengers in the car home in the Hasidic ambulance. The remaining passenger, who has witnessed the entire event, calls Rabbi Spielman who comes to the scene and takes him away.203

The next interview is with The Reverend Canon who tells about the entourage that accompanies the Grand Rebbe and how he is whisked quickly through his neighborhood on a weekly basis. He feels this speeding and resulting accident justifiably leads to rioting in the streets and that the neighborhood is currently in a “Mexican stand-off.” “…it’s gonna happen again.”204

Norman Rosenbaum, the slain scholar’s brother from Australia, declares that the only reason that his brother was killed was because of his Jewish religion. “When my brother was stabbed four times, each and every American was stabbed four times…it was the gravest of indictments against this country.”205

The last interview is with Carmel Cato, Gavin Cato’s father, who, as a primary witness, remains traumatized by the death of his son. Carmel Cato had a premonition


204 Ibid., 88.

205 Ibid., 103-104.
prior to the accident that something was about to happen - not just to him, but to us.\textsuperscript{206}

Having fasted for two weeks before his son’s death he reveals in mystical terms,

“Something wrong somewhere but I didn’t want to see it. I could feel it, but I didn’t want to see.”\textsuperscript{207}

The Jewish people, they told me
There are certain people I cannot be seen with
and certain things I cannot say
and certain people I cannot talk to.
They made that very clear to me - the Jewish people -
they can throw the case out
unless
I go to them with pity. …
But I was born with my foot.
I’m one of the special.
There’s no way they can overpower me.
No there’s nothing to hide,
you can repeat every word I say.\textsuperscript{208}

Smith reveals that there is a lot more to understand than just the incidents themselves. The car accident and resulting death of Gavin Cato and the murder of the visiting scholar, Yankel Rosenbaum, are found at the apex of long standing problems between two cultures; cultures that are so unique and convoluted in their diversity and ethnicity that they are crying out to be recognized and comprehended. The court records and police reports seem inconsequential after listening to Smith’s narratives, which are not only responsive to the human side of events, but are equally inclusive of both the Black and Jewish communities. Pivoting between the testimonies of individuals from both cultures, she understands that “American character lives not in one place or the

\textsuperscript{206} Lewis and Smith, “The Circle of Confusion,” 64.

\textsuperscript{207} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{208} Smith, \textit{Fires in the Mirror} (1997), 138.
other, but in the gaps between the places, and in our struggle to be together in our differences.”

When asked specifically why she chose the title, *Fires in the Mirror*, Smith responds, “The reason I use the image of the mirror is that we think of the stage as the mirror of society, the thing that shows us back what we are, that shows us our identity, and right now fire is in the mirror. There are plural fires, not just one fire; fires are in the mirror.”

In response to Smith’s handling of the Crown Heights controversy, Cornel West acknowledges,

Smith knows that there can be no grappling with Black anti-Semitism and Jewish anti-Black racism without a vital public sphere and that there can be no vital public sphere without genuine bonds of trust. As an artist, she knows that public performance has a unique capacity to bring us together- to take us out of our tribal mentalities- for self-critical examination and artistic pleasure. *Fires in the Mirror* is one sure sign, an oasis of hope, that human art can triumph in the face of a frightening urban crisis- a crisis symptomatic of a national tragedy.

*Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992*

While Smith’s *Fires in the Mirror* was undergoing a successful run in New York, race riots were underway in Los Angeles in reaction to the beating of a speeding motorist, Rodney King, by Los Angeles City Police. The four officers who conducted the arrest and beating were caught on tape by amateur photographer, George Holliday. The officers involved were brought to trial and later acquitted by a suburban jury on April 29, 1992. In response to the acquittal, angry Blacks pulled a White truck driver from his cab and beat

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him unconscious. The ensuing riots in the ghettos of South Central Los Angeles left 50 people dead, 2,300 injured, and $1 billion in damaged property.²¹² Like Brooklyn Heights, Los Angeles was indeed on fire.

Although the circumstances surrounding the events that led to the rioting in Los Angeles were contextually different than those of Brooklyn Heights, Smith’s reasons for documenting them were the same. “I think that my work…is theatre, but it’s also community work in some ways. It’s a kind of low anthropology, low journalism; it’s a bit of documentary.” ²¹³ “At the same time we speak communally, we also speak specifically. Part of the glory of humanity is the potential for understanding the specific and coming together around it.”²¹⁴

Smith came to “understand the specifics” by interviewing over 200 dissident voices representing various factions of the fractured Los Angeles community. Korean shopkeepers, the mayor of Los Angeles, police officers, gang members, family members of those involved, Latinos, Blacks, the fire chief, the Los Angeles County coroner and many other victims as well as perpetrators had their say. Reminiscent of the Watts riots of 1965, “They reveal the underlying stress in a community that seems to be living not only


²¹⁴ Ibid., 58.
on a geological but also on a sociological fault-line that threatens a new earthquake or volcano daily.\footnote{S. E. Wilmer, \textit{Theatre, Society, and the Nation: Staging American Identities} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 178-179.}

Smith arranges her interviews, about twenty-five altogether, using the same lateral structure as in \textit{Brooklyn Heights}. She begins by establishing the background for the ensuing riots, interviewing those who witnessed the chaos, and ends by summarizing the reflections of those involved. One of the first interviewed, Ted Brisino, a police officer accused of beating Rodney King, explains:

But probably, the things that hurt the most—
Was that
I wanted my children to look up to me
As their father
First,
but I wanted them to look at me as
as a hero.
I didn’t have a hero,
when I was growing up.
I didn’t have a Father.
My Father died when I was eight…
to this day it’s still in the back of my head.
was that he died of a broken heart.\footnote{Anna Deveare Smith, \textit{Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992} (New York: Dramatists Play Service, 2003), 21.}

Rudy Salas, Sr., a Mexican-American, talks about his background and how he grew up hating “gringos.” His grandfather had ridden with Pancho Villa in Mexico and fought General Pershing as a freedom fighter in Chihuahua:

So I grew up with all this rich stuff at home-
And then at school first grade, they started telling me
I was inferior
because I was a Mexican!
And that’s where,
I knew from an early age
I realized I had an enemy
And that enemy—was those nice white teachers.
I wonder what it is?
Why?²¹⁷

The rioting in Los Angeles also concerned the antagonistic relationship that had developed over the years between Blacks and Korean Americans. One case that had been tried a year before the Rodney King trial involved the killing of a Black girl named Latasha Harlins by Korean store owner, Soon Fa Du. Smith included the video surveillance of the shooting in the play in order to show that animosities between the two groups existed prior to the riots of 1992. “For those on the side of Mrs. Du, Latasha was stealing orange juice and beating Mrs. Du with a chair; for those on the side of Harlins, Du shot her in the back over a carton of orange juice which Latasha had no intention of stealing.”²¹⁸ Many of those interviewed blamed the light sentencing Du received as a direct cause for the looting and burning of Korean-owned shops during the riots. Community activist Gina Rae, AKA Queen Malkah, volunteers the following,

Because justice denied Latasha Harlins
Is justice denied every American citizen.
And the sentencing of Soon Ja Du,
Was a five-hundred-dollar fine,
“restitution of the funeral expenses.”
You can’t bury a dog in Los Angeles for five-hundred-dollars….²¹⁹

Korean liquor store owner Jay Woong Yahng tells of the robberies he has had to endure at his own store and the hate he feels towards the perpetrators by explaining,

²¹⁸ Ibid., 39.
²¹⁹ Ibid., 48.
They wear the big backpack
and they put inside something,
a soda, whatever.
After that I really hate this country.
I really hate.
We are not like customer and owner
But just like enemy.\textsuperscript{220}

One of Smith’s most insightful interviews is with Alice Waters, owner and executive chef of the Chez Panisse restaurant in Berkeley. She insists that families would be better off if they would sit around the dinner table and communicate as they have in the past:

It’s healing
And I think that’s what the table is!
It’s an offering to nourish people!
And the more you’re out there
The more you realize
what’s upstream is coming downstream…
you know
we’re all
sort of connected here.\textsuperscript{221}

After a jury tried and acquitted the police officers involved in Rodney King’s beating, one of the jurors spoke out about the ordeal that he and fellow jurors had experienced following the trial:

You know I knew that
There would be people unhappy with the verdict…
If I had known what was going to happen…
I mean it’s not fair to say I would have voted a different way
I wouldn’t have, that’s not our justice system.
But I would have written a note to the judge saying
“I can’t do this” because of what it put my family through….\textsuperscript{222}

\textsuperscript{220} Smith, \textit{Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992}, 47.

\textsuperscript{221} Ibid., 155-156.

\textsuperscript{222} Ibid., 56.
Smith chooses the last voice to be that of Twilight Bey, organizer of a gang truce held after the rioting in Los Angeles. Smith says she chose him to end the play because “out of forty-six people he made it clear he had to have the last word. So the end of the show was not a problem. That part was organic.” When he metaphorically speaks of himself as light and dark, day and night, he unknowingly addresses all of those who are caught in “between the gaps:”

I see the darkness as myself
I see the light as knowledge and the wisdom
of the world and understanding others.
And in order for me to be… a true human being.
I can’t forever dwell in darkness.
I can’t forever dwell in the idea,
j ust identifying with people like me, and understanding me and mine.
So twilight
is
that time
between day and night
limbo
I call it limbo.

Anyone from Los Angeles who attended or read Smith’s *Twilight* was forced to look in the mirror and see themselves and those around them—scars and all. Instead of closure, Smith exposed truths about race relations and social injustices. She gave some sense of order to situations that had none. *Twilight* permitted each “warring tribe” to recognize its position in context with others, as part of a larger community. This needed to be done in order to repair relationships, heal, and move on with their lives.

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Conclusion

Documentary’s evolution from the epic stage productions of Piscator and Brecht; to the Federal Theatre Project’s “Living Newspapers;” to Duberman’s documentary play, *In White America*; and finally to the verbatim plays of Anna Deveare Smith has been a long progression. Piscator and Brecht, through the use of mechanizations and theories, laid the groundwork necessary for future documentary theatre artists on which to build. Through them we learned that documentary educates with purpose. It heightens the emotions cathartically, calling upon the audience member to *think* and hopefully act upon those emotions in a positive and constructive manner.

Molly Flannigan and The Living Newspaper presentations during the 1930s Depression instilled in all who attended the hope and possibility of transforming lives for the better. Martin Duberman’s documentation of the Black race *In White America* during the 1960s period of unrest and polarization defined the history behind the racial divisions that existed and which needed to be addressed in order to change. Anna Deveare Smith’s verbatim plays provided examples on how communities could explore moral and social issues through role-playing in theatre. Her dialogues precipitated conversations between various factions within the community - each one learning from the other.

The examples given have pointed out that by engaging in dialogue, borders are crossed and changes are made. As Smith’s plays suggest, ignorance and denial contribute to divisiveness and confrontation. Only through *understanding* is healing likely to occur, and documentary theatre is one method that provides the opportunity.
Chapter 2

Dramaturgical Duties and Audience Responsibilities

If you want to tell the untold stories, if you want to give voice to the voiceless, you’ve got to find a language, which goes for film as well as prose, for documentary as well as autobiography. Use the wrong language and you’re dumb and blind.

--Salmon Rushdie

If he has them in his power, no matter what we may believe in ordinary life, in the theatre we must believe as the poet wills.

-- Gotthold Ephriam Lessing, Essays on German Theatre

The move from ritual to theatre happens when a participating audience fragments into a collection of people who attend because the show is advertised, who pay admission, who evaluate what they are going to see before, during, and after seeing it. The move from theater to ritual happens when the audience is transformed from a collection of separate individuals into a group or congregation of participants.

-- Richard Schechner, Performance Theory

As outlined in Chapter 1, the history of documentary and its evolution from drama to verbatim has been a long but noteworthy process. What has not been discussed is the role of the dramaturg in its progression. What are the commonalities and differences located within the diegesis of the documentary or verbatim script that coincide with or set it apart from other literary forms? Besides an adherence to truths, what are the factors or unifying elements that lend authenticity and recognition to the presentation as being documentary theatre? What is a dramaturg and what are his/her responsibilities when designing (dramaturg as literary manager) and producing (dramaturg as production manager) documentary for the stage? And finally, what duties are conferred upon the audience member in order to move the play forward to completion?
Beginning in ancient Greece with Aristotle’s *Poetics*, continuing to Hamburg, Germany during Europe’s Age of Enlightenment with playwright Gotthold Ephriam Lessing, leading to Piscator and Brecht’s Epic Theatre, and ending with post-modern productions, the path or role of the dramaturg in writing and production has been an evolving process. At the start of the new millennium, with a proliferation of contemporary dramaturgs entering the fields of literary and production management, the epistemology of the term *dramaturg* has been redefined and grown in complexity in relation to theatre in general and to documentary specifically.

It becomes the function of the dramaturg, in collaboration with the writer (if other than the dramaturg), director, stage manager, actors, set designer, costume designer, and lighting and sound designers during the process of writing and staging documentary, to analyze and to incorporate various elements into the text as well as into onstage productions in order to provide authentication. Following Piscator’s epic tradition, these authentications, signs, or *didascaliae* as Aristotle referred to them in *Poetics*, can be incorporated as documents, transcripts, films, photographs, posters, flags, and other props and mechanizations in order to provoke awareness and to provide authenticity.

Documentary relies not only on the collective efforts of the writer, director, actors, and others involved in production to move the play from “page to stage,” but the audience member is also recognized as playing a pivotal role in its progression. The spectator is considered an integral part of the theatrical community for without audience recognition, understanding, and, finally, “coming to terms” with the presentation, there would be no lessons learned or ideas shared. In this regard, dramaturgical analysis is dependent on the reflexive contributions of audience members expressed in post-
performance discussions and questionnaires. As in the past, pedagogy remains the primary dramaturgical and literary focus in playwriting and production of documentary theatre.

**Aristotle’s Poetics (330 B.C.)**

All forms of drama trace their origins to the pedagogical lessons found in Aristotle’s Poetics. Aristotle (384 BC-322 BC) wrote *Poetics* in response to the views of his predecessor Plato (429 BC-348 BC), who believed that all poetry was based solely on imitation and therefore was fictitious and not to be believed. Plato also was concerned with the psychological effects of drama on human behavior. If the mimesis that drama created was viewed pleasurably, then the public or viewing audience would be prone to mimic or copy the actions of the actors in their daily lives. Plato therefore viewed comedy negatively, for if the performance involved lewd or unruly behavior, members of the viewing audience might replicate that behavior. He summarily felt comedy served no worthwhile purpose and dismissed it as an art form. He ultimately believed that all poets and those who took part in poetic indulgences such as theatre and art practiced “mimicry” and therefore were unworthy of entering into his “state of ideals.”

Aristotle disagreed with his predecessor. Considered a lover of plays, Aristotle collected and studied the works of fifth century classicists such as Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. As writer, philosopher, and educator, Aristotle was not content to be merely entertained by theatrical productions, but instead concentrated on their dramatic technique and plot construction. He believed that drama was valuable in

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that it served as an artistic re-creation of life and, as such, broadened man’s understanding and concept of “truths.” One learned by “doing,” which was the very definition of drama. He also believed that through tragedy, which contained the elements of pity and fear, the actor and audience were able to purge their emotions, leading to a state of cleansing or cathartic healing. After releasing emotions through catharsis, the audience was able to return to a more dignified or “controlled” state. Aristotle was not opposed to comedy, but felt tragedian drama more natural, more true to life, and therefore more cathartic. By dividing tragedy into the six elements of plot, character, diction, thought, spectacle, and song, Aristotle was able to define theatrical invention. He considered a plot’s structure, composed of a beginning, middle, and end, to be the most important of the elements. Each tragedy was to employ a series of cause and effects in order to incite emotion in the spectator.  

Aristotle’s observations on dramatic form and function created an entirely new methodology and practice of drama, which has since become the backbone of the formalist approach. As James Thomas explains:

First, he summarized the basics of drama and analyzed their inner workings and possible combinations. Second, he insisted on the importance of the artistic nature of plays. Third, he reduced concern with outside realistic or moral issues and emphasized instead strict attention to inner structural design, placing special emphasis on the importance of plot as a unifying feature. Fourth, his method was inductive rather than prescriptive. These four principles together make up the heart of the formalist tradition in criticism.

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Considered the “Ur” text on dramaturgy, *Poetics* has been subject to the art and science of hermeneutics throughout the centuries.\(^{229}\) These scholarly interpretations have concurred on the effectiveness of the principles Aristotle formulated centuries ago. Bert O. States understands the importance of *Poetics* to the playwright when he suggests it “offers an ideal yardstick, for if we want to know what something is and how it behaves, we need a standard against which to judge it, and the *Poetics* … is our most durable and straightforward description of what drama is and how it does what it does.”\(^{230}\) With the introduction of plot, Aristotle was able to transform religious ritual and historical imagery as witnessed by the ancients into drama. *Poetics* remains relevant and continues to be taught in theatre studies classes on college and university campuses today. During Europe’s golden Age of Enlightenment, German playwright and scholar Gotthold Ephriam Lessing studied, practiced, and taught Aristotle’s lessons on dramatic form.

**Gotthold Ephriam Lessing (1729-1781)**

The end of the Thirty Years War marked the beginning of the eighteenth century Age of Enlightenment in Germany as well as in the rest of Europe. Although possessing newfound freedoms to analyze and to explore, many scholars were reluctant to change, for change meant the end of French dominance in society and in the arts. Philosophers such as Kant, Hegel, and Nietzsche regarded this as a period of opportunity for men of all races, religions, and financial circumstances to aspire to the best of their capabilities. This also proved to be an era marked with trial and error. The Enlightenment became an age of

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\(^{230}\) Ibid., 48.
cautious optimism where improvements were steadily being realized in Germany’s
cultural as well as political landscape.

Playwright and critic Gotthold Ephriam Lessing became an important member of
the intellectual community during Germany’s pursuit to improve its standing in literature
and in the arts. Recognizing that drama was connected to German national identity or
*Bildung*, Lessing strove to improve the condition of the common man by establishing
theatre as a provider of “spiritual and intellectual nourishment.”231 It was his desire to
avoid French neo-classicism, which German playwrights in the past were fond of
imitating, and to create an entirely new theatre, one that would be reflective of
Germany’s newly acquired nationalism.

Prior to this period, “theatre” for the poor and disenfranchised was produced by
strolling bands of actors who based their skits on political “dramas” similar to those
formally found in Italian commedia dell’ Arte productions. Actors wearing makeshift
costumes staged performances on street corners, in courtyards, or wherever there
happened to be a public gathering. The players had no set scripts; more often than not the
“staged” plays were highly political as well as satirical, poking fun at local politicians as
well as the aristocracy. With no written text to incriminate, the threat of incarceration was
avoided. A hat was passed after each performance and the commedia troop moved on to
the next available venue.

“… (T)he rising class of the bourgeoisie … had no public forum in which they
might effect social change or influence the course of political life; so the theatre could be

231 Martin Esslin, forward to *Essays on German Theatre*, ed. Margaret Herzfeld-Sander (New
York: Continuum, 1985), xiii.
looked on as the one place where moral and social issues might be debated in public.”

It was Lessing’s desire to elicit change by making theatre accessible to all, primarily to improve and to elevate Germanic culture and theatre. “In such a culture the theater is perceived as part of the educational infrastructure, on a level with museums, libraries, and universities…”

Raised in a clergyman’s family in a small village in northern Saxony, Lessing showed early promise as a classical scholar. Despite their poor circumstances, his parents enrolled him in classes at the University of Leipzig in the hope of young Gotthold becoming a theologian or a doctor in order to help support the family. Lessing, however, had other ideas. Dramatist friends such as C. F. Weisse and actress Karoline Neuber, who began her career with the strolling players, propelled his interest towards classical studies with a focus in theatre, leading Lessing into such avant-garde fields as playwriting and literary criticism.

After several unsuccessful playwriting attempts, Lessing’s first well-received play, Miss Sara Sampson, opened in 1755. Miss Sara Sampson was considered innovative because of its subject matter, which traced the life of a German commoner rather than a member of the French bourgeoisie. In an essay written during this period, Lessing revealed,

… names of princes and heroes can lend pomp and majesty to a play, but they contribute nothing to our emotion. The misfortunes of those whose circumstances most resemble our own, must naturally penetrate most deeply into our hearts, and if we pity kings, we pity them as human beings, not as kings. Though their

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233 Esslin, forward, xiii.
position often renders their misfortunes more important, it does not make them more interesting. 234

Rather than concentrate on events staged in the past, and in order to promote the German concept of Bildung or national identity, Lessing chose to archive modern Germany by writing plays in German rather than in French as his predecessors had done. In Minna von Barnhelm (1967), he traced a Prussian soldier’s path during the Seven Years War (1756-63) and told of his relationship with Minna, a Saxon girl, in an “appeal for reconciliation” between the hostile states involved in the war. 235 Due to the outspokenness of the heroine and the union of the two lovers at the end of the play, Minna von Barnhelm was considered Germany’s first national comedy. 236 Well received by the German public, Minna von Barnhelm firmly established Lessing as playwright.

In order to accept the position as head of Germany’s first National Theatre and resettle in Hamburg, Lessing was forced to sell his extensive library collection. He used a portion of the money earned from the auction to write and publish the first critical analysis of plays, actors, and playwrights in a series of reviews he titled, The Hamburgische Dramaturgie or Hamburg Dramaturg. Lessing created the term dramaturg or “composer of drama” from the Greek root word drama meaning “to make” or “to work.” 237 Even though his criticisms were painfully harsh on the actors and productions, The Hamburg Dramaturg was well-received and the term “dramaturg” was


accepted by the theatre-attending public. An article appearing in the Times dated November 17, 1859 reported, “Schiller was starving on a salary of 200 dollars per annum which he received... for his services as dramaturge [French spelling ends in “e”] or literary manager.”

Despite the fact that Lessing had validated himself as a dramaturg and Germany had established its first National Theatre, the project failed within one year due to lack of public support and complaints and bickering among the actors and management. It did not help that Lessing was part of the controversy. His published essays in the Hamburg Dramaturg were highly critical and brutally honest of both actors and playwrights’ abilities, which did not aid in attracting playgoers. Eventually, when denied the freedom to choose his own theatre’s repertory, Lessing responded,

To what end the hard work of dramatic form? Why build a theatre, disguise men and women, torture their memories, invite the whole town to assemble at one place if I intend to produce nothing more with my work and its representation, than some of those emotions that would be produced as well by any good story that everyone could read by his chimney-corner at home? The dramatic form is the only one by which pity and fear can be excited, at least in no other form can these passions be excited to such a degree.

After leaving Hamburg in 1779, Lessing scripted his best known and well-received play, Nathan the Wise. Lessing’s intent was to instill racial and religious tolerance in others by examining the relationship of Judaism, Catholicism, and Protestantism. Nathan the Wise “encouraged writers to discard the constraints of the neo-classical rules and to risk the portrayal of wider historical themes, using a multiplicity of

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239 Lessing, “Hamburg Dramaturgy,” Sec. 80, 15.
settings and a wide range of characters.” Nathan was the first major play in German drama to contain free or blank verse, becoming a prototype for epic playwrights such as Erwin Piscator and Bertholt Brecht more than a century later.

Lessing concentrated on tragic drama and its relationship to history because of his interest in the plight of the common man. He also acknowledged there were lessons to be learned about the past that could be transmitted through theatre. As historian, Lessing believed in facts as truths, but as playwright and poet he felt that drama gave him the liberty to include cause and effect, freeing him from handling facts in an exact and precise manner. He understood that through dramaturgy, the poet “… rearranges, interchanges, reduces and increases the parts of the actual world.” The dramatist “does not make use of an event because it really happened, but because it happened in such a manner that he could scarcely invent more fitly for his present purpose. […] From the stage we are not to learn what such and such an individual man has done, but what every man of a certain character would do under certain given circumstances.”

Through his plays and dramaturgical writings, Lessing exposed Germany to a new way of looking at theatre, elevating its stature to an art form of importance. Despite facing criticism from actors and audience for changing the style, language, and content of German plays produced during his lifetime, Lessing’s theories on drama continue to have import on playwrights today. He strove for truth and perfection, and as biographer H. B. Garland noted, “Lessing’s style is noteworthy for its extreme relevance. It is always

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concise, always bearing on the subject, never discursive or evocative.”

Hamburg Dramaturg not only provided the first published works on theatre criticism and dramaturgy, but with Lessing’s insistence that they be written in German, they proved essential in establishing a German National Theatre with an identity of its own.

**Erwin Piscator and Bertholt Brecht**

As noted in Chapter 1, Erwin Piscator and Bertholt Brecht revolutionized German theatre by producing “proletarian” or “Epic Theatre” to include and to inform all classes. They not only incorporated multiple stage devices to assist in production and prevent illusion, but like their predecessor Lessing, dramaturgically reshaped texts in order to fit their political ideologies. By combining dramatic and narrative techniques that included the audience member as an active participant, they were able to redefine theatre in the hope of causing change.

“The theatre had the task of showing the proletarian as a rebel and the stage as the site of the struggle for a new order. Political drama received its persuasive power through expressionist techniques and the documentary style of Piscator’s stage. […] the objectives were once more to close the gap between art and reality, between stage and audience.”

In Piscator’s words, “[…] it was about the extension of the action, that is to say it involved a continuation of the play beyond the dramatic framework. A didactic

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play was developed from the spectacle-play. This automatically led to the use of stage
techniques from areas which had never been seen in the theater before.”

Brecht defined Piscator’s productions as “experiments” and elaborated on their
meaning by explaining,

While they turned the stage into a machine-room, the auditorium became a public
meeting. Piscator saw the theatre as a parliament, the audience as a legislative
body. To this parliament were submitted in plastic form all the great public
questions that needed an answer. Instead of a Deputy speaking about certain
intolerable social conditions there was an artistic copy of these conditions. It was
the stage’s ambition to supply images, statistics, slogans which would enable its
parliament, the audience, to reach political decisions. It didn’t want only to
provide its spectator with an experience but also to squeeze from him a practical
decision to intervene actively in life.246

Piscator’s widow, Maria Ley-Piscator, explains that it is not necessarily the plot
that moves the play forward in epic theatre, but the “philosophy, the point of view; be it
historical, political, social, or moral … which allows the ideas to become alive.”247 She
goes on to add,

The epic play is not written in acts but in small scenes, each one self-contained.
The conflict of passion does not drive towards any catharsis. It does not portray
any struggle but rests on a situation, showing it, developing it in sequences.
Flashback as well as future visions free the action from time and space and
change the spectator into the observer; who instead of sharing an emotional
climax, can analyze the why and the wherefore. Epic Theatre compels the
spectator to a world outlook instead of a view from the bridge.248

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245 Erwin Piscator, Essays on German Theatre, ed. Margaret Herzefeld-Sander (New York:
Continuum, 1985), 182.


247 Maria Ley-Piscator, The Piscator Experiment: The Political Theatre (New York: James

248 Ibid., 181, 182.
Brecht agreed with Piscator, but also considered fellow German Alfred Doblin’s ideas on *deconstruction* as another excellent example of epic dramaturgy. “The epic writer Doblin provided an excellent criterion when he said that in an epic work, as opposed to a dramatic, one can as it were take a pair of scissors and cut it into individual pieces, which remain fully capable of life.”249 Even though these vignettes, episodes, series of stories, or mise-en-scenes remain singular, they are understood as parts of a whole, and because each possesses the capability of standing alone they are no longer dependent on cause-and-effect or on a sequential linear plotline. This analysis of plot was to emerge later as one of the foundations of the documentary genre.

Brecht was more interested in educating than in entertaining the audience, believing that the epic genre should appeal less to the spectators’ emotions than to their understanding and intake of the message. “To accomplish this, to create theatre in which the audience actually learns the truth about the world, you must first be willing to make it less of a diversion, less of an escapist entertainment.”250 As a result, his theories on epic theatre led to new forms of dramaturgy that transcended the forms of the past. Brecht’s table charting the dramaturgical differences between Aristotelian or “dramatic theatre” and Epic Theatre highlights the *disunities* rather than unities characterizing the two forms, as illustrated in Table 1.

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Table 1

Dramaturgical Differences between Dramatic Theatre and Epic Theatre

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dramatic Theatre</th>
<th>Epic Theatre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• plot</td>
<td>• narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• implicates the spectator in a stage situation</td>
<td>• turns the spectator into an observer, but</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• wears down his capacity for action</td>
<td>• ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• provides him with sensations</td>
<td>• arouses capacity for action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• experience</td>
<td>• forces him to take decisions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the spectator is involved in something</td>
<td>• picture of the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• suggestion</td>
<td>• he is made to face something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• instinctive feelings are preserved</td>
<td>• argument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the spectator is in the thick of it, shares the experience</td>
<td>• brought to point of recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the human being is taken for granted</td>
<td>• the spectator stands outside, studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• he is unalterable</td>
<td>• the human being is object for inquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• eyes on the finish</td>
<td>• he is alterable and is able to alter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• one scene makes another</td>
<td>• eyes on the course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• growth</td>
<td>• each scene for itself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• linear development</td>
<td>• montage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• evolutionary determinism</td>
<td>• curves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• man as a fixed point</td>
<td>• jumps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• thought determines being</td>
<td>• man as a process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• social being determines thought(^{251})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Brecht considered Aristolean dramaturgy as “static; its task is to show the world as it is.” He, however, understood the epic drama or “learning-play” as “essentially dynamic; its task is to show the world as it changes (and how it may be changed).”\(^{252}\) The

\(^{251}\) Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre*, 37.

\(^{252}\) Ibid., 79.
learning-play “holds that the audience is a collection of individuals, capable of thinking and of reasoning, of making judgments even in the theatre; it treats it as individuals of mental and emotional maturity, and believes it wishes to be so regarded. With the learning play, then, the stage begins to be didactic [emphasis added].”

Never losing sight of his Marxist roots, Brecht continued writing and producing politically charged plays. During one of his last interviews with a reporter from Theatre Heute in the 1950s, he revealed that the present day world was capable of being reproduced and transformed by means of theatre “asserting that the solution was political.”

According to J. L. Styan,

Epic theatre adopted the presentational and externalizing elements of expressionism, and at the same time stripped away its inherent sentimentality, taking advantage of any new ground gained for a more objective stage. As a result, the developing epic style most reflected its environment, and best responded to the sensibilities of its place and period. Epic theatre reminded us that the political side of the theatre as a public institution is often primary and always present.

Throughout his career Brecht not only continued in the role of dramaturg/literary manager by writing and arranging script to suit his political purposes, but he also assumed responsibilities in all areas of theatrical production. As director he was provided the freedom to introduce innovations in sound, lighting, scenery, music, and film into his plays; and by maintaining a true collaborative effort with all involved from script to performance, Brecht contributed a substantial legacy to the dramaturgy of postmodern documentary.

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253 Brecht, Brecht on Theatre, 79- 80.

254 Brown, The Oxford Illustrated History of Theatre, 403.

Rolf Hochhuth (1931-), Heinar Kipphardt (1922-1982), and Peter Weiss (1916-1982)

In order to educate a fractured German nation following World War II, three German playwrights intent on pursuing Piscator and Brecht’s epic tradition, wrote politically charged documentary scripts based on events surrounding the war. These writers were Rolf Hochhuth, Heinar Kipphardt, and Peter Weiss, and their best-known scripts included *The Deputy* (1963), *In the Matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer* (1964), and *The Investigation* (1965). Each made its debut under the direction of Erwin Piscator after his return to Berlin, Germany from America in 1951.

In 1962, Piscator was offered and accepted the position of general director of the *Freie Volksbuehne* in West Berlin and it was there that he was introduced to playwright Rolf Hochhuth’s *The Deputy*. Hochhuth based his play on the accusations of a young German priest, Riccardo, and an SS Officer named Gerstein on the failure of Pope Pius XII, representing the Roman Catholic Church, to intercede on behalf of German Jews who met mass extermination at the hands of Hitler’s Third Reich. In the play both Father Riccardo and Gerstein were murdered while the papacy remained silent, refusing to interfere with the politics of Germany. As expected, *The Deputy* proved highly controversial, especially among those of Catholic faith who felt both the Pope and the church had been treated unfairly.

Because of its politically charged subject matter and the realization that it was loosely based on factual material, *The Deputy* was banned in Italy and as a result “only eight theatres in Germany were willing to produce it.”

However, Piscator was thrilled to receive a script pertaining to political events surrounding the war. He understood that,

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256 Brockett and Findlay, *Century of Innovation*, 653.
“This epic play, epic–scientific, epic-documentary, a play for the epic “political” theatre for which I have fought for thirty years …”257 had found meaning in Hochhuth’s script. As biographer C. D. Innes notes, “It is also significant that the play contains no specifically Marxist message. The criteria of human behavior are Christian rather than Communist, and The Deputy is ‘political’ theatre in the general sense of the word. This vindicated Piscator’s belief that a political theatre did not necessarily need to be tied to any particular ideology…”258

Based upon its controversial subject matter, The Deputy was considered groundbreaking theatre during its period. It was, however, accused of being slow, repetitious, and laborious because of Hochhuth’s insertion of numerous fact-filled documents. Nevertheless, Hochhuth defended his dramaturgical process in an addendum to the play entitled, “Sidelights on History:”

… I have done my best to arrange the overlapping items in an order corresponding with the action of the play. Stricter organization proved unfeasible since the same facts often crop up in different scenes - but sometimes as contradictions or in diverse interpretations, as happens in the living flow of dialogue. What is offered here is not scholarly work and is not meant to be. But since neither the Vatican nor the Kremlin as yet permit free access to their archives, historians will have to wait before they can present a comprehensive account of these events. To intuitively combine the already available facts into a truthful whole becomes the noble and rarely realized function of art. Precisely because he is faced with such a plethora of raw material, as well as with such difficulties in collating it, the writer must hold fast to his freedom, which alone empowers him to give form to the matter.259

257 Innes, Erwin Piscator’s Political Theatre, 7.

258 Ibid., 176.

Despite its flaws and criticisms, *The Deputy* was the first of several German documentaries written during this period. Even though its subject matter proved provocative, “… it was effective and sensational, and did much to stimulate the documentary revival.”

Piscator produced Heiner Kipphardt’s tribunal play, *In the Matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer*, in 1964. This documentary was based on the 1954 personnel security hearings organized by the American Atomic Energy Commission’s Security Board in order to examine Oppenheimer’s supposed communist affiliations. Its basic premise explored man’s inherit rights to his personal beliefs, even though they differed from those of his government. Known as the “the father of the atomic bomb,” physicist Oppenheimer expressed his regret at having been involved in its conception. Kipphardt interjected closing remarks at the end of the play, which he understood to be Oppenheimer’s personal sentiments:

… I ask myself whether we, the physicists, have not sometimes given too great, too indiscriminate loyalty to our governments, against our better judgment - in my case, not only in the matter of the hydrogen bomb. We have spent years of our lives in developing ever sweeter means of destruction, we have been doing the work of the military, and I feel it in my very bones that this was wrong. I shall request the Atomic Energy Commission to review the decision of the majority of this Board; but no matter what the result of that review may be, I will never work on war projects again.  

*In the Matter of J. Robert Oppenheimer* contains the testimonies of 6 witnesses out of the 40 who originally testified. Although Oppenheimer openly objected to these omissions, Kipphardt defended his dramaturgy, “The author’s main source is the 3000

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typewritten-page account of the hearings…it is his intention to produce a condensed picture of the hearings, which can be reproduced theatrically, and which does not cause violence to the truth….”

The third documentary Piscator produced during this period was Peter Weiss’ The Investigation (1965). This play was based on the verbatim testimonies of Auschwitz survivors during the War Crimes trials. Like his predecessors, Weiss dramaturgically culled testimonies in order to foreground the truths and expose the horrors of these events. Because of the dramatic import of the content, Piscator kept props and scenery to a minimum and, except for witnesses entering and exiting the courtroom, limited the onstage action.

Although criticized for exploitation, The Investigation was produced in 17 locations in Germany while being simultaneously directed by Peter Brook in London before its arrival in the United States. Each venue was filled to capacity. The public had come to understand and accept the meaning of “true” documentary.

In 1968, after the success of The Investigation, playwright Weiss outlined documentary’s dramaturgical functions in an article titled, “Fourteen Propositions for Documentary.” The following 10 are most relevant for they continue to influence and remain embedded in almost all postmodern documentary productions:

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1. Documentary theatre is based on factual reports and shuns all invention.
2. It selects its material so that it may focus on a precise political or social theme.
3. Its quality is determined by the viewpoint and editing.
4. It is superior to journalistic reporting because it can cut through the camouflages erected by official sources of information.
5. It adopts the attitude of an observer and submits facts to appraisal.
6. … It caricatures personalities and drastically simplifies situations in order to make them more striking; it uses such devices as songs, choruses, pantomime, masks, music, sound effects, and commentary.
7. It takes sides …
8. To be truly effective, it ought to move outside the traditional theatrical framework, which is too subject to official control, and “gain entry into the factories, the schools, the sports grounds, the public halls.”
9. It is possible only in the context of “a stable, working-group, possessing a political and sociological formation.”
10. It is opposed to the absurdist view; “the documentary theatre affirms that reality, whatever the obscurity in which it masks itself, can be explained in minute detail.”

The turn of the millennium continues to find Hochhuth, Weiss, and Kipphardt’s documentaries being studied and produced on campuses today. New German playwrights such as Patrick von Blume (Speeches after September 11, 2002) and Andres Veiel (The Kick, 2005) are continuing Brechtian tradition by including political subject matter in their documentary plays.

Blume’s Speeches after September 11 records the official statements of world leaders in response to the World Trade Center bombings. By employing actors to represent presidential figures such as Bush, Putin, Chirac, Berlusconi, Sharon, and Schroder, von Blume hoped to distance these important personalities from their words and images (reminiscent of Brecht’s Verfremdungseffekt).  

263 Brockett and Findlay, Century of Innovation, 657.

Using material of the moment in a theatre and dramatizing its extremely theatrical implications for its speakers and for a global audience was a highly political act that replaced the ritual of words in theatre as a critical representation with the ritual of words as politics. This is still documentary theatre, but far more informed and reflective - and deconstructed - than that of the previous generation of documentary playwrights.265

The Kick by Andres Veiel is based on the murder of a teenager by neighborhood thugs in the city of Potzlow outside of Berlin in 2002. The boy’s body was left in a sewer where it remained until it was discovered the following year. Playwright and filmmaker Veiel interviewed townspeople and family members of both the 16-year old victim, Marinus Schoberl, and of the perpetrators. The town of Potzlow was in a state of depression, suffering from poverty and unemployment. The boys involved in the killing were reflective of the town’s conditions, and because of the brutality of the crime, the entire community suffered.266 After conducting many interviews, Veiel composed a documentary script that provided an honest, inclusive, and reflexive approach to the difficult situation under which the town suffered, offering a sense of closure and healing.

The differences between the German documentarians of the 1960s and today are not only found in the currency of the subject matter they approach, but in the verbatim interviews of the subjects themselves. In a review of Veiel’s production, German scholar Thomas Irmer contends,


266 Ibid., 27.
The uncertainty principle of physics, which assumes that a given state of affairs can only be approached to a limited extent, and Cubism’s multiple perspectives, which disrupt the simple realistic logic of forms, have wandered into the territory of documentary theatre. Veiel’s production was a critical success, and theatre in Basel and Berlin offered money and venues for various performances. It is rare for this kind of research on such a complex situation to, in the end, produce a refined and published text for theatre. Not a play, in the original sense, but a vivid documentation - a method that ultimately poses more question than it answers. This is what German documentary has become today.  

**Unities of Documentary**

In *Documentary Theatre in the United States*, writer and researcher Gary Fisher Dawson defines three dramaturgical “unities” or commonalities that are characteristically found within the documentary format. These include the Unity of Factual Authenticity or *form*, The Unity of Primary Sources or *content*, and The Unity of Piscatorian Stage Devices pertaining to *stagecraft*. He considers these the primary components or building blocks integral to the documentary genre.

Dawson cites Duberman’s *In White America* as an example of a unity of factual authenticity for its veracity and documented truths. Duberman, historian as well as documentarian, “researches a subject, collects data about a thesis, reaches certain conclusions based upon the analysis, and then reports the results in the form of a published text.” As noted in Chapter I, *In White America* meets the criteria that give function and *form* to documentary.

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269 Ibid., 93.
270 Ibid., 100.
Primary sources or testimonies such as those found in Anna Deveare Smith’s *Fires in the Mirror* and *Twilight: Los Angeles* make up the second unities that concern *content*. Composed from recorded interviews conducted by the playwright, they harbor “truths” found in eyewitness accounts. “One convincing way to assure the playgoer that what is being seen really took place is to use the actual words spoken by the participating agents to an event, circumstance, or situation reenacted on the stage in the form of an aural history, call it rememory theatre. There is something about the internal course of thought of actual speech that rings true to the ear in the way invented dialogue does not.”

These dialogues lend authenticity to the play script because they are verbatim. “The vocal signs, or messages, of key agents in unfolding events of human circumstances between worlds and words, fact and story, provide communication that is not the same as conventional stage dialogue.” Documentary playwright Emily Mann fittingly labels these interviews, *Theatre of Testimony*. Because they are based upon first person eyewitness accounts, they are believed.

The third unity Dawson discusses is the incorporation of Piscatorian *stagecraft* or semiotics into the production. The presentation is enhanced by employing mechanizations such as film footage cast on walls and ceilings; lighting techniques such as highlights and blackouts, photographs and posters; music and voice-overs transmitted

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271 Dawson, *Documentary Theatre*, 104.

272 Ibid., 107.

273 Ibid., 119.

274 Ibid., 120.
throughout the theatre; and smells and scents such as those wafting from meals being prepared onstage. All of the senses are involved and stimulated. By including stage devices such as these, directors and dramaturgs are able to heighten the spectator’s emotions by revisiting memories of the past as well as by providing a new store of memories and ideas on which to base future presentations.

**Semiotics**

Semiotics, or the study of signs, are ways “humans communicate meaning: words, images, behavior, arrangements of many kinds, in which a meaning or idea is relayed by a corresponding manifestation we can perceive.” A smile is just a smile if it is not seen by someone else, but if a smile is noted by others - it is perceived as happiness. The study of signs is based upon French linguist Ferdinand de Saussure’s research at the beginning of the twentieth century. Saussure divides the sign into two parts: the signifier (a hand wave) and the signified (a greeting).

Since Saussure, there have been semioticians such as E. S. Peirce, Roland Barthes, Patrice Pavis, and others who have provided in-depth studies of semiotics and its relation to theatre. They have acknowledged that signs are inherent not only in everyday life, but when performed and presented on stage they are of special significance. Signs clarify *meaning* in performance. The nature of theatre is complex in that “it is not comprised of a single signifying system but, rather, of a multitude of signifying systems.

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276 Ibid., 20.
that each have a dual function: as a literary practice and as a performance practice.”

The script may not only contain dialogue, but explicit stage directions that are to be used in conjunction with the spoken word. For example, the scriptwriter may include directions in the text as to whether the actor should directly address the audience, what props should be included, what stance or glance (Brecht’s *gestus*) the actor should assume, how lighting should be directed, and what sounds or music should be included. It has been suggested that “*everything* is either an artificial or a natural sign” in a theatrical presentation. Taken in their entirety, signs are important players in enhancing and contributing to the production’s interpretive “reading.”

According to Marvin Carlson, theatre’s relationship to semiotics greatly contributes to the “interplay of society and culture.” Nowhere are signs more significantly displayed than in documentary theatre. Whether signs are verbal or nonverbal (often what remains *unspoken* has more import than what is *spoken*), apparent or hidden, documentary depends on signage to enhance, to teach, and to document. For example, Emily Mann’s documentary production of *Having Our Say: The Delany Sisters’ First 100 Years* (1996) employs many such signs. Based upon the book of the same name by biographer Amy Hearth, *Having Our Say* chronicles the lives of 103-year-old Sadie and 101-year-old Bessie Delany. Their father, Henry Beard Delany, was a former slave and the first African-American to rise to the post of Episcopal Bishop. He not only taught his girls (second and third in a line of 10 children) how to navigate through years of

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racism and hardship, but to do so with composure and dignity. Bessie became a dentist as well as an activist in Harlem while her sister Sadie taught school. Choosing to live together in order to draw on each other’s strengths and courage, they were a testimony to life as it could be - one filled with humor, grace, and hope.

Mann’s documentary begins with projections of large screen images of the Delany ancestral home and with a visit to the Delany parlor where a visitor/reporter (the audience) is invited to join in a celebratory dinner. In direct address to the audience Bessie states, “Stay as long as you like. We won’t charge you rent. Truth is, I never thought I’d see the day when people would be interested in what two old Negro women have to say.” The Delanys are preparing the same meal in front of the audience that they have prepared for over 80 years in tribute to their father and family. Metaphorically taken as a ritual of love, the meal consists of the family’s favorite comfort foods: stuffed turkey, ham, vegetables, macaroni, ambrosia salad, and cake. The stage design is an exact replica of the Delany kitchen and drawing room in Mount Vernon and, as indicated in the performance notes, “The set is a memory space.”

Each sister recounts her life experiences, showcasing how far we, as Americans, have advanced in terms of material improvements and mechanizations, but also how slow we have progressed in improving race relations. The opening of Act II is flooded with images of “Jim Crow,” “colored only” signs, and projections of the early 1900s Harlem “projects,” while music depicting the era is being broadcast in the background. Act III

\[280\] Emily Mann, Having Our Say: The Delany Sisters’ First 100 Years (New York: Dramatists Play Service, 1996), 7.

\[281\] Ibid., 5.
opens with a choir singing “Lift Every Voice” with images of the civil rights era, including Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks, being projected on the screen above. The Delanys talk about these events as though they were experienced yesterday and, because of their age, demeanor, and verbatim dialogue, the audience empathizes with their accounts. The *New York Post* review heralded *Having Our Say* as “a window on the world now lost, full of love, a little pain and a wondrous deal of hope.”²⁸²

Anne Ubersfeld, in *Reading Theatre*, points out that no one can clearly understand the author’s vision by script analysis alone. Only through live performance where semiotics play an important role, can a script be thoroughly understood. Ubersfeld cautions the audience as receivers of the play to pay attention to signs, “to the text’s materiality with all its possible significations.”²⁸³ Relying primarily on memory, the spectator clearly is an important part of production as it becomes his/her duty to translate a performance’s construct or meaning. “What is so unique to theatre is the fact that, because it is no longer … ‘one person’s voice’ - since the scriptor has voluntary withdrawn - it so implicates the spectator that it ends up being the voice of us all.”²⁸⁴

**Dramaturgical Responsibility**

Author Gordon Farrell introduces his book, *The Power of the Playwright’s Vision*, with this thought provoking statement, “Every work of art is an attempt to make contact with at least one other human being. Whether completely abstract or richly realistic in its details, art is one man or woman saying, I have experienced something, I

²⁸² Mann, *Having Our Say*, back cover.


²⁸⁴ Ibid., 192.
have witnessed something, I have survived something - and I need to know if it’s as important to you as it is to me.”

Even though all art requires an audience to be seen or heard, theatre is situated in a special position. It is uniquely capable of combining all of the arts, touching all of the senses, and reaching a spectatorship comprised of many people from all walks of life.

Because of theatre’s ubiquitous position, the documentarian understands that through theatre “the problems in the world can be understood and solved. … (It) is an approach to playwriting created by men and women who believe it is possible for you and I to produce change in the world by taking action.”

The playwright’s vision, therefore, is realized through his or her choice of words in order to educate, to induce change, and to heal relationships. Authorship, therefore, becomes a responsibility as well as a blessing.

**Word Power**

Poets and playwrights long have understood that words are powerful. Eric Bentley tells us:

> In the beginning was the word. When the horde breaks into two and the orgiasts or communicants become voyeurs or spectators, when, too, as Aristotle reminds us, the single speaker steps out from the undifferentiated chorus, a new event is created of which the essence is men speaking to men. This is the archetypal dramatic event. The drama finds itself as it finds its voice. And so the drama, at its birth, is an intellectual thing.

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286 Ibid., 15.

When discussing words as opposed to images and their importance to theater, Pulitzer Prize winning playwright Tony Kushner argues, “Images are important, but words are at the barricades. Images are ambiguous, offer shelter from certain meaning. Words will pin us down, positionally … (they) limit the possible number of meanings to a few generally agreed upon and hence are irreplaceable if we actually want to say something.”

“Saying something” of import and relevance is what documentary strives to do.

In verbatim theatre, once the participants’ testimonies are compiled and the history researched, “the next stage is to interpret the emergent pattern in words.” No one seems more capable of understanding the connotations and importance of “the word” than documentarian Anna Deavere Smith. In the introduction to her verbatim play, *Fires in the Mirror*, she discusses the power of the word. “The word, the word above all, is truly magical, not only by its meaning, but by its artful manipulation.” She acknowledges the tremulous line dividing reality and invention when addressing documentary and authorship and treads carefully when writing her own plays to remain as close to the “word” as possible.

Dialogue possesses the power to engage, to excite, and ultimately to educate those around us. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Brazilian educator Paulo Freire stresses the importance of the word in relation to dialogue and meaning, “the essence of dialogue… is the word” and by compartmentalizing “the word,” man is capable of recognizing and

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understanding the essence of communication. Freire feels that dialogue is a key component to “critical thinking” and by dialoging with others we come to understand that not everyone possesses the same societal perspectives. Freire’s political counterpart, Augusto Boal, in his treatise, The Aesthetics of the Oppressed, feels words are primarily symbolic and therefore the “receiver” needs to be attentive in order to interpret their meaning:

- a symbol being a thing which stands in the place of another - need to be charged with the hopes, desires, needs and life experiences of each citizen. The word is one thing, and the meaning that we give it another, the two not always coinciding. We know that every word comes loaded with the desires of its sender. We also know that every receiver has their own structures of reception.

Documentary has proven a viable platform on which to share not only “words,” but stories and ideas, acculturating the audience by recognizing commonalities as well as differences. In Performance Ethnography, Denzin finds that “Words matter. Those who perform culture critically are learning to use language in a way that brings people together. …These texts do more than move audiences to tears - they criticize the world the way it is and offer suggestions about how it could be different.”

“We now know that the ethnographic, the aesthetic, and the political can never be separated.”

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291 Freire, “Pedagogy of the Oppressed,” 92-93.


294 Ibid., 129.
In his dramaturgical analysis, *Ghostlight*, Chemers suggests, “The process of transforming fragmentary materials into (a) complete piece of documentary theater is really more of a dramaturgical task than it is one of playwriting.”²⁹⁵ In many ways the writing of a documentary play is more complex and difficult than that of a dramatic work. This particular art form “requires a clearly articulate methodology and a fidelity to the original material, and this in turn requires the brand of critical engagement and perpetual questioning that define what dramaturgy is.”²⁹⁶

In order to engage the audience in exchange for their attention and response, the documentary playwright must draw a fine line between educating and entertaining. Bill Nichols recognizes that documentary “has a kinship with those other nonfictional systems that together make up what we may call the *discourses of sobriety* [emphasis added]. Science, economics, politics, foreign policy, education, religion, welfare - these systems assume they have instrumental power; they can and should alter the world itself, they can effect action and entail consequences.”²⁹⁷ It therefore becomes a dramaturgical task to make the “sober” palatable, which is not dissimilar to Bertholt Brecht’s understanding of the “culinary” (plebian) in relationship to art.

The author/dramaturg generally has a clear picture of the message he or she would like to communicate to the audience and it is his or her duty to ensure this message is presented accurately and faithfully. Hay states, “Dramaturgy, I believe, is a process of


²⁹⁶ Ibid., 140.

making sense both for the production and the audience. A good dramaturge helps to articulate that sense.\textsuperscript{298} "The dramaturge is spokesman for the word if not a creator of words himself, he is the champion of ideas in a theatre - and a world - increasingly devoid of them; and he is a believer in the elusive if not ineffable spirit of well-wrought dramatic texts, which he helps to embody in beautifully shaped, infinitely shaded, and piercingly heard theatrical productions.\textsuperscript{299}"

When dealing with human “voices” such as those recorded in verbatim theatre, choices must be made with the respondents in mind. For example, in 1936 at the height of the Great Depression, \textit{Fortune} magazine sent journalist James Agee, along with photographer Walker Evans, on an assignment to record the depressed state of America’s agricultural economy and the corresponding plight of the American farm worker.\textsuperscript{300}

After three destitute farm families agreed to share their stories, Agee became distraught over his decision to interview them. Concerned that he was exploiting their depressed circumstances, he agonized about remaining “true to their conditions, and I would not wish to conceal these conditions even if I could, for I am interested to speak as carefully and as near truly as I am able.”\textsuperscript{301} “[A]ll of consciousness is shifted from the imagined, the revisive, to the effort to perceive simply the cruel radiance of what is.”\textsuperscript{302}


\textsuperscript{302} Ibid., 11.
Frustrated with his assignment, Agee chose to return to New York without its completion and without pay. He eventually wrote *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* as a tribute to those interviewed.

Psychiatrist Robert Coles understands the difficulties that the interviewer endures, “Each of us brings … a particular life to the others who are being observed … and so to some degree, each of us will engage with those others differently, carrying back from such engagement our own version of them.”\(^\text{303}\) In his clinical work, Coles suggests that he and others in his profession maintain a certain amount of neutrality in order not to unduly influence the patients being interviewed. He considers himself and others in his profession as “objects of transference” or “instruments” in order for the patients to better discover *themselves*.\(^\text{304}\) But in truth, “We notice what we notice in accordance with who we are” and in fact it is extremely difficult to remain impartial or “value free.”\(^\text{305}\) Likewise, the documentarian has the authorial responsibility to maintain a neutral yet realistic balance between the objective and subjective, recognizing the fact that he or she is situated in a privileged position, a position that requires honesty and forthrightness.

It becomes a dramaturgical responsibility to ensure that collected dialogue and documentation are researched factually and culled for primary topical evidence. Once evaluated, the material requires editing in order to obtain a dramatic theatrical arc, while at the same time remaining true to the context in which the information was initially presented. Steeped primarily in facts with no apparent separation between narratives,

\(^\text{303}\) Coles, *Doing Documentary Work*, 5.

\(^\text{304}\) Ibid., 6.

\(^\text{305}\) Ibid., 7.
documentary is one form of theatre that is not required to follow a sequential dramatic plot line as outlined in Aristotle’s *Poetics*.

In verbatim theatre, where events are witnessed through narrated interviews, isolated stories, conversations, and recordings, a theatrical montage is created. These mise-en-scenes are connected primarily thorough concepts and ideas whose forms tend to be episodic, circuitous, or open-ended rather than linear in nature. Writer and teacher Ann Fliotsos explains,

> Episodic plots may not come to any concrete conclusion, though they often finish with a sense of completeness, having played out a theme, much as a musical composition presents variations on a theme. Scenes may or may not be chronological and are often somewhat disconnected in terms of time span, location, central characters, or motif.  

David Edgar refers to these non-linear plays as being either “double” or “disconnected” - where “two or more apparently disparate narratives” are joined together and where the audience member is then expected to “join up the dots.” Post-millennium dramaturgs are inclined to seek out signposts, turning points, or goals rather than plots. They are more concerned with function than form, disorder than order, and movement than stasis. Although their narratives follow no set of rules, they are no less important.

Turner and Behrndt point out, “Though we have not seen a return to ‘the drama,’ perhaps we are increasingly seeing ways in which theatre is finding a new relationship with representation - one in which stories can be told, while the modes of telling, the

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tellers and even the stories themselves can be suspect, ambiguous and multiple.”

Yet as the new century begins, we seem to be seeing a strategic re-entry of narrative, textuality and even of representational strategies existing, perhaps paradoxically, alongside an increased awareness, even valorization, of theatrical presence….”

**Evoking the Senses**

To interpret and appreciate nonlinear scripts requires the spectator to engage all of the senses. “… (W)hat you see, smell, touch and sense in a postmodern production likely bears much more meaning than the plot or action of the play. Reading a postmodern script, therefore, relies not upon following the proverbial trail of breadcrumbs from beginning to end, but on our more abstract ability to interpret and synthesize our impressions as we see/hear/sense the production in our mind’s eye.”

Geoffrey Proehl further explains: “In emotive terms, a play’s dramaturgy is its soul, that part of a being characterized by depth and interiority, that part of the self most liable to falling in love.”

Because the audience responds to what they know and therefore expect from a presentation, “when performances are operating in a sphere outside the modes of conventional representation, the attendant may not be able to judge the work by utilizing

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309 Ibid., 188.

310 Fliotsis, *Interpreting the Playscript*, 79.

the experiences that have modulated his or her sensorial perceptions.” They have to “reconfigure” what is known in order to understand. Stephen di Benedetto explains that because of the brain’s malleability it is open to new sensations and ideas. “Scientific discoveries are rapidly changing our understanding of the human brain.…”

Neuroscientists are finding that studies involving brain imaging, scanning, and response benefit from theatrical performance. These techniques “have proved that the brain is plastic and all sensation it experiences continually modify how it perceives the world. Theatrical performance has the potential to change our experiences of the world and therefore, the potential to change our ability to perceive them in a new way.”

All humans share the same biology despite “culture, race, and identity.” Everyone receives and processes information through our sense of smell, touch, sight, and sound. Neurons transport messages received from the senses to the brain where it, in turn, compiles and interprets the event. Even though we all process according to our cultural or environmental conditioning, the senses play a vital role in “shaping our consciousness.” Based upon memories that we have stored away, prediction is inherent in everything we say and do. Each time a new play is presented our brain will interpret its significance depending on what we already know. We process and predict based upon past experiences. The inclusion of semiotics or signs in the presentation not only

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313 Ibid., 1.

314 Ibid., x.

315 Ibid., 4.

316 Ibid., 5.
provokes and stimulates the senses, but once they are processed, have the ability to reconfigure our memory bank. By involving the senses, theatre has the capacity “to keep our brains flexible” and open to learning.317

The Production Dramaturg

Since Lessing, the role of the dramaturg has expanded substantially. The duties of the dramaturg extend beyond the written script when they are called upon, depending on specific production and performance needs. These “duties” may include translating script; developing policy and repertoire; designing programs and composing program notes; educating those involved in the production of the playwright’s intent; providing background information about the play with regards to time period, setting, and socio-political issues to the cast, director, and crew; aiding the costume department on period dress; working with the sound and lighting crew on music and “mood;” attending casting calls and rehearsals; educating the public through newspaper interviews, fliers, and handouts; designing lobby displays; holding talk-backs after performances; keeping a dramaturgical notebook of meetings, rehearsals, and performances (including production photos and director’s notes); critiquing performances; and, in general, advising on all things educational. Depending on the performance, especially if the play is an inaugural presentation by a new playwright, the role of the dramaturg is extensive.

Dramaturgy is no longer exclusively focused on the literary aspects of theatrical production. As Peter Eckersall notes,
Performance dramaturgy… has created the need for creative specialists who keep track of the complicated flow of ideas, technologies and forms associated with such work. Professional dramaturgy has therefore moved beyond literary modes of production into new fields of performance, dance and technical and production work.\textsuperscript{318}

Enjoying newfound freedoms and modes of expression, playwrights and dramaturgs are eager to stretch boundaries. Besides new inventions in script design, they also are involved in creating “site-specific” performances located outside of mainstream theatre. With roots reverberating back to the early 60s, plays are being staged in factory and warehouse settings and in open air parks or parking lots. Mediatized events such as “happenings,” “promenades,” “on street interviews,” and “history in the making” political events are advertised and recorded on websites such as YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook. Similar in form to art installations, poetry “slams,” story-telling sessions, or impromptu musical concerts staged outside the theatre complex, they remain reliant on audience participation for response and feedback.

As Lehmann suggests, “When a factory floor, an electric power station or a junkyard is being performed in, a new ‘aesthetic gaze’ is cast onto them. The space presents itself. It becomes a co-player…. It is not dressed up but made visible.”\textsuperscript{319} The space provides a level of “commonality” between the audience and performers who also are considered co-players in production as all are “guests of the same place.”\textsuperscript{320} Richard Schechner describes these venues as “environmental spaces” in that the “performers are aware of the audience, where space is shared and brought to life by the interaction


\textsuperscript{320} Ibid.
between performers and spectators” and where “the show itself would lack living yeast and fail to rise” without audience participation.³²¹

Documentaries that are site specific and are attended by people who have lived through memorable events like those enacted in the productions of Anna Deveare Smith’s *Twilight: Los Angeles* and *Crown Heights, Brooklyn*; Emily Mann’s *Greensboro: A Documentary*; and *The Laramie Project* by Moises Kaufmann have little difficulty in procuring audience attention and involvement. All parties are interested in seeing themselves and others portrayed in community, not only to comprehend, but to obtain some sense of connectedness and ultimately closure with the realization that theirs was a “shared experience” and that they are not alone. Lynn M. Thomson understands that the postmodern dramaturg plays an integral role in productions such as these. “… American dramaturgy is not only about plays, new and old, and production, but also programmes, events, institutional mission and organization, education, the place of a theatre in a community, theatre in our culture - and more. Engendering discourse (between artists, artists and a community, within a community) in our fractured and fractious society is a persistent goal.”³²²

As previously indicated, the role of the dramaturg in writing and production is exponentially expanding as are the duties of the audience. Postmodernism has ushered in a different way of viewing, for even though it remains the duty of the dramaturg to

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consider the effect the performance has on the attendants, it becomes the responsibility of the audience to “strive to be the ideal receptors for the ‘truth’ of the piece.”

**Audience Participation**

When I go to the theatre, I’m invariably surprised that all these people have chosen to come, have acted on their interest or desire or need to be together for a few hours with relative strangers to witness the telling of stories, the creation of images, the magic of theatricality, the wonder of imaginations at work in this crucible of light and texture and sound. When I see people converge, and when I’m part of that convergence, I’m already moved by this demonstration of community, by the faith we’ve brought to the importance of gathering together. The act of coming, of showing up, signals to me that communities still constitute themselves around the importance of physical presence.

-- Jill Dolan, *Utopia in Performance*

Robin Mroue defines theatre in terms of not only what it is, but what it is capable of *doing*. Mroue underscores the importance of the audience and its participatory role in production by explaining,

Theatre stresses differences rather than similarities; it stresses confrontation rather than agreement. It is a place for uncertainty, a place for the struggle of ideas; it is a space for open discussion concerning an unresolved issue, in the presence of an alert audience, which is listening to the different voices and the conflicts between the characters. The theatre needs an audience composed of individual citizens, having the benefit of civic rights, the ability to choose and express their opinions, enough time to think and contemplate, and access to enough space to distance themselves from other individuals.

It is important for actors, directors, dramaturgs, and other practitioners involved in theatrical productions to credit the audience for interpreting and deciphering the histrionics or meaning of a play’s structure and content, or of locating, decoding, or

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323 Chemers, *Ghost Light*, 57.

sensing the ‘true voice’ of the playwright. As Heinz Fischer understands, “Whether facing an elaborate stage or an empty space, an audience is amazingly open, versatile, swift to understand and participate. It will willingly imagine Venice, Birnam Wood, or the appearance of a Japanese ghost. It is able to bear all manner of shock treatment, and it will even readily accept constant change within a single character….“

The audience member is therefore considered a vital player in the performance process and is encouraged to become an active participant. Fischer elaborates, “As long as the audience does not become involved, any theatrical effort is wasted. The spectator who is not moved will just move out. For this reason alone, if for no other, the audience is the most important element in theatre.”

Lawson agrees:

The audience is the ultimate necessity which gives the playwright’s work its purpose and meaning. …The purpose of the drama is communication: the audience plays, not a passive, but an active part, in the life of a play. Dramatic technique is designed to achieve a maximum response. If a playwright is not seeking to communicate with his fellow men, he need not be bound by unity or logic or any other principle, because he is talking to himself….“

Theatre not only relies on the ability to connect with the audience, but it reciprocally depends on the spectator to understand what is happening onstage and react in a more pronounced and direct manner. As author James Thomas reveals,

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Modern plays are fashioned to pull the audience into the action and force them to actively comprehend what is happening, not just listen inactively. A great deal of aesthetic pleasure comes from penetrating the secret thinking of the characters. Consequently modern acting, directing, and design should demand the most of audience understanding.328

“Aesthetic distance,” such as Brecht indicated, refers to the space, psychological as well as physical, between the audience and performance. When discussing aesthetic distance and performance as it relates to the modern stage, Oscar Budel suggests that involvement of the audience “is to be made part and parcel of the whole performance; it is to be dragged, as it were, into the play.”329 For example: “Controversial portrayals of events such as violence, nudity, and sexual activity are more provocative than the same depictions on film - the difference being that of watching human actors perform these acts in your presence rather than watching pictures of the acts. … [T]he close aesthetic distance in the theatre makes possible -even demands - communication among audience members and between the audience and the performers.”330

A variety of methods can be incorporated into the text by the playwright in order to dramaturgically reduce the aesthetic distance between audience and performance. These include direct address of the audience, recognizing the audience through breaks in the script during performance, by the imposition of a narrator to interrupt and comment on onstage proceedings, and by “the conscious evocation of an atmosphere of suspension

328 Thomas, Script Analysis, xxv.

329 Oscar Budel, “Contemporary Theatre and Aesthetic Distance,” PMLA 76, no. 3 (June, 1961), 284.

between essence and appearance, between the world of the stage and real life.”

Because it relies on the audience for reception and response, documentary is one form of theatre that is dramaturgically capable of combining some or all of these devices into production.

By engaging a “community” of individuals into her plays, Anna Deavere Smith is keenly aware that theatre art possesses the ability to create feelings of belonging. “It doesn’t necessarily unify, but it creates community out of a disparate bunch of people who happen to observe the same thing, especially when they view the same thing at the same time. It can help us feel our humanness.” Jean-Louis Barrault explains this ad hoc “community” enters the theatrical space as separate individuals, but during and after viewing the performance, becomes a “quintessence of the others. …The audience is a sort of magnet that brings together humanity in all its numbers and in all its varieties, and it is really only the audience when all the human varieties are closely gathered and people brush shoulders. The audience is a sort of synthesis of the whole community of the world, of the promiscuity of all the others pressing one against the other; a sort of human stirring… and through it they re-find themselves.”

There are many social, physiological, and psychological determinants that influence an audience member’s attention and response. Seat placement and the architecture of the theatre, the personality and acting ability of the actors, the physiological make-up and involvement of fellow spectators, the critical analysis and

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332 Anna Deavere Smith, Letters to a Young Artist (New York: Anchor House, 2006), 129.

reviews of the play prior to performance, and whether audience members were seated last
or first are all conditions that factor into reception. Some in the audience will be more
involved and attentive than others for various reasons. Whatever factors influence
audience receptiveness, there remains a need for a “psychological connection” or
“collaboration” between the spectators and actors in order to “validate or reject the
histrionic choices, which are the external means by which the possibility of theatre is
created.”

Stephen Di Benedetto observes:

We simulate the expressions and emotions of the people around us. Therefore we
are primed to make the emotional journey presented within theatrical expression
and its effects are greater than we can imagine. We are inherently social beings
and our own physiological states are tied to those we perceive around us. The
more we are in contact with others, the more we are tied into the social mood. As
live theatre is a shared experience, simply our proximity to others during the event
affects our response; therefore, the unconscious affect of sensorial stimulation is
intrinsic to the theatrical event.

When assembled as a collective, the audience is more likely to spontaneously
participate by cheering, booing, clapping, and standing. “Most experts in social
psychology agree that assembling into a group reinforces individual power, leading
participants to act differently than they do when they are alone.” Cognizant of others,
they are more willing and able to comprehend that what they are viewing onstage is an
act, a representation, or a mimesis of persons or events. It becomes the attendant’s
responsibility to separate the real from the imagined in order to connect intellectually and


emotionally with what is portrayed onstage. The decisions that are formed in the minds of the spectators are what make the performance complete. How the spectators choose to act on these decisions is how the performance is perpetuated.

Documentary theatre depends on audience interaction and response. “Because it is dense with information to absorb, assimilate, and clock for reference, instead of passive watching, a documentary play requires mental awareness in a spectator.”\(^{337}\) When characters share deeply personal conversations onstage, responsibility then is conferred to the audience and their involvement intensifies. “The audience becomes a key, if silent, character in the performance.”\(^{338}\) People care what happens to the characters onstage because their experiences are similarly real and likewise based on fact. “[S]omeone is interesting if they widen our knowledge of the complexity of the human condition, and bring fresh insight into the situation we’re exploring.”\(^{339}\)

Hans-Thies Lehmann explains, “Theatre becomes a ‘social situation’ in which the spectator realizes that what s/he experiences depends not on him/herself, but also on others.”\(^{340}\) We structure our world through identification with others and theatre is a viable method of fostering these perceptions. There are as many ways to interpret theatre as there are individual responses and reactions to people and events being portrayed. Kahn and Breed suggest, “What intention you derive from a play depends upon what you

\(^{337}\) Dawson, *Documentary Theatre*, xii.


\(^{339}\) Ibid., 34.

bring to it; no two people will find precisely the same intention, although if the play is a good one, they will probably find some linkage between their interpretations.\textsuperscript{341}

Author Marvin Carlson, recognizing theatre’s ability to function as a vehicle for exploring social and cultural issues, extends audience involvement one step further:

The audience’s expected “role” changes from a passive hermeneutic activity of decoding the performer’s articulation, embodiment, or challenge of particular cultural material, to become a much more active entering into a praxis, a context in which meanings are not so much communicated as created, questioned, or negotiated. The “audience” is invited and expected to operate as a co-creator of whatever meanings and experience the event generates.\textsuperscript{342}

Bennett understands, “No two theatrical performances can ever be the same precisely because of audience involvement. In much contemporary theatre the audience becomes a self-conscious co-creator of performance and enjoys a productive role which exceeds anything demanded of the reader or the cinema audience.”\textsuperscript{343} Because of these expectations, today’s audiences are found to be more educated, more aware, and more participatory than those of the past. Jonathan Bate and Russell Jackson observe that productions are requiring more input and participation from audiences than ever required before:


\textsuperscript{342} Carlson, \textit{Performance}, 215.

The production’s physical resources may have rivaled those of an opera-house, or consisted of eight actors, two ladders, and six metal buckets. It is more probable now than fifty years ago that the company will have treated Shakespeare more as a collaborator than an authority, and that they want to help audiences find the means and arguments to change society for the better. On a good night, the audience may leave feeling that they have actively participated in something that engaged them directly, with a mind full of new arguments from old matter, and an appetite for more.\(^{344}\)

**Conclusion: Dramaturgy in the New Millennium**

Just as the dramaturgical structure of documentary has changed incisively over the last millennium, so has its socio-political messaging. As Peter Brooks suggests in *There Are No Secrets*, “theatre is life” \[^{345}\] and life itself is change. Likewise, the expanding field of social psychology implicates dramaturgy into the matrix of people’s relationships and insinuates that how they interact and communicate with others is, in itself, a theatrical event. The metaphor used to describe how people present or “re-present” themselves is drama and viewing drama denotes a dramaturgical act: \[^{346}\]

Dramaturgists … are not so much concerned with social cooperation as such, but rather with the ways in which people both facilitate and interfere with the ongoing behavior of others… the emphasis being on the expressive nature of the social bond. Thus, cooperation, hostility, solidarity, conflict - are all viewed as among the possibilities of social life. They are human possibilities, which is to say they are created and sustained only through the expressive activities of human beings.\(^{347}\)

With the proliferation of mechanical devices such as cellular phones, documentary is no longer limited to a singular stage. It has found a global audience and a


\[^{347}\] Ibid.
new wave of dramatists willing and able to record history in the making. Street interviews, verbatim conversations, and onsite events are recorded, catalogued, and “saved.” Political upheavals in the Middle East and tragedies such as the Boston Marathon bombings give much to report, explore, expose, and reflect upon. Cell phone visibility is not only instantaneous but, as in the case of the Boston bombings, plays a pivotal role.

The outcomes of these tragedies have been previously decided historically and politically outside of the theatre. Therefore, it is not the purpose of the documentarian to dramatically re-enact events in order to place “verdict” or “blame.” The audience already has been informed as to what has occurred, and therefore it becomes the duty of the dramaturg to give clarity to the “known.” German scholar Hans-Theis Lehman explains, “Suspense is not located in the progress of events but is an objective, intellectual, mostly ethical one…” Fortier further argues, “…living is a social activity, and its art is not about making present, but making a different and better world.”

Because of its unique ability to capture and clarify incidents occurring around the globe, documentary has become recognized as a recorder of “truths.” When based on personal memories, these “truths” may be multiple, vary in complexity, and require no “correct” answers or response. Meaning resides within the spectator’s interpretation and not necessarily within the author’s vision. It remains the duty of the dramaturg, however, when recording “truths” such as these to provide them transparency and an openness to debate. As Ingham explains, “Explicitly or implicitly, every play asks a lot from its

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audience: to believe, imagine, listen, pretend, admit, think, wonder, respond … As we become more and more aware of what we expect from audiences, it only makes sense that we include them in all our conversations with the play, particularly those that arise in the course of text analysis.”

Author and educator Carol Martin questions the meaning of ‘truth’ in documentary, recognizing an “overlap and interplay between ‘theatre’ and ‘reality’” and the blurring of “boundary between the stage and the ‘real’ world.” Understanding that the archival material on which documentary is based is ultimately selected or rejected by the scriptwriter, Martin considers the word “documentary” inadequate. In verbatim theatre voices are “displaced or even replaced by an assemblage of selected verbatim texts that are collectively devised.” The actors are required to assume the roles of “surrogates,” providing representations of those “absent, unavailable, dead, and disappeared.” “How events are written, archived, staged and performed helps determine the history they become.”

Taking all of these statements into account, documentary, according to Martin, offers the mere appearance of truth, for it provides an incomplete history or a performance of history that is construed or interpreted by the scriptwriter and those involved in production. “By staging a disquieting past,”

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353 Carol Martin, “Bodies of Evidence,” 19.

354 Ibid., 17.
documentary “unsettles the present.”

In Martin’s estimation, “truth,” as we know it, is no longer verifiable. In the end, it becomes the responsibility of the audience to determine “the theatrical, the real, and the simulated, each as its own form of truth” or as Steven Colbert would advise, to take into account and consider the “heartfelt, gut feelings” or truthiness of a presentation and to determine for themselves what is indeed - fact or fiction.

In Theatre Audiences: A Theory of Production and Reception, Susan Bennett describes the elusive nature of theatre and how important audience interaction is to performance:

Unlike the printed text, a theatrical performance is available for its audience only in a fixed time period. Furthermore, the event is not a finished product in the same way as a novel or poem. It is an interactive process which relies on the presence of spectators to achieve its effects. A performance is, of course, unlike a printed work, always open to immediate and public acceptance, modification, or rejection by those people it addresses.

Because “live” theatre is fleeting, it leaves only archival remnants such as program booklets, posters, playbills, or reviews of the critic in its wake. “Nothing besides the moment is the event. Its instant destruction is inevitable; its effect and how it affects other people is more important. The fragments of the attendant’s memory - a photograph, a review, or description of the event - are corpses that stimulate the transmission of an

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356 Ibid., 22.
358 Bennett, Theatre Audiences, 67-68.
idea into the future.” Each audience member is free to draw their own conclusions, and, as Fliotsis understands, “There is no one meaning; it resides in each of us.”

When the performance ends, “the play like the narrative, continues talking, retaining the past and telling a story, to an audience that comes to listen and to see, to…participate in and maintain the experience.” “(I)n primordial direct experience we act as if union of self and other is possible and general. We feel for and make sense of the other in spite of difference; our mimetic activity as an audience opens us to possible shared experiences and as a speculator/critic presumes that others can become our audience and repeat that connecting of experiences.

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360 Fliotsis, *Interpreting the Playscript*, 80.


362 Ibid., 59.
Chapter 3

Didactic and Restorative Powers of the Documentary Genre

The theatre is not merely a place of amusement. I believe it can be a great educational medium, teaching an audience many things that would otherwise be lost to them. It widens the sympathies and broadens the intellect and sweetens the heart.\(^\text{363}\)

--- Agnes Moorehead

heal: v. 1. To restore to health or soundness; cure. 2. To set right; repair: healed the rift between us. 3. To restore (a person) to spiritual wholeness. To become whole and sound; to return to health.

--- The American Heritage Dictionary
Second College Edition

Documentary theatre, through dialectical development and illumination of conditions and tensions portrayed onstage, assumes the pedagogical position of “teacher,” while audience members take on the roles of “students” as well as jurors. In theatrical terms, the famous “4th wall” has been dropped. More importantly, as Brecht advocated, the production should encourage the audience member to think. How did this happen and what can be done to prevent it from occurring again? How can I become involved? Can we as a community make a difference? Can we come together in understanding in order to forgive past aggressions and to heal? Questions such as these ultimately are discussed in post-performance talkbacks, where actors and audience are free to inform their own decisions.

A key concept of any theatre conversation is based upon a mutual act of “openness,” which requires the audience to listen actively and to absorb the information.

as presented. The spectator is encouraged to assimilate this information, transform it, and, by responding, offer a fresh interpretation or “way of seeing” the production. During the talkback, a reversal of roles occurs. The audience becomes teacher while the actors, director, or dramaturg are placed in the position of students. It is through this participatory process of “openness” between all concerned that theatre becomes a revolving method of instruction. Each participant learns and “takes away” from the other. By encouraging this exchange between praxis and reception, documentary assumes the mantle of social advocate. As Farrell states, “we can solve our problems by raising the consciousness of our audiences.”

It becomes the responsibility of the playwright/teacher through the written word to set the process of educating in motion. It is not his or her intent to persuade or provide solutions but, by exposing “truths,” to instill in the spectator a sense of awareness, empathy, or, through cathartic impulse, to induce feelings of empowerment. The beginning of the twenty-first century finds documentary playwrights entrenched in socio-political issues as in the past, but the problems themselves are more complex and cover a wider field. Issues such as gay bashing, bullying, civil rights, health related problems, aging studies, prison reforms, marital relations, race relations, and sex and gender issues currently are being researched and explored through theatre. Theatre that possesses a social conscience and deals with issues such as these remains intent on “clarifying” in order to bridge the gaps that exist between the known and unknown and between the

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relationships of teacher/student, patient/doctor, individuals/community, state/nation, and nation/nation in order to grow, heal, and make changes for the “good.”

Richard Schechner argues that theatre repeatedly has served as a vehicle for instigating social and political change and, because of its unique position, continues to retain its ability to educate and inform. This has been particularly true for documentary works because of their sociopolitical leanings and adherence to truths. These plays share a history of being shaped, conditioned, guided by underlying processes of social interaction. The politician, activist, militant, terrorist all use techniques of the theatre… To support social action -events that are consequential, that is, designed to change the social order or to maintain it. The theatre artist uses the consequential actions of social life as the underlying themes, frames, and/or rhythms of her/his art. The theatre is designed to entertain and sometimes to effect changes in perception, viewpoint, attitude: in other words, to make spectators react to the world of social drama in new ways.

Theatre “with a message” is no longer confined to a proscenium arch or wedded to a single venue. Reflecting back to the impromptu stage settings of commedia dell’Arte, Blue Blouse productions, Living Newspapers, and “happenings” of the 1960s, documentarians of the new millennium are intent on reaching those who will most benefit. Under the umbrella term of “applied” performance, social issues are taken to audiences positioned in schools, churches, museums, hospitals, nursing homes, and prisons. As Tom Barone indicates, “These are the places where real problems reside,

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365 Fearnow, Theatre and the Good.


where materials of the artist are close at hand, and where genuine education can occur.”\[^{368}\]

Globally, theatre is found equally at home, on a blanket under a shade tree in Uganda, on a crowded street corner in Mumbai, along a river bank in the outback of Australia, on an icepack in the Arctic, or wherever learning takes place. As educator Maggie Hulson tells us, “The arts are not about learning - they are learning. They are not subservient to other learning areas - they are whole learnings within themselves.”\[^{369}\] No one has better understood theatre’s role in learning and reaching out to inform those located on boundary’s edge than Brazilian educator and activist Augusto Boal.

**Augusto Boal (1931-2009)**

The Theatre of the oppressed was never an equidistant theatre which refused to take sides - it is the theatre of struggle! It is the theatre OF the oppressed, FOR the oppressed, ABOUT the oppressed and BY the oppressed, whether they be workers, peasants, unemployed people, women, black people, young people, old people, people with mental or physical disabilities - in the end, all those on whom silence is imposed and from whom is taken the right to a full existence.

-- Augusto Boal, *The Aesthetics of the Oppressed*

The intersecting of theatre art and politics was of primary importance to Marxist Augusto Boal. Following in the footsteps of fellow Brazilian Paolo Friere, who wrote *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in response to what Friere recognized as a lack of communication between Brazil’s school systems and government, Boal made a lifelong commitment to educating through theatre.

\[^{368}\] Tom Barone, introduction to *Applied Theatre: Creating Transformative Encounters in the Community*, by Philip Taylor (Portsmouth: Heinmann, 2003), xi.

\[^{369}\] Maggie Hulson, *Schemes for Classroom Drama* (Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books, 2006), 156.
Educator and activist Friere recognized the importance of communicating and encouraged a “true dialogue” between self and other, within classroom and community. In his words, “… dialogue is a way of knowing and should never be viewed as a mere tactic to involve students in a particular task. … I engage in dialogue not because I recognize the social and not merely the individualistic character of the process of knowing. In this sense, dialogue presents itself as an indispensable component of the process of both learning and knowing.”\textsuperscript{370} Friere felt that through dialogue, man could imagine a world “less ugly, more beautiful, less discriminating, more democratic, less dehumanizing, and more humane.”\textsuperscript{371}

Boal agreed on the importance of dialogue and thought theatre, an effective communicator, could serve as a platform for informing and educating those who were suffering and in need. Disturbed by the political oppression under which the working class labored in his native country, Boal recognized theatre as an instrument for social change because of its unique ability to point out discrepancies between the privileged and non-privileged, between the powerful and the powerless. By applying political theory to the participatory function of performance, he was better situated to inform and persuade. He visited small towns across Brazil to set up “people’s theatres” in order for the politically disenfranchised to have a voice in their own affairs. These “theatres” were installed fleetingly in parking lots, train stations, cafes, restaurants, or anywhere they could evade authorial/police detection. Similar to Brecht’s early theatrical performances,


they were politically Marxist in tone and were dependent on the spectator’s involvement to survive.\textsuperscript{372}

Beaten and incarcerated by Brazilian authorities for his highly politicized productions, Boal was compelled to write \textit{Theatre of the Oppressed} in 1973 while in exile after his release. Boal’s theories on audience involvement and participation differed substantially from his predecessors Aristotle and Brecht. Aristotle encouraged learning by “viewing,” where the actors and audience absorbed the lessons that were enacted (mimesis) in order to purge emotions “in a catharsis of revolutionary impetus.”\textsuperscript{373} Brecht’s vision of pedagogy was to elicit change by encouraging the spectator to convert dramatic action into \textit{real} action. Boal, however, described the spectator as a participant, one who was involved in the performance itself and who was not afraid to contribute to the onstage production by saying what he/she was thinking. Boal referred to his ideas of audience involvement as “learning by doing” or the “poetics of liberation.”\textsuperscript{374}

Boal’s theories on theatre and performance evolved substantially over the course of his lifetime. In his highly ambitious Forum Theatre, audience members not only were encouraged to take a “stand” for what they felt was right, but to come to the stage and express their feelings by acting them out in order to test for possible solutions. In Boal’s words, “Popular audiences are interested in experimenting, in rehearsing, and they abhor the ‘closed’ spectacles. In these cases they try to enter into a dialogue with the actors, to interrupt the action, to ask for explanations without waiting politely for the end of the


\textsuperscript{373} Ibid., 473.

\textsuperscript{374} Ibid.
play. Contrary to the bourgeois code of manners, the people’s code allows and encourages the spectator to ask questions, to dialogue, to participate." These participatory acts of “openness” were used to educate, promote understanding, and ultimately heal divisions within the community.

For these reasons Boal considered “spectator” a bad word. He preferred the name “spect-actor” instead, feeling that the audience should be as much involved in the production as the actors:

All these experiments of a people’s theatre have the same objective - the liberation of the spectator, on whom the theater has imposed finished visions of the world. And since those responsible for theatrical performances are in general people who belong directly or indirectly to the ruling classes, obviously their finished images will be reflections of themselves. The spectators in the people’s theatre …cannot go on being the passive victims of those images.

In the introduction to Boal’s *Rainbow of Desire*, translator Adrian Jackson describes the audience members as the subjects or “protagonists” of the presentation. Basing the impromptu scripts on real-life scenarios provided by the audience, the actors improvise multiple readings or “takes” on the situations described. The results are then “collated, discussed and relayed back to the protagonist. Any ‘conclusions’ arrived at are strictly subjective … and it is up to the protagonist to make of them what he or she will.” In Boal’s words, “We do not interpret, we explain nothing, we only offer multiple points of reference. The oppressed must be helped to reflect on his own action…” By

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376 Ibid., 473.


378 Ibid., 45.
involving the spect-actor in its productions, Theatre of the Oppressed not only offers fresh insight into the socio-political problems of the day, but gives the spectator/participant a feeling of empowerment over his/her own situation.

Boal believed theatre could prove therapeutic to both actors and attendants. “Looking at the problem is in itself therapeutic: it is a step toward doing something about it. A therapy which continually throws light on problems, a variety of different shades of light, is by definition more dynamic than one which seeks (and stops at) a solution.”

When the spect-actor or protagonist subjects their situation onto others, they are exposing “truths” about themselves that may never before have been revealed. Knowing that theatre holds a mirror to lived situations, the actors become sympathetic to the protagonist’s difficulties. “Though they are outside observers, observing from a distance… they become empowered to penetrate into his lived experience… feeling his emotions and perceiving analogies between their own lives and his…” As Boal suggests, “Theatre is a therapy into which one enters body and soul, soma and psyche” in order to “modify our image” and change.

Realizing the important connection of theatre to therapy, Boal devised a dramaturgical technique to help assuage the fears and anxieties under which the oppressed labored. Addressing social, political, as well as personal issues, he labeled this form of dramaturgy “cops-in-the-head.” Not unlike psychotherapist J. L. Moreno’s experimentations in group therapy that called for “creative spontaneity,” Boal was intent

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379 Jackson, Rainbow of Desire, xx.
380 Ibid., 26.
381 Ibid., 28, 29.
on “freeing spontaneity” in order to expunge the protagonist’s fears.\(^{382}\) Both techniques were deemed cathartic and, in turn, healing.\(^{383}\) As Boal discovered, when a protagonist performed as himself, “a deep experience of self-knowledge” occurred where “emotional blocks loosened and dissolved, previously obstructed behavioral capabilities were recovered, and new possibilities for action were induced.”\(^{384}\)

Until his death in 2009, Boal traveled the globe, presenting in workshops his theories and ideas on how theatre could best represent the displaced and forgotten. Never losing sight of the pedagogical lessons first outlined in *Theatre of the Oppressed*, Boal understood that theatre could offer the promise of hope and healing to those most in need. He also encouraged cross-cultural understanding and envisioned a theatre where,

> Arabs perform Jewish plays, blacks perform plays by and about whites, north African immigrants perform French classics, and French citizens perform north African folk plays… by stepping into someone else’s shoes - that is, through identification as much as through difference - respect can be developed for the initially threatening, unknown cultural other [emphasis added].\(^{385}\)

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\(^{383}\) Feldhendler, “Augusto Boal and Jacob Moreno,” 89.

\(^{384}\) Ibid., 99.

Improving Cognition by Engaging the Senses

The art of telling stories is considered a pleasurable experience. Like all agreeable sensations, they produce a positive response. Stephen di Benedetto explains how memories of pleasurable experiences are likely to incur changes in the brain.

Art is pleasurable, and the brain is conducive to stimuli that are pleasurable, thereby art can deeply influence the way that the brain is structured. Recent brain studies have proven that our memories of events activate the same parts of the brain that the actual experience did - to remember is to relive, and therefore it is experience. How we interpret these experiences gives the experiences meaning.386

Judy Willis, a practicing neurologist as well as classroom teacher, has been involved in studies of the brain and how children process learning. She understands that “Because advances in technology enable us to view the working brain as it learns, educators can now find evidence-based neuroimaging and brain-mapping studies to determine the most effective ways to teach.”387 Her research indicates that “learning promotes learning” and that children’s cognition and memory are improved when lessons are repeated using various teaching methods.388 Theatre has twice the propensity to reinforce lessons because “If the learned information (is) taught with visual and auditory associations, it can be recalled by the students using either their sound or visual memory.”389

It is easier for children to learn new material when they are able to produce a ‘mirroring effect’ by connecting it to past experience. They also are prone to become

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386 Di Benedetto, The Provocation of the Senses, 22.
387 Judy Willis, Research-Based Strategies to Ignite Student Learning (Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2006), 1.
388 Ibid., 8.
389 Ibid., 10.
emotionally involved when they “care about new information or consider it important for it to go through the limbic system expeditiously, form new synaptic connections, and be stored as a long-term memory.”\footnote{Willis, Research-Based Strategies, 20.} Willis explains:

> When students investigate topics creatively with thematic, interdisciplinary approaches, they learn patterns and skills, not just facts. When subjects are interrelated, they are more easily recalled and there is less need for memorization, because higher levels of thinking have been stimulated and there are increased numbers of pathways by which information can travel in and out of long-term memory banks.\footnote{Ibid., 22.}

According to Dr. Stephen Di Benedetto, “While we watch a play, it is difficult to solve an abstract problem. However, we are able to juggle both conceptual qualities as well as sensory qualities of an experience. …These experiences also trigger emotions and thoughts.”\footnote{Di Benedetto, The Provocation of the Senses, 9.} For example, our visual and aural senses are separate entities but are programmed to act in tandem in order to better comprehend, learn, and remember. “We use different neural pathways to distinguish different sets of information, but the conscious processing does not detect the redundant information taken in by the other senses. It is only when the senses work in concert with each other that we really start to perceive the world.”\footnote{Ibid., 13.}

> “Learning needs to be impressive and vivid if it is to be retained for long or it needs to be reinforced by practice and rehearsal… In approaching history, ... or any of the curriculum where there are human elements, the dramatic method can help both in...
investigating and researching the material and in unifying it towards an end product…”

This is where theatre, which incorporates all of the disciplines and all of the senses, becomes an exceptional learning tool. By writing or studying the script, acting out the characters, being involved in set design, staging, managing props, or by merely watching a performance, children not only learn, but remember. “So many attitudes in education have ground down to a hardened, inflexible routine. Using drama will help to sharpen awareness, sympathy, and understanding,” and when students become involved in the theatre-making process, learning can be fun.

**Theatre Strategies for Expanding Classroom Learning**

Any good theatre will of itself be educational - that is, when it initiates or extends a questioning process in its audience, when it makes us look again, freshly, at the world, its institutions and conventions and at our own place in that world, when it expands our notion of who we are, of the feelings and thoughts of which we are capable, and of our connection with the lives of others.

-- Anthony Jackson, *Learning Through Theatre*

Documentary theatre has value in the classroom setting. It is capable of teaching life lessons by uniting students through ‘common threads’ or ‘feelings of connectedness.’

Richard Morse describes the inseparable connection between “theatre as a learning tool” and “theatre as a healing influence,” explaining: “As students are freed from social snares of alienation, hopelessness and violence, they inevitably learn better; and as the joy of theatre is integrated into the curriculum, students begin to feel bonding, self-assurance

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395 Ibid.
and peace.” Helen Nicholson understands: “There is a deep utopianism about theatre education that consistently imagines the world to be more equitable and more just, and its aesthetic practices are orientated towards social engagement and cultural understanding.” Students are more apt to be sympathetic of others when they are in the process of developing their own cultural norms and values. “Strong strands form this connection to our common ancestry - art and understanding, imagination and reason. As it engages with the expression of human connection to the material world, with our interpretation of the meaning of matter and culture, educational classroom drama is strengthening the bonds between these strands - bonds that go to the heart of what it is to be human.”

Through the combined processes of storytelling and “acting-out,” classroom drama is capable of instilling in children positive lifelong values that will not be easily forgotten. Educator Richard Morse understands the difficult problems faced by teenagers today and suggests that those “young people who have entered the inclusive and sheltering refuge of a theatre program, even briefly, have seen their lives changed dramatically.” Educator and drama therapist Robert Landy explains:

Given a modern society that is often confusing and irrational, at best, the teacher may want to search for ways to help the student make sense out of the world he lives in. This act of making order out of disorder, sense out of nonsense, may well represent the most essential value in the dramatic experience. From our dramatic play as children to our viewing of the great plays from our dramatic literature, we

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398 Hulson, Schemes for Classroom Drama, 10.

399 Morse, Theatre, 13.
continue to explore the crucial human concerns of meaning and mortality in a form that is manageable, intelligible, and personal.\textsuperscript{400}

One of the longest running educational programs based on theatre in the classroom can be found in the United Kingdom. Organized in 1965 in Coventry, Theatre in Education (TIE) is made up of various professional acting teams that are under the sponsorship of national as well as local government agencies. Working with teachers and administrators within the school system, these teams devise scripts according to the age level and concerns of the students. Socio-political issues such as “the environment, racism and local history to language learning, science and health”\textsuperscript{401} are studied by the students and teachers prior to the presentation. Authors Anthony Jackson and Chris Vine explain that “the TIE programme is not a performance in schools of a self-contained play… but a coordinated and carefully structured pattern of activities, often devised and researched by the company, around a topic of relevance both to the school curriculum and to the young people’s own lives…”\textsuperscript{402} In the tradition of Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed, the students are “invited to challenge or advise characters from a play they have just witnessed, sometimes being incorporated into its action.”\textsuperscript{403} Either by acting, staging, or merely watching a presentation and sharing in a teacher moderated discussion period afterward, all pupils are encouraged to participate.

\textsuperscript{400} Robert Landy, \textit{Handbook of Educational Drama and Theatre} (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1982), 34.


\textsuperscript{402} Ibid., 6.

\textsuperscript{403} Ibid.
In *Can Theatre Teach?*, Christine Redington discusses the historical and evaluative benefits of the Theatre in Education program. The purpose of TIE “is that its presentations in schools should educate, widen pupils’ horizons, and lead them to ask questions about the world around them, as well as entertain.” The scripts are based on real events, introducing problems of an historical or contemporary nature. As Redington explains,

> The subject-matter of a TIE programme has some basis in real life. It might, for instance, present the problems of gypsies and their treatment by the local council, or demonstrate the life of the nineteenth-century navvy building railways. The content of TIE work is often social and political, and in this respect it is similar to the content of Political Theatre. However, it does not baldly state a political message; it offers the pupils an experience of a socio-political problem without giving a pat answer.

The Breakout Theatre Company, formed in 1984 in the Royal County of Berkshire, does not limit itself to a single performance, but instead may work for a week or longer (mostly with elementary school children where the schedule is more flexible) to create, for example, a play based on a particular period in history. Alistair Campbell notes, “With the use of role-play, we might develop an extended cross-disciplinary drama incorporating debate, recording, history, geography, math, and science, animated and galvanized by the imagination and participation of students. This kind of project is one of

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405 Ibid., 2.

406 Redington, *Can Theatre Teach?*, 2.

the many hybrids between acting and teaching which is still alive in primary school classrooms in Britain.”

After being introduced to Forum Theatre in the late 1980s, Breakout Theatre incorporated Boal’s techniques into the classroom setting with some success. Including the students as spect-actors was of prime importance. “On an ideal day we would present a short piece on race issues, for example, and end up sitting in the audience with the students performing their stratagems for survival and self-expression back to us. That was a real devolving of power and skill, and we have never looked back.”

Theatre in Education as a means to enhance the educational curriculum within the primary and secondary schools of Great Britain has not only succeeded, but globally expanded. The Creative Arts Team (CAT) is a prime example of TIE’s influence abroad. Associated with City University of New York (CUNY), CAT was formed in the 1970s “to examine pertinent curricular themes and social issues, including race relations, HIV/AIDS, child abuse, teen pregnancy, violence, multiculturalism, and the environments.” Funded by government-sponsored social service agencies such as New York City’s Department of Youth Services, New York State Division of Substance Abuse Services, New York State Division for Youth, New York City’s Board of

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408 Alistair Campbell, “Re-inventing the Wheel,” 54.

409 Ibid., 56.

Education, and others,411 “CAT has worked in nearly 1000 classrooms and communities in the five boroughs of NYC. Our students reflect the City’s economic, ethnic, and cultural diversity. Over our 38 years of existence, we have worked with more than a million youth.”412

According to their mission statement posted on October 7, 2013,

CAT uses theatre as a medium to promote social, emotional, and intellectual growth in communities throughout New York City. Working from early childhood through the adult years, CAT offers interactive dramas that explore curricular themes and social issues such as literacy, inter-cultural understanding, peer pressure, violence, sexuality, substance abuse, and HIV/AIDS prevention. Students become participants in fiction based group improvisations. Questions emerge from dramatic conflict, and participants are challenged to find their own answers. Through theatre conventions reality is viewed afresh, prejudices revised, and conflicts seen from many points of view. Throughout, professionally trained actor-teachers process these experiences so that participants are able to transfer the new skills and insights into their own lives.413

Considered a highly successful teaching tool since pupils most often “learn by doing,” TIE provides a unique addition to mainstream education. Christine Reddington explains: “Teams are able to introduce themes and methods into a school which a teacher would find it hard to do as an individual. In its ability to motivate pupils to learn, and concentrate, and produce stimulus on many different levels, TIE offers something that the education system appears to destroy.”414 As Helen Nicholson points out, “One enduring legacy of TIE practitioners is that they showed how to develop a theatrical pedagogy by

411 Riherd and Hardwick, “The Creative Arts Team,” 205.


414 Redington, Can Theatre Teach?, 211.
asking profound questions about the purpose of education, the social role of theatre and its ability to affect the lives of young people.”

Drama in Education, another program that has a long-standing tradition within the classrooms of Great Britain, was established through the 1944 Education Act during the war years of the 1940s. With the appointment of dramatist and educator Peter Slade as the first dramatic advisor to the Educational Drama Association, DIE was becoming well established as a vehicle for learning as well as therapy for those located on the fringes of society following the war. “There was a widespread feeling that a new and fairer society should be built from the ruins of one where classes of forty or more were not uncommon and where 5 per cent of all children were officially classified as under-nourished.”

Reorganized in the 1960s by educators Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton, DIE continued to address issues that confronted students on an everyday basis. Trained teachers, referred to as “Mantle of Experts,” encouraged students to act out dramatizations within the classroom setting in order to learn. Heathcote felt that one of the main purposes of Drama in Education should be to “help people achieve the fullest and most varied subtle changes of register in relating to others… It is in this field that dramatic activity is of most direct help.”

Bolton describes the teaching methodology of DIE as “lived through” drama. In his words, “Drama is concerned with a change of insight… For drama to be effective in these terms there must be some shift of appraisal, an act of cognition that has involved a

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417 Dorothy Heathcote, *Drama in Education of Teachers* (Newcastle upon Tyne: University of Newcastle upon Tyne, 1972), 21.
change of feeling, so that some facet of living is given … a different value." \(^{418}\) “It’s basic, because it’s concerned with identification. And if you look at any aspect of the curriculum, whether its history, geography, literature or social studies, you are concerned with getting the child to identify with someone else’s situation.” \(^{419}\)

Having assumed the position of Mantle of the Expert, the teacher may have questions that she/he would like answered before beginning a “lived through” drama. Questions for consideration could include: “What sorts of knowledge/ information are to be studied? What skills (mental, linguistic, artistic, psychomotor, or dramatic) are to be practiced through the knowledge? What ploys are needed to help special needs of the class? What will make them reach out and set standards for themselves?” \(^{420}\)

It becomes the teacher’s responsibility to decide what best meets the needs of his/her class and what role he/she (as educator and role-player) is to assume in production. The unit or drama can take a week or longer to complete, depending on the subject matter and skill level of the class. At the completion of the period, lessons will have been learned, not only concerning the subjects under study, but in the basic social skills required in working with one another in production. The “lived through” drama should engender a positive effect on both students and teacher. It is understood that role-playing is how children learn best, and Drama in Education affords them the opportunity.

On another continent, Canadian teacher and researcher, Kathleen Gallagher, worked with an urban Catholic girls’ school over an 18-month period to bring drama to


\(^{419}\) Landy, *Handbook of Educational Drama and Theatre*, 29-30.

the classroom specifically for girls. By exploring socio-political issues such as gender, sex, and race relations in a protected and closed environment, Gallagher “with the explicit intention of identifying those aspects of their schooling that might be inhibiting their full participation in their learning…” hoped to prepare adolescent girls to empower themselves and others through drama. In the process, she found “that girls bring their gendered and cultural knowledge to their dramatic creations in a way that allows them to stand proudly, speak wisely, and see differently. Working in role… teaches students about the social constructs that shape their lives while allowing them to shift perspectives and seek truth in opposites – to alter action, slow down processes, and create meaning collectively.”

Gallagher refers to one Remembrance Day performance as particularly compelling:

We heard the stories of men going to war, not returning from war, victories and defeats. Of the thirty-three students, only one was of British descent. The questions that followed and the story-telling the students performed seemed to somehow transcend both culture and gender while being firmly rooted in both these contexts. Through their explorations, they began to make the story their own. Each day there seemed to be a growing sensitivity in the room. The horrors of war and lost lives were beginning to take the students outside their own context. They were beginning to see beyond themselves.

With the permission of the students, all of the drama classes were recorded in order to “make- meaning” of their voices and reflect on their work. According to Gallagher, “My classroom observation of tenth grade girls offers an important but

422 Ibid., 27-28.
423 Ibid., 23.
different insight about single-sex education: when gender is ‘relaxed,’ other categories of identity emerge more strongly in these same sex groupings.”\(^{424}\) The girls involved learned to make choices based on their own experiences and diversities. A student named Rosa, for example, told about one lesson learned from the experience. “I learned that in every situation everyone views their own story as the truth, builds up their own truth. And through acting out different points of view we understood why everyone wanted their story to be the truth.”\(^{425}\) For Rosa and the others, the idea that everyone had their own “truths” to tell proved not only educational - but liberating and empowering.

**Storytelling in the Classroom: A Therapeutic Process**

In a story we have the power to write our world because the telling of stories enables us to pattern reality and vice versa. It is not so much that we are engaging in a conscious act of will to create a reality; it’s more that we are engaged in a social process that both reflects and builds the cultural world in which we live. As we tell the story we are ‘telling’ reality- it makes *us* as we make *it.*

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Maggie Hulson, *Schemes for Classroom Drama*

Children love stories and nowhere are stories found to have more impact than in the home or classroom setting. Drama educator Maggie Hulson understands the participatory nature of storytelling and the effect of empowerment it bestows on both the storyteller and audience. She offers narratives such as those found in Greek mythology as examples of stories that provide messages that remain relevant in today’s culture. She then encourages students to create their own “myths” based on their personal experiences and those of others:

\(^{424}\) Gallagher, *Drama Education*, 133.

\(^{425}\) Ibid., 134-135.
By participating in an unfolding, collaborative discourse, within a set of carefully chosen givens, the class (is) learning through and about the creation of culture, of meaning. By living through a story set in the past, for example, as it unfolds in the present, the participants are engaged in predicting and making that which happens next.426

Once the stories are compiled, they are acted out or staged under the supervision of the dramatist/teacher (Heathcote’s Mantle of the Expert), who intervenes, if necessary, in order to provide and explore various solutions. By implementing “learning zones” where the children are free to express themselves without fear of reprisal, the entire story project under the auspices of “educational classroom drama” is reflexive and rewarding, not only for the “storytellers” but for all involved.

Hulson’s dramaturgy differs from “process drama” where students are encouraged to “write from the imagined perspective of a character or another person in a role drama to display and extend their understandings” of a given narrative or text.427 Cecily O’Neil explains the important role imagination plays in “process drama” pedagogy:

Although it is a necessary condition for almost all intellectual activity, imagination is insufficiently acknowledged as a powerful catalyst for learning. Where imagination is encouraged, a range of learning possibilities is immediately made available in the classroom. Speculation, interpretation, evaluation, and reflection, all demanding cognitive activities are promoted. Opportunities arise for both teacher and students to make the kinds of personal, social, and curricular connections that transcend the traditional boundaries of the curriculum.428

By bringing stories located on the page to life, process drama expands and adds to classroom literacies by offering multiple approaches to learning. By imagining

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themselves as ‘others,’ students are more likely to connect to and understand the reasons behind the choices made by historical figures and choose either to empathize with or to deride their decisions. When working through drama, students are better prepared to locate and address the social, cultural, and ethical issues under study. According to O’Neill, drama encourages independent thinking: “If the students are unable to imagine things differently and consider the world from unfamiliar perspectives, they will be unable to bring about any change in their circumstances. The arts, and drama in particular, have always provoked these shifts of perspective.”

Under proper guidance and instruction, process drama is deemed appropriate for all age levels. In early childhood education, for example, the teacher may orally read *Goodnight Moon* and then have the children act out the routine of bedtime together. Each child may have varying bedtime procedures that they may wish to include on their own. Knowing that other children in their class have similar bedtime routines, they may be less inclined to be afraid when the lights go out and the moon appears. Through the use of dramatic action, *Goodnight Moon* possesses the ability to become participatory, personal, and comforting.

On the high school level, a history class may be studying a chapter on America’s Founding Fathers and their involvement in the First Continental Congress. By reading and documenting excerpts from speeches and texts, the students come to a better understanding of the material, the time period, and the famous figures involved. They then are encouraged to create a “real” documentary play based on the historical materials under study. Not only are lessons learned, they are remembered.

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429 O’Neill, forward, xi.
When students are asked to tell their own experiences/stories based on the textual material, they are required to move beyond their normal learning curve. This form of process drama provides challenges and opportunities to both teachers and students:

… [I]t is a method for learning and teaching that can be used to integrate the content of numerous curricular areas while also developing the minds and the social consciences of the students. Process-drama techniques allow students to view the world from multiple perspectives, involving them in situations in which they must make informed decisions and live with the consequences of their actions. Therefore, process drama is an educational tool for learning, thinking, and doing.\textsuperscript{430}

Through storytelling, the students “gain new insights while collectively negotiating meanings and investigating problems in spaces where my story is your story. They leave the experience with new knowledge and the reminiscences of the powerful feelings they took from the drama and from their collectively negotiated narratives.”\textsuperscript{431}

\textit{Standing Tall (2002)}

One example of storytelling in the classroom that left a deep impression on the students, teachers, and parents, occurred after the World Trade Center bombings on 9/11. Having witnessed the attacks as they unfolded through their classroom window, the 4\textsuperscript{th} and 5th graders of Manhattan’s P.S. 3 reportedly were having difficulty sleeping and dealing with the traumatic events. Professional drama therapist Robert Landy was called upon to help the students devise a script and act out events based on what they were feeling. A group of theatre professionals from City Lights Youth Theatre also were involved in helping the students create a series of role-playing incidents for the

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\textsuperscript{430} Crumpler, Rogers, and Jenifer Jasinski Schneider, introduction to \textit{Process Drama}, xv.
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\textsuperscript{431} Winters, Rogers, and Schofield, “The Antigone Project: Using Drama and Multiple Literacies to Support Print Literacy among Youth,” 38.
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production. Working together once week, the entire project took only a few months to complete.

*Standing Tall* not only provided “clarity and hope” for the children involved, but for the audience members made up of parents and fellow classmates who participated in talk-backs post-performance, “their play offered an intergenerational community an opportunity to participate in a ritual through which to share a common history.”\(^{432}\) Phillip Taylor explains, “Theatre becomes a way for community members to examine their relationship to the shocking events of the attack. In this new version of community theatre, people can directly apply the art form to assist in reconstructing their identities. Community theatre is vital to the process of healing for it enables people to share pain and hope narratives.”\(^{433}\)

Peggy Stern, who filmed the performance, interviewed some of the parents and children afterward and reported “that even some of the overtly stoic children had nightmares and that the experience of *Standing Tall* helped them deal with their fears. …for one girl, the experience … changed her way of thinking about life.”\(^{434}\) In her words, “I don’t know what I’d do without the drama… Without the drama, I would just be … dead in my mind.”\(^{435}\) As “Christa” reveals in *Standing Tall*, “A lot of grown-ups felt scared, too, even more scared than the children. And a lot of people felt proud to be Americans who would stand tall no matter what. Some were angry and … wanted to

\(^{432}\) *Standing Tall*, DVD, produced by Peggy Stern (New York: Gladeyes Film, 2003).


\(^{435}\) *Standing Tall*. 158
throw bricks and bombs at the villains. And some were forgiving, hopeful that victims and heroes would just be ordinary people again.\textsuperscript{436}

The end of the play reveals the hope and empowerment the students feel after having participated in their documentary.

CHRISTA: And so the children began to rebuild, one story at a time, not with bricks and mortar, but with words and images, until the city of darkness was once again a city of light and hope.

GARRETH: We are the artists.

ROBERT: Our city is a place called New York, New York where buildings stand tall.

ANNA: Our city is a place where we stand tall. This play is our memorial.\textsuperscript{437}

**Stories beyond the Classroom Setting**

What is important… must be spoken, made verbal and shared, even at the risk of having it bruised or misunderstood.

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\text{-- Audre Lourde, *The Cancer Journals*}
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British playwright Mark Ravenhill’s Robbie in “Shopping and F***ing” understands:

I think we all need stories. We make up stories so we can get by. And I think a long time ago there were big stories. Stories so big you could live your whole life in them. The Powerful Hands of the Gods and Fate. The Journey to the Enlightenment. The March of Socialism. But they all died or the world grew up or grew senile or forgot them, so now we’re all making up our own stories. Little stories. But we’ve each got one.\textsuperscript{438}


\textsuperscript{437} Landy, *Standing Tall*, 13.

Personal stories, which are considered the building blocks of verbatim theatre, are more likely to be remembered when they are divulged as “truths” in front of a receptive audience. Hovel, in *Writing for the Stage*, discusses the cathartic transformation that is likely to occur when stories are disclosed onstage:

Even the toughest truth expressed publicly, in front of everyone else, suddenly becomes liberating. In the beautiful ambivalence that is proper only to the theatre, the horror of that truth…is wedded to something new and unfamiliar, at least from our reading: to delight (which can only be experienced collectively), because it was finally said, it’s out of the bag, the truth has finally been articulated out loud and in public.439

When discussing the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa (1998), Rustom Bharucha maintains that story telling is not necessarily based on fact and that “factual truths” are not storytelling.440 Facts are obtained through documentation, scientifically corroborated evidence, and objective procedures, while personal stories are based on memory. It has been found that these personal stories, even though they are considered too subjective to stand up as accurate evidence, when accepted as “truths,” possess the potential to heal.441

Famous storyteller and fiction writer Isak Dinesen has said that, “All sorrows can be borne if you put them into a story or tell a story about them.”442 Dinesen’s contextual

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441 Ibid.

442 Ibid.
meaning of “borne” is “endured,” and through the process of storytelling she understands that as realities are illuminated, the “aporias of pain” can be dealt with.\textsuperscript{443}

Bharucha understands that “Silence is unacceptable in dealing with any tragedy or atrocity, even if the absence of justice is tolerated. You have to speak out. That is the underlying imperative of almost any exposure of violence, whether it concerns apartheid or the genocide in Rowanda or the Partition in India.”\textsuperscript{444} One must speak up and be heard in order for dialoguing to occur and reconciliation to begin. Bharucha regards the terms “reconciliation” and “forgiveness” one and the same. “Forgiveness, it could be argued, is an important element of many other faiths, and indeed, it may be necessary to forgive in order to survive the trials of the past.”\textsuperscript{445} Time alone does not provide the power to heal for some have carried the scars of abuse for decades, but when combined with forgiveness, healing is more likely to occur. In the hope of healing we must not only forgive, but also must learn to graciously accept forgiveness from others.

In “Out of the Silence,” David Diamond discusses the importance of storytelling to Headlines Theatre in Canada. Basing their Power Play Workshops on those of Augusto Boal, Diamond explains the need for respondents to get their stories “out” and shared. He has found that “The richest and most productive way to work with oppressed groups is to help them find their own voice, not to speak for them. When individuals don’t express themselves emotionally for long periods of time they get sick; communities are the same.

\textsuperscript{443} Bharucha, “Between Truth and Reconciliation,” 3764.
\textsuperscript{444} Ibid., 3771.
\textsuperscript{445} Ibid.
One way for our communities to heal is for all of us to take back our rights of healthy collective expression.\textsuperscript{446}

What becomes of stories that are never told? “What happens to these unacknowledged partitions, these undisclosed truths?”\textsuperscript{447} Stories that define who people are and what they hope to become have been lost forever because they never were articulated. As has been stated, theatre is one forum where truths are not only presented, but are opened for debate. Confrontation onstage, where actors perform as conduits for truth, is important for reconciliation offstage. “Between the exposition of truth and the possibility of reconciliation, there needs to be a modulation of energies, whereby the listeners and interlocutors of truth, including the perpetrators, assume a collective responsibility in caring for the future of the victims. The keyword here is ‘care’….”\textsuperscript{448}

**Empathy and Understanding in a Shared World**

The magic of performance, the privilege of relief from banality and the pleasure of working at creating the ever lifting, always partial understandings and empathy that the stage allows, models a way to be together, as human beings, in a culture and a historical moment that’s working much harder to tear us apart.

-- Jill Dolan, *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theatre*

…you never really know a man until you stand in his shoes and walk around in them.

-- Atticus Finch, *To Kill a Mockingbird*


\textsuperscript{447} Bharucha, “Between Truth and Reconciliation,” 3764.

\textsuperscript{448} Ibid., 3768.
Empathy or “identification with and understanding of another’s situation, feelings, and motives”\textsuperscript{449} is a primary motivating factor in any theatrical production. Dramaturgical techniques such as dialogue, stage direction, acting, music, lighting, and costuming are put into practice to elicit empathetic response. The lives of the characters portrayed onstage and the lives of the audience members become connected and intensified. Emotional attachments result. Polish director Jerzy Grotowski explains how feelings of empathy and understanding towards one another are likely the result of this unique relationship between production and reception:

The performance engages a sort of psychic conflict with the spectator. It is a challenge and an excess, but can only have any effect if based on human interest and, more than that, on a feeling of sympathy, a feeling of acceptance. … A kind of warmth towards one’s fellow man is essential - an understanding of the contradictions in man, and that he is a suffering creature but not one to be scorned.\textsuperscript{450}

Stories have the potential to become cathartic and heartfelt when the characters onstage face similar situations to those of the spectator. “The concept of catharsis as emotional relief has occupied a central role in the therapeutic use of drama but equally important is the notion that vicarious involvement, identification and the ambivalence of knowing that events on stage are not real, but are perceived to be real \textit{at the moment} result in a temporary suspension of disbelief.”\textsuperscript{451} Likewise, Fearnow has discovered that, “The connection felt with an exterior reality is always a relief. Such truth may have no connection with spoken language whatsoever. The connection may come in the bend of a


\textsuperscript{450} Jerzy Grotowsky, Towards a Poor Theatre (London: Methuen, 1981), 47.

wrist, that angle of a hat, the intonation of a laugh.”452 However they are expressed, these connections, associations, or shared moments of collusion between actors and audience that permit simultaneous presentations of belief and disbelief identifiable through the process of praxis and reception have the tendency to evoke empathetic response and induce change.

Daphna Ben Chaim claims that documentary has the ability to “assault” or penetrate the audience by “implicating them in issues related to the real world.”453 Current events or “literal truths” may be similar to situations audience members may have experienced, such as the loss of a loved one due to trauma or war, and therefore are more likely to trigger empathetic emotions and response. After viewing televised reruns of traumatic events such as the assassination of President Kennedy in Dallas on November 22, 1963, the bombings of the World Trade Towers on 9/11, and the Boston marathon bombings of April 13, 2013, we still are capable of experiencing the pain and suffering these events precipitated. Even when we, as an audience, are aware of the ultimate outcome, our brains feel pain and empathize. Researchers are discovering that these emotional sentiments can be illuminated and traced through brain scanning. Neuroscientist Michael Gazzaniga explains:

452 Fearnow, Theatre and the Good, 24.

Whether you anticipate the pain for yourself or another, the same area in the brain is used. Looking at pictures of humans in painful situations also activates brain activity in the area that is active in the emotional appraisal of pain, but not the area that is active with the actual sensation of pain. There is evidence the same neurons mediate the emotional appraisal of both personal and vicarious pain.\(^{454}\)

Stephen Di Benedetto suggests that theatre, when staging or ‘reliving’ traumatic events such as these, has the capacity to initiate these same emotions. Theatre’s “live quality brings us together. …it is cathartic because it takes us through the trials and tribulation of other humans and finds resolution through the compressed form of the experience that artists offer up to us as they shape performances that stimulate our embodied responses to the artworks. This makes theatre an extremely powerful medium that is intrinsic to human survival.”\(^ {455}\) The audience comes to theatre to “forget their daily life. They’ve come also to witness the concerns of others. They themselves have their little individual concerns and they want to see others having much greater ones. This is going to purge them of their own anxieties. It is a quest for purification.”\(^ {456}\) “Through empathy our brains will respond and together we understand.”\(^ {457}\)

**Addressing Social, Political, and Intercultural Issues through Performance**

…(T)heatre education offers a powerful place to encounter the unexpected, to extend horizons of expectation and to consider where we are positioned in the world. It is material and ephemeral, and recognizes that meaning is made not only in the symbols, metaphors and narratives of drama, but between spaces and places, in the gaps and the silences of reflection as well as in the movement and activity of practice.

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\(^{455}\) Di Benedetto, *The Provocation of the Senses*, 170.

\(^{456}\) Barrault, “Best and Worst of Professions,” 25.

By “acting out” through role-play and theatre, students are better equipped to “make meaning” of situations involving culture, race, and gender issues that confront them on a daily basis. Commonalities as well as differences are shared, explored, and ultimately internalized. By offering ideas on how change can occur for issues to be resolved, theatre helps prepare them for a more hopeful and equitable future.

By adopting the utopian vision of living in a world of “shared differences,” where social and cultural disparities are no longer of concern, bridging cultures through performance becomes possible. Documentary playwrights can present the problems only in the hope that those who listen will understand and promote change within themselves and within others in the broader community in order to establish a more peaceful society in which to live. Susan Bennett explains:

It is, of course, true that live performance has an often uncanny ability to touch those very stories by and through which we understand ourselves. Indeed, part of what makes us a theatre audience is our willingness to engage with performances in ways that speak to the most intimated detail of our experience. However that relationship works, it can only do so, I believe, because of the cultural context in which any person can conceive of a place in the world.”

Through theatre “we are discovering how one ought to be… we are also finding out how, despite our seeming differences, humans can know what it is to be human, and step into a shared world.”

When addressing the subject of interculturalism and its relationship to performance, educator Ric Knowles has discovered that one of the primary roles of theatre is to,

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458 Bennett, Theatre Audiences, vii.

459 Hulson, Schemes for Classroom Drama, 10.
… bridge cultures through performance, to bring different cultures into productive dialogue with one another on the stage, in the space between the stage and the audience, and within the audience. It begins with the assumption that culture exists only insofar as it is enacted, performed into being by the daily ritual and performative activities of individuals and communities as they negotiate their place in the world.\textsuperscript{460}

Ethnographer Norman Denzin suggests, “We inhabit a performance-based dramaturgical culture. The dividing line between performer and audience blurs and culture itself becomes a dramatic performance.”\textsuperscript{461} Similar to documentary theatre, performance ethnography bases itself on true stories and factual documentation. Primitive societies use performance as a tool to investigate, educate, and explore issues that most concern them. Topics as diverse as AIDS, gay bashing, gang rape, drugs, politics, and other social and political concerns are not only explored, but are discussed and illuminated in post-performance talk-back sessions. This collaborative effort involving the entire community results in a better understanding of how it feels not only to ‘walk in someone else’s shoes,’ but how (as Freire suggested), through an exchange of dialogue, changes can be made and issues resolved.

Audience members are free to share their thoughts and feelings about what they have heard and seen by participating in conversations held after each performance. When it is fresh and new in their memories, they are more likely to achieve an openness to understand and a willingness to learn from each other’s perceptions and beliefs. Because of the diverse, multi-cultural society in which we live, it becomes important not only to be prideful of one’s heritage and upbringing, but to recognize the community as a whole

\textsuperscript{460}Ric Knowles, \textit{Theatre and Interculturalism} (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 1.

\textsuperscript{461}Denzin, \textit{Performance Ethnography}, x.
and to be cognizant of others in order to gain a truer sense of connectedness and belonging. “Performers and audience alike accept that a primary function [of performance]… is precisely cultural and social metacommentary, the exploration of self and other, of the world as experienced, and of alternate possibilities.”

Because of its political nature, documentary spotlights world issues and events, adding “to the importance of theatre art in learning about life.” Theatrical space operates as a safety zone where political issues can be analyzed and debated while moving “the conversation about its subject matter from a state of entropy to a higher level of activation energy and discourse.”

When discussing the preponderance of new plays that are focused on socio-political issues at the start of the new millennium, David Savran notes,

The lifeblood of theatre remains new plays, plays that give relatively knowledgeable audiences an opportunity to see debated, and to debate themselves, important social issues. The vitality of drama does not mean Brecht’s activist (and revolutionary) theatre is alive and well and living in America. But it does mean that theatre remains a forum for the examination of often difficult and contentious issues. For example, racist institutions, sexual violence, homophobia and even the workings of capitalism are interrogated more openly and vigorously in theatre… than in mass culture.

Three verbatim plays recently written and produced that haven’t been afraid to open past and present wounds by confronting sensitive socio-political issues include:

*Greensboro: A Requiem* by Emily Mann, *The Arab-Israeli Cookbook* by Robin Soans,

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463 Dawson, *Documentary Theatre*, xi.

464 Ibid., xii.

and *The Laramie Project* by Moises Kaufmann. By directing a spotlight on controversial topics (racism, interculturalism, and homophobia) that others have chosen to ignore, these playwrights have had a profound influence on the definitions of ‘self,’ ‘other,’ and ‘community’ in a rapidly expanding shared world of theatre.

**Greensboro: A Requiem (1996) by Emily Mann**

As we have learned from *The Delany Sisters*, one playwright who understands theatre’s direct impact on exposing contentious socio-political issues and who is not afraid to address them *out loud and in public* through documentary is Emily Mann, director of Princeton’s McCarter Theatre.

Mann felt compelled to confront the issue of race relations in America when a staged rally against the Ku Klux Klan of Greensboro, North Carolina went awry. On November 3, 1979, demonstrators organized a march to protest the KKK, which, up to this point in time, held a strong presence in Greensboro. Marchers, made up of representatives of both White and Black races, Greensboro’s university students, and other like-minded members of the community, picketed through Greensboro streets, shouting inflammatory statements such as “Death to the Klan!” A caravan, made up of nine cars of Klansmen, quickly interceded by blocking the roadway. When some of the demonstrators responded by beating on the cars with picket signs, the Klansmen fired rifles into the crowd of marchers, leaving five dead and nine wounded in their wake. Because of the severity of this event, Greensboro was forced to confront its racial divisions, and Mann, recognizing documentary’s ability to face issues squarely, felt theatre would offer a practicable approach.

Klansman David Mathews testifies:
They said we were scum, that we were hiding under a rock, that we were chicken shit to come out and meet them head-on. Fine and Dandy. We decided to come. …We heard that the communists and the niggers was going to shoot us on the side, so we took some shotguns. …So the niggers started shooting, and there was some spectators around and some communists. So just like anybody with any common sense, anybody starts to shoot at you, you better defend yourself. They were trying to protect theirselves and finally got stopped. Niggers and communists. …We didn’t take guns there just to kill people. There were some innocent people shot, I reckon, as I’m told anyway. But I was shooting at the niggers…

Black marcher “Ronnie” tells his story:

Sandy saved my life… I was disoriented and didn’t know which way to go. Sandy had just been severely bashed in the head, yet she could think better than I could in that situation. She was herding children out of the street, trying to save the children, and saw me standing there disoriented, and she grabbed my arm and said “Go!”…when I turned around to take Sandy’s hand… I saw her kinda slumped up against a wall…she was dead. Shot between the eyes.

The courtroom trials that ensued involved both the state and federal courts. All-White jurists acquitted the Klansmen on the grounds that they had fired in self-defense. Later, the victims’ families filed a federal court suit claiming wrongful death. The City of Greensboro and the KKK were named jointly responsible, but no one served prison sentences or made monetary restitution to the families of the deceased.

By recording court proceedings, documents, and verbatim testimonies of the survivors, the relatives of the deceased, members of the KKK, and others equally involved, Mann took care to report the facts and let them stand on their own. Toward the end of the play, African-American survivor Reverend Nelson Johnson, in response to his


467 Ibid., 273.

own question, What does it mean when there’s so much suffering and persecution?, declares,

Suffering doesn’t last always. …you might carry pain for a long time…you might hurt for a long time…you might be confused for a long time…but thanks be to God, the joy still comes in the morning. On the other side of pain, there is joy. …all of us will see it together, and we will be brothers and sisters in a new community on the other side. On the other side of sorrow.469

South African playwright and activist Athol Fugard, after attending Mann’s production of Greensboro and listening to the stories of Blacks in America, describes the experiences of the Greensboro victims as similar to those suffering the injustices of apartheid in his own country. The word “healing’ is pronounced in his discussion of the play’s effect on the audience and in its relation to the idea of reconciliation of race relations in South Africa. “Because without that spirit of reconciliation, unless we face up to and come to terms with the lies behind us, no healing [emphasis added] of the terrible wounds of our Apartheid past will take place.”470 Fugard also understands that the playwright as artist is vital to the healing process. “I also do believe that in any society trying to deal with evil and injustices in its past, like my own country and America, the artist has a very significant role to play. I would even go so far as to say that the work of artists will ultimately have a much deeper and more lasting effect on the national psyche than any government-appointed commission.”471

Martha Woodall, a Philadelphia Inquirer critic who interviewed Mann after Greensboro opened, quoted her as saying, “We are at a stage in this country where race is

469 Mann, “Greensboro” 326-327.

470 Athol Fugard, introduction to Testimonies: Four Plays, by Emily Mann (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1997), xi.

471 Ibid.
an obsession and violence is almost a hobby. And people seem to be spinning their
wheels wondering how to think about this. Hopefully it (Greensboro) is a healing place.
Although it is a play about hate, the love is stronger.”

**The Arab-Israeli Cookbook (2004) by Robin Soans**

When approached by directors Tim Roseman, a practicing Jew, and Rimi Brihi, an Arab, to write a verbatim play “about how ordinary people, caught up in the Arab/Israeli conflict, were managing to go about their everyday lives,” British playwright Robin Soans complied. In Soans’ words,

> I am often struck by the fact that when subjects such as the Israel Palestine conflict are debated, they remain the province of politicians, experts, professors and academics. Conversely, the people who are hardly ever asked for their opinion are the people who have to live with the situation day after day… a hairdresser in an Arab village, a student working in a shopping mall to earn his tuition fees, a gay couple in Tel Aviv, a priest’s wife in Bethlehem, a falafel maker in Jerusalem, a houmus maker near the wall. These are the people whose lives are most affected by the conflict, and yet they have traditionally been the least consulted. Surely, if we want real insight into any situation, we shouldn’t listen only to those with an academic overview.

Soans and directors Roseman and Brihi interviewed many people from all walks of life and found that whether they were Christian, Muslim, or Jew, they all basically shared two things in common - a hope for a better future for their families and a passion for food. The idea of preparing food onstage was not new (Mann’s plays, *The Delaney Sisters* and *Annulla*, for example, where aromas of chicken soup from a pot boiling stage left wafted into the audience), but whenever Soans met with someone new to interview,

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472 Martha Woodall, “New Drama Explores A Deadly Confrontation.”


they insisted on ‘breaking bread’ and sharing a meal. He therefore felt compelled to include discussions of food and recipes as well as conversations about war-induced trauma into his documentary. Consequently, sharing for both the Israelis and Palestinians involves recipes, as well as shared hopes and dreams for a better, less violent future, and lays the foundation for Arab/Israeli Cookbook.

Hala, a Christian Arab living in Israel, explains that she is especially torn by the conflicts between the Arabs and Jews because she,

has a foot in both camps... Because I’m an Arab, I empathise with the Palestinian people… they’re not allowed to live a normal life, their children can’t go to school every day, you can’t visit your relatives, so many people are kept in a perpetual state of uncertainty. Uncertainty… it’s a cruel and debilitating weapon. Yet now, because I live in Israel, and I studied at the Hebrew University, and all my neighbors and most of my friends are Jewish… when I hear there’s been another suicide bombing, I feel personally responsible, and I burn inwardly, burn for the victims. This is why I pray a lot, because I crave peace of mind.475

An Israeli named Vitya is on stage preparing a Rosh Hashanah feast of gefilte fish, beetroot onion salad, stewed roast beef with onions and quinces, rice, carrots steamed with prunes, and an array of desserts.476 She tells the story of shopping with her daughter at a supermarket in Jerusalem for the Jewish feast of Passover. Although she notices a group of Arab women selling vegetables at a market stall interspersed between Jewish flower sellers, she is unconcerned because she has seen them selling before and even has bought herbs and fruit from them. At the checkout they hear a loud piercing blast and soon surreal streams of toilet paper resulting from the exploding bomb are seen floating from the sky.

475 Soans, The Arab-Israeli Cookbook, 33-34.

476 Ibid., 51.
Vitya and her daughter felt their lives were spared by the toilet paper display, while other shoppers were found covered in a mixture of red blood and white display paint. Vitya later described the scene: “Like a Fellini movie, utterly grotesque.” It later was discovered that a young Arab girl had whispered warnings to each of the Arab vendors, who managed to vacate before she detonated her suicide bomb. “The Jewish flower sellers remained.”

The Laramie Project (2006) by Moises Kaufmann

In October 1998, a young bicyclist out for early morning exercise discovered the mangled body of 21-year old University of Wyoming student, Mathew Shepherd, tied to the base of a fence in the middle of a desolate farm field outside the city of Laramie, Wyoming. Mathew was found clinging to life in sub-freezing temperatures after being brutally tortured and left to die. He never regained consciousness, dying several days later in a Laramie hospital. The assailants, two town boys about his same age, had met Mathew at a bar and intended to rob him, knowing full well that he was gay and alone.

Because of the brutal nature of the crime and the homophobic implications attached to Matthew’s killing, it made headline news across the nation. In New York City, director and playwright Moises Kaufmann heard of Mathew’s death and immediately became interested in writing a documentary play based on his story. Kaufman and members of the Tectonic Theatre Project travelled to Laramie on numerous occasions, conducting over 400 interviews involving 100 residents. Their purpose was not to judge Laramie, Mathew, or the perpetrators, but to try and understand, “How did

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477 Soans, The Arab-Israeli Cookbook, 53.
478 Ibid., 54.
this crime define the culture, not just of the Western town, but of the entire United States? In Kaufman’s words, “I have always believed that there are moments in history that cast a sudden bright light on an entire culture. And if what happens in that moment can be recorded, we not only further illuminate the beliefs, ideologies and morals that pervade a culture; we can seize the moment for change. The murder of Mathew Shepard was just such a moment.”

The ensuing documentary, *The Laramie Project*, written by Kaufmann and other members of the Tectonic Project ensemble, premiered at the Ricketson Theatre in Denver in February 2000 and then moved on to the Union Square Theatre in New York City where it played for five months. The cast was composed of eight actors who played the roles of one narrator and approximately 60 townspeople. The sparse set consisted of a few tables and chairs. Costuming was in keeping with what local community members such as doctors, nurses, waiters, bartenders, law enforcement officials, friends, counselors, classmates, relatives, and clergy were wearing during the time period between Mathew’s killing and the final interviews - from 1998 to 1999.

Dramaturgically, Kaufmann included a narrator to introduce the characters. So many voices were involved that, without a narrator, it would have proved too difficult for the actors to switch identities and smoothly transition into the various roles. He also developed a separate technique called “moment work,” where the actor tells his story by

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directly addressing the audience. “It is a method to create and analyze theatre from a structuralist (or tectonic) perspective. For that reason, there are no scenes in this play, only moments. A moment does not mean a change of locale or an entrance or exit of actors or characters. It is simply a unit of theatrical time that is then juxtaposed with other units to convey meaning.”

Jill Dolan, in an assessment of Laramie’s dramaturgy, explains:

…it intends to use performance to practice a conversation about tense current events, a discussion that might not be possible in the reality of history. … it uses performance to reflect on and to share feelings about personal experience with political resonance. The conventions of performance permit conversations and, in Laramie’s case, musings about ideas that otherwise might have remained private.

When interviewed by Kaufmann, university student Jedadiah Schultz reveals,

If you would have asked me before, I would have told you Laramie is a beautiful town, secluded enough that you can have your own identity… A town with a strong sense of community - everyone knows everyone…A town with a personality that most larger cities are stripped of. Now, after Mathew, I would say that Laramie is a town defined by an accident, a crime. We’ve become Waco, we’ve become Jasper. We’re a noun, a definition, a sign. We may be able to get rid of that …but it will sure take a while.

After attending a candle light vigil for Mathew, Zubaida Ula, a young Muslim, shares,

And it was so good to be with people who felt like shit. I kept feeling like I don’t deserve to feel this bad, you know? And someone got up there and said, “C’mon guys, let’s show the world that Laramie is not this kind of a town.” But it is that kind of town. If it wasn’t this kind of town, why did this happen here? I mean, you know what I mean, like - that’s a lie. Because it did happen here….these are people trying to distance themselves from the crime. And we need to own this

482 Kaufman, The Laramie Project, xiv.


484 Kaufman, The Laramie Project, 9.
crime. I feel. Everyone needs to own it. …We are like this. We Are like this. WE are LIKE this.485

Even though the documentaries of *Greensboro*, *Cookbook*, and *Laramie* offered their audiences different dramaturgical approaches concerning content, form, context, and dialogue, they all were driven to reveal that, through empathy and understanding, persons and communities can be made better. Jill Dolan understands that performances like these “allow audiences to deepen their connection to their political and social lives by rehearsing a depth of feeling that can demonstrate effective and affective civic engagement.”486 By sharing and exposing truths revealed through these personal - and formally private - stories, verbatim testimonies possess the power to touch the core of what it means to part of a more respectful, humane, and less contentious society in which to live. They have indeed shown that *theatre matters by offering the promise of hope and healing to those who are in need of both*.

**Theatre and Therapy: Healing Individuals and Community**

There appears to be a universal quality of dramatic experience spanning history, culture, and human developmental stages that promotes a kind of individual and group healing. This dramatic, therapeutic quality is to be found in the play of children; in the theoretical writings and practices of theatre artists; in the rituals and rites of Western and non-Western cultures alike; in the dramatic and therapeutic notions of catharsis, role-taking, and role-playing; and in the practice of psychodrama and related action-oriented therapists.

-- Robert Landy, *Handbook of Educational Drama and Theatre*

Theatre performance has been used throughout history as a ceremonial rite to heal, educate, and affect change. Beginning with the Dionysian rites of spring, the ancient Greeks promoted theatre and dance as a means “to assure a good hunt, an ample


rainfall, or a long life to a new leader. The dramatic elements included chanting, dancing, storytelling, and dressing up in the costumes and masks of gods, animals, or elements. As in most rituals, the learning that occurred was social and cultural: an affirmation of community, common values, needs, and hopes.487

Centuries later, well-respected leaders of tribal clans called shamans used theatre, ritual, and dance as a means to cathartically heal individuals who were mentally or physically suffering and in need. The shaman and members of the community gathered in a circle of safety around the subject in order to ward off evil, provide curative power, and restore peace to the whole. Ethnographer Richard Morse explains:

…. [T]he patient is first urged to whirl and dance to the accompaniment of a drum or flute for long periods of time, encircled by supportive clan members. This strenuous exercise leads to a state of exhaustion, wherein the celebrant yields all attachment to present life and submits to the guiding influence of the shaman. This achieved, a dream state is induced by the shaman healer in which the clan member departs on an imaginary journey.488

Shamanism remains a viable method of healing within primitive cultures today. In the words of a practicing shaman, as told to anthropologist Henry Munn, “I am he who puts together, he who speaks, he who searches. I am he who looks for the spirit of the day. I search where there is fright and terror. I am he who fixes, he who cures the person who is sick.”489

In Northern Europe during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, St. Vitus dance rituals were being performed by “masses of people, all dancing and screaming hysterically, often in response to the epileptic-like seizures associated with the Black

487 Landy, Handbook of Educational Drama and Theatre, 4.

488 Morse, Theatre, 178.

Death,” also known as the plague. These rituals, much like Aristotle’s catharsis, were “intended to purge illness from the dancers by forcing them to sweat out impurities.” With no other known cures at their disposal, these ancient communities called upon the power of the theatre “to heal the illnesses of both the individual and society.”

After studying these ancient theatrical rites and rituals and considering them as healing cures, “playwrights began imagining themselves assuming similar functions.” Alain De Botton understands, “… art matters for therapeutic reasons. It is a medium uniquely well suited to helping us with some of the troubles of inner life: our desire for material things, our fear of the unknown, our longing for love, our need for hope. … It is an apothecary for the soul.” It has been found that the arts are an essential aid in the healing process when they are employed to cope with debilitating emotions such as despair and grief. “Without adequate expression of some sort, grieving can be arrested, and appropriate response denied, giving rise to a host of maladies: physical, psychological, and social. Unresolved grief is like a ticking time bomb.” Sandra Bertram describes how dealing with grief is possible through the arts:

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491 Ibid.

492 Ibid.


…we understand grief only and entirely as we filter and interpret it through our own experience. Initially it captures us, but we can capture it back and reshape it; and the expressive arts and therapies function beautifully as vehicles to help us reshape grief. Ultimately, the potential for healing in the midst of suffering exists because grief is about creating and transforming bonds of attachment, not severing them irrevocably. ¹⁴⁹⁶

Drama therapists such as J. L. Moreno long have considered theatre an effective tool for healing by enabling those who are suffering to face their traumas and fears through processes such as role-playing. By using a wide variety of techniques such as “story dramatization, pantomime and movement work, interrelated work in music and visual art, and formal theatre production,”⁴⁹⁷ drama therapists, through multiple sessions, are intent on getting to the heart of the patient’s problems. Dr. Renee Emunah, psychiatrist as well as drama therapist, feels she and others in her field are indebted to Moreno for “putting ourselves in the shoes of others, increasing our understanding and empathy, and not only seeing but experiencing the world from a perspective outside of our own. More profoundly, these processes are about acknowledging our differences and locating our commonality, our connectedness as human beings.”⁴⁹⁸

Drama therapists are currently working with soldiers who have returned recently from the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars and who are suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome. When sharing with others who have experienced the same traumas in group therapy sessions and role-playing scenarios, these soldiers realize they are not alone. By releasing pent-up feelings, memories, and emotions through storytelling, role-play, and


⁴⁹⁷ Landy, Handbook of Educational and Dramatic Theatre, 148.

theatre, these subjects are offered relief from their pain and suffering. Some may never be
“cured” of reliving and re-experiencing these horrific memories of trauma and loss, but
by exposing them through drama their impact is lessened, allowing most to move on with
their lives.

It has been noted by professor and researcher Mark Fearnow that soldiers and
victims of trauma are not the only ones feeling isolated and unconnected in today’s
society. In Theatre of the Good, he discusses “the crisis of loneliness” that the Internet
generation currently is undergoing “in a world that allows us to go days, weeks at a time
without uttering a meaningful word to anyone.”

He cites sociologist Dean Ornish’s studies, which show “that actions taken to improve one’s feelings of social connectedness
and human intimacy improve not only the person’s life satisfaction and sense of
wholeness, but also improve treatment outcomes and prevention of potential disease.”

Fearnow feels that theatre, by bringing a group of diverse people together in a unified and
collaborative effort, is able to stave off loneliness and isolation and, in turn, improve
health. He explains: “Theatre has tended to be a place that accepts people in their
brokenness, in their states of rebellion and pain, in their inability or unwillingness to
conform.”

Theatre also has served as “sanctuary, refuge, and home” to those most in

499 Fearnow, Theatre and the Good, 2.
500 Ibid., 3.
501 Ibid., 23.
502 Ibid.
Documentary: An Operative Tool for Research Dissemination

Registered nurse Mary J. Simpson, founder and director of the Positive Alternatives Wellness Center in Brampton, Ontario, discusses the concept of “cure versus healing” in her article, “Therapeutic Touch: Those Who Accompany the Dying:”

In the Western medical model, cure is seen as the elimination of symptoms. The term “healing” comes from the Anglo-Saxon word haelen meaning “to make whole.” This understanding is crucial to the practice of Therapeutic Touch, which works at all levels of a person’s reality, that is, mind, emotions, and spirit in relationship to his or her environment. Hence a person may be, for instance, healed emotionally without being cured of the physical disease, which may in fact cause his or her death.503

As Simpson suggests, theatre and the arts are not meant to cure, but they can play a role in emotionally healing those who are ill and in need of care. “The work of art helps us to see how much is missing and how deeply we would like things to be better than they are. … They distill and concentrate the hope that we require to chart a path through the difficulties of existence.”504

Since the beginning of the 1990s, researchers in the fields of sociology, anthropology, and medicine have been experimenting with theatre as a means to dispense information based on research findings. Intent on moving data from “field to forum,” they feel theatre provides an important link in connecting research to those who will benefit most. Because “theatre has no borders and finds its form in the existing cultural expression of the communities that create it…[i]t offers the means of creating an analysis


of the economic, cultural, and social conditions\textsuperscript{505} of those located in the most poor and disadvantaged communities. Documentary, because of its ability to “inspire thought, critical reflection, emotional engagement and personal transformation,”\textsuperscript{506} provides an ideal platform on which to record and dispense analytical thought. For this reason, studies involving health issues such as cancer, cardiac disease, mental illness, diabetes, etc. are being enhanced and concretized through verbatim theatre.

Talk-backs and survey evaluations are considered invaluable additions to research findings. By answering subjective questions such as: Were you able to connect with the performers onstage? Did you agree/disagree with what was being said? As audience members and caregivers, did this performance have relevancy to what you have experienced?, researchers, as well as theatre practitioners, are granted an immediate response to their combined efforts.

\textit{I'm Still Here} by playwright Vrenia Ivonoffski addresses the subject of Alzheimer's disease and its debilitating effect on patients, families, and caregivers. Working in collaboration with nursing research professionals Dr. Gail J. Mitchell and Christine Jonas-Simpson, whose studies of patients suffering from Alzheimer's and related dementia provoked them to do more than the requisite journal article. Their intent was to “connect with persons who might benefit from the understanding we had gathered and grown over the span of a decade.”\textsuperscript{507} This included family, friends, health


\textsuperscript{506} Kate Rossiter et al., “Staging Data: Theatre as a Tool for Analysis and Knowledge Transfer in Health Research,” \textit{Social Science} 66, no. 1 (January 2006): 131.

professionals, and caregivers who were shouldering the burden and responsibility of the disease. They were the ones who were involved in the patient’s everyday affairs and care. They also had little time to immerse themselves in journal articles steeped in research.

According to Mitchell et al., the themes explored in *I’m Still Here* cover a wide range of subjects, including loss, limitations, feelings of fear and sorrow, difficulties in communicating, inattentiveness, and positive responses to gentle touch and expressions of love. After immersing herself in the scriptwriting process, author Ivanofsky tearfully confided to Mitchell, “I don’t know how to do this play without it hurting people.” Understanding the play’s intent was to “alleviate unnecessary suffering - not create more of it” and “to make a shift in attitudes” towards the disease itself, Ivanofsky had to strike a balance between disarming people and turning them completely off. Once she had discovered that almost all of the researchers’ interviews had included discussions about *Dis-ease*, or difficulties the caregivers and patients confronted when dealing with issues related to Alzheimer's, she was able to complete the script.

Audience members consisting of members of the families, caregivers, and nursing professionals were highly receptive, and noted that moments in the play that discussed everyday situations such as a mother/daughter shopping expedition that involved purchasing underwear proved to be humorous and relatable. During the talk-back that followed, a daughter of one of the patients made “a public apology to her father - for all

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509 Ibid.

510 Ibid., 201.
the times she expressed exasperation and dis-ease… Another…that she wished she had seen our play before her mother died.”  

It is important that members of the families understand that they are not alone; that others with similar health issues and concerns are experiencing the same problems and difficulties. “As so many researchers concur, it is not so much the content of the stories that heals, as the sense of community derived from sharing them.”  

For this reason, talk-backs and audience discussions following performances are encouraged. By exposing “truths” regarding pertinent health issues with those who are suffering, fears are assuaged and a sense of connectedness and well-being results. As one respondent noted, “I’m not alone in my experience. Mom is not unusual.” The presentation of I’m Still Here! shows that documentary theatre provides a viable platform on which to explore and exchange ideas on pertinent issues, educating and healing all who listen.

### Conclusion: What Next?

Luminaries in dramaturgy and in documentary field work such as Lessing, Piscator, Brecht, Flanagan, Duberman, Deveare-Smith, and Boal were focused effectively on the connection between life and art and what best served the public ‘good’ through periods of fluctuation and re-organization in times of change. “We only have to look at the history of theatre in its many forms and structures - some connected and some appearing like a tree on a once-barren landscape - to see how art, especially theatre art, grows, changes and transforms. The arts change as society changes, and sometimes art

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512 Bertman, Grief and the Healing Arts, 7.

follows culture and at other times anticipates it.”\textsuperscript{514} Suzi Gablick suggests, “What we will be seeing over the next few decades is art that is essentially social and purposeful…a new emphasis that falls on community…and creating with responsibility.”\textsuperscript{515}

Theatre artists today, recognizing that their goals are essentially the same as their predecessors, are responding to societal upheavals in much the same way, but on a broader scale. As Peter Brook anticipates, “Today, the world offers us new possibilities. This great human vocabulary can be fed by elements that in the past have never come together. Each race, each culture can bring its own word to a phrase which unites mankind.”\textsuperscript{516}

Documentary theatre has proven itself a facilitator for exchanging dialogues across borders in the hope of improving “who we are and what we aspire to become.”\textsuperscript{517} By bestowing validity on multiple and differing points of view, documentary has provided the opportunity for communities and cultures to come together, to teach one another, and to heal. As Michael Rodd has discovered, “The theatre allows us to converse with our souls - to passionately pursue and discover ways of living with ourselves and others. We are all artists, and theatre is a language. We have no better way to work together, to learn about each other, to heal and to grow.”\textsuperscript{518}


\textsuperscript{515} Suzi Gablick, \textit{The Re-Enchantment of Art} (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 4-8.

\textsuperscript{516} Brook, \textit{There Are No Secrets}, 94.

\textsuperscript{517} Taylor, \textit{Applied Theatre}, xviii, xix.

Lluis Pasqual, founder and artistic director of Barcelona’s Teatre Lliure, reveals in his essay, “Theatre in Crisis?,” that “The history of mankind and the history of art, in this case of theatre, have always run in parallel”\(^{519}\) and if the present state of unrest in the world is any indication, theatre artists should be alerted to theatre’s tenuous position, economically, socially, and politically. It therefore behooves members of the “human community” to keep theatre alive, “and either consciously or unconsciously, begin to set the wheels of renewal in motion…”\(^{520}\)

Pasqual should not have concerns. As participating members of its vast audience, we have found that theatre is not only alive and well, but lives and dwells in each and every one of us, offering renewal, hope, and healing on a daily basis.

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\(^{520}\) Ibid.
PART II. WITH THEIR VOICES RAISED

ENHANCING HISTORY THROUGH DOCUMENTARY

IN AN EFFORT TO PROMOTE PEACE

Chapter 4

The Power of Personal Testimony in History and Documentary Theatre

The great virtue of history, one the theatre stands in need of is that it counteracts present-mindedness—the belief that what is has always been and must always be. To have historical perspective is to become aware of the range of human adaptability and purpose… If the variety of past experience could be communicated with an immediacy drawn from the theatrical idiom, both history and drama might become vehicles for change rather than only the recorders, respectively of past and present attitudes.

-- Thomas Michael Croak, *Documentary Drama in the Twentieth Century*

It has been recognized that documentary theatre “can be responsive to urgent social and political issues and can serve as a valuable tool for the historian studying the time, places, and people which the genre portrays.”\(^{521}\) The documentary acts as an “alternative to received journalism…significantly adding to the importance of theatre art in learning about life.”\(^{522}\) In *Performing History*, Freddie Rokem understands that “[t]o live is to live in history” and therefore raises these questions for study, “When is the life of an individual transcended in order to become included in that form of continuous linear “eternity” we call history? …[U]nder what circumstances does the individual

\(^{521}\) Croak, *Documentary Drama*, 211.

\(^{522}\) Dawson, *Documentary Theatre*, xi.
within this flow become aware…that this is the case? And not least, does such an awareness bring consolation?”

He goes on to add: “History can only be perceived as such when it becomes recapitulated, when we create some form of discourse, like the theatre, on the basis of which an organized repetition of the past is constructed, situating the chaotic torrents of the past within an aesthetic frame.”

History witnessed through performance makes each of us part and parcel of that history.

Tony Kushner, in “Notes about Political Theater,” feels that “Americans suffer from collective amnesia; our own past is lost to us. Theatre has always had a vital relationship to history; the examination and, yes, the teaching of history has got to be accounted a function of any political theater.”

Kushner points out the paradox of the “personal” versus the “political” and feels the “membrane” separating the public from the private is permeable. “We can’t make good politics without access to our souls.”

The new millennium presents an opportunity for change. “[T]he time has come to reconsider the rationalist basis of our political theories, not to leap dumbly into some ersatz New Age, but to begin to explore the role of faith, prayer, and soul in a politics that is concerned, as ours must be, with irreparable loss, with community and with the sacrifices community entails, and with the most difficult and necessary thing of all,

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523 Freddie Rokem, Performing History: Theatrical Representations of the Past in Contemporary Theatre (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2000), x.

524 Ibid., xi.

525 Kushner, “Notes about Political Theater,” 28.

526 Ibid., 29.
hope.”527 Kushner feels that theatre is an effective and useful method of exploring these issues. “…I believe that for theater, as for anything in life, its hope for survival rests in its ability to take a reading of the times, and change.”528

**Perpetuating Oral History through Field Research**

When I was first approached in the spring of 2010 by American and Japanese researchers to develop a theatre presentation based on 51 Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima survivor testimonies, I had only a general understanding of the events leading to the United States involvement in World War II. My knowledge of the Pacific theater was based upon a recollection of a grainy photograph in my American History high school textbook of the USS Arizona engulfed in smoke and flames at Pearl Harbor on Dec 7, 1941. I also had read *Hiroshima* by John Hersey, but had no connection with the term hibakusha. I had a lot to learn.

In the winter of 2011, I traveled to Hiroshima, Japan and had my picture taken underneath the Memorial Monument for Hiroshima. Inside the Peace Museum I noticed a pocket watch, forever stopped at 8:15; tattered swatches of blackened clothing; and tiny pieces of concrete that were once buildings and homes. I watched video footage of the atomic bomb, its mushroom cloud of ash and debris rising high into the morning sky. I saw archaic clips of bald hibakusha, their faces covered with red dots, their teeth black and decaying. Finally, I signed the visitor’s book, along with countless others, in a pledge and plea for peace throughout the world.

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527 Kushner, “Notes about Political Theater,” 33.

528 Ibid., 34.
In the spring of 2012, I visited Oahu, Hawaii. I climbed the steps of the control tower at the Pacific Aviation Museum on Ford Island and listened to the silence of the salt air. I rode a ferry over to the USS Arizona and saw the oil-slick ‘tears’ on top of the water while the ship’s turrets remained below. I took the ‘Home of the Brave’ bus tour and drove past the countless headstones at Punchbowl National Cemetery, each one decorated with an American flag. Finally, I signed the visitor’s book, along with countless others, thanking our brave servicemen and women for their sacrifice and service to our country.

Needless to say, working with the Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima survivors’ stories opened up a whole new path to my studies and the way I viewed the world. It also introduced me to documentary theatre as a way to perpetuate history and disseminate research outside the textbook and classroom.

The Historical Background

For two and a half centuries, beginning in the early 1600s, shogun rulers enacted a policy of isolationism that prohibited Japan from contact with the outside world. The Japanese could no longer leave their homeland under “penalty of death” and foreigners were not allowed to step foot onto Japanese soil.\footnote{John Hunter Boyle, \textit{Modern Japan: The American Nexus} (Ft. Worth: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1993), 47.} As historian Kenneth Pyle has pointed out in his recent book, \textit{Japan Rising}: “Japan is separated from the Eurasian continent by more than 100 miles, five times the distance that separates England across the Straits of Dover from the Continent. This distance across the Korean Straits is...
surpassed by the 450 miles of open seas that lie between Japan and China.”\textsuperscript{530} As a result of its remote position and insular attitude, Japan developed a distinct and unique culture, reflective of its growing political and social values.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, a more conciliatory approach was adopted, and in 1842 the Japanese people provided “food, water, and fuel under certain circumstances to ships accidentally arriving in Japanese ports.”\textsuperscript{531} Foreign nations were quick to note Japan’s abundance of coal and in 1851 U.S. President Millard Fillmore urged Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry to use his diplomatic skills to persuade the Japanese to open their seas and ports to American ships in order for them to obtain coal and other provisions. After a month of intense negotiation and compromise on both sides, the Treaty of Peace and Amity was signed on March 31, 1854 at the port of Kanagawa on Edo Bay. This treaty sparked a burgeoning relationship between Japan and the United States. The two countries, although culturally diverse, maintained mutual respect and admiration for one another during much of their early interactions. However, prior to World War II, cooperation between the two countries began to break down over competing territorial interests in the Pacific region.

After defeating Germany in the European Theater, many Americans believed the Japanese would quickly concede the Pacific. Throughout the summer of 1945, American political and social circles expressed bitter disappointment that the Pacific conflict remained unresolved. Why, when faced with certain defeat, did the Japanese continue to


\textsuperscript{531} Boyle, \textit{Modern Japan}, 55.
fight? In hindsight, it is clear that Americans were ignorant about Japan’s cultural traditions, which played a key role in the country’s unwillingness to surrender.

Although officially abolished in the early 1870s, the deeply rooted samurai values and ethics of duty, discipline, and self-sacrifice had been passed down to younger generations and continued to influence the lives of the Japanese people. Confucianism, adopted from the religious teachings of the Chinese philosopher Confucius, was another ideology that continued to influence Japanese culture. These philosophies stressed “duty, loyalty, respect for authority, and strict observance of proper social ritual and etiquette.”

In Confucianism, as well as in the samurai code of conduct, strong emphasis was placed on the concept of loyalty. This sense of loyalty was at first restricted to the family unit. It, however, underwent change in 1868 when the Meiji Emperor, Mutsuhito, came to power. It was during his long reign (1868-1942) that “loyalty” began to extend from the family unit to the emperor and state. During this period, the Japanese emperor’s role was redefined as the “father” of the Japanese national “family.”

Young Japanese students were schooled in imperial genealogy. By linking the emperor’s ancestry back to the Sun Goddess, “Schoolchildren were taught that the emperor had descended from the gods, and that his divine blood ran in the veins of all his subjects. His portrait hung in every school, and was made the object of organized

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532 Boyle, Modern Japan, 52.
533 Ibid., 85-86.
compulsory daily veneration.” The Japanese people were obligated, therefore, to regard the reigning emperor with respect and reverence.

Historian John Hunter Boyle explains that “however awesome and respected Japanese emperors might be, actual political and military power slipped out of their hands early on in history, and from the twelfth to the nineteenth century real power in Japan was exercised by a hereditary military aristocracy governed by a shogun (generalissimo).” In Japanese society the emperor was considered to be above politics, which meant he and his court could not be blamed for losing wars or causing military blunders.

After Commodore Perry’s armored “black ships” ended Japan’s self-imposed isolation, imperial officials and military shoguns focused on the growing influence of the Western powers. According to Boyle, “the last decades of the nineteenth century saw a dramatic intensification of international rivalry among European powers….” To Japan’s discomfort, with most Western land colonized and under stable control, the European powers directed their attention on the weaker, less well-protected Eastern countries.

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536 Ibid., 122.
During the century after the Opium War (1839-1842) in which England defeated the Empire of China, the...Western powers slowly accumulated in China, as well as in other parts of Asia, a host of economic and political rights, guaranteed by a network of interlocking treaties that were sanctioned by international law and backed by the presence of foreign gunboats and marines stationed in privileged enclaves throughout China.\footnote{Boyle, Modern Japan, 193.}

Based upon the country’s desire to gain power in China, Imperial Russia posed the biggest threat to Japan’s security. “From 1858 to 1860 she acquired 400,000 square miles of territory from China, a vast emptiness at the time.”\footnote{Ibid., 130} Russia was not the only country to take advantage of the Middle Kingdom’s weaknesses and the last decades of the nineteenth century saw both England and France aggressively claim land in China.

During September 1931, in an effort to dissuade the imperialist countries from seeking further land-gain in China, officers in Japan’s Kwantung Army “blew up a few inches of rail outside the Mukden (Feng-t’ien) station of the South Manchuria Railway and, blaming Chinese sabotage for the event, undertook military action to conquer the whole of Manchuria.”\footnote{Akira Iriye, Japan and The Wider World: From the Mid-nineteenth Century to the Present (New York: Longman, 1997), 63.} According to historian Akira Iriye, this event “marked the collapse of postwar internationalism and the return to the primacy of militaristic thought in Japanese foreign policy”\footnote{Ibid., 64.} The Japanese military believed that “the globe was becoming divided into several regions, and everywhere realignments of forces were taking place so that in time the world would come to be divided into a few blocs, each under a dominant power.”\footnote{Ibid., 64.}
America was also beginning to pursue a foreign policy that potentially threatened Japanese interests. At first, the United States appeared satisfied in filling out its own continental frontiers, but after the Spanish–American War of 1898, it slowly began to participate in overseas expansionism. “In 1908 the U.S. Navy … committed itself to a two-ocean navy and chose Hawaii as the site of its main Pacific base. Soon engineers began dredging a harbor at the mouth of the Pearl River on Oahu.”

During November 1938, in reaction to Western expansionism, Japan proposed an entirely “New Order in East Asia.” For the East Asian countries, this New Order was the “… antithesis of nationalism, individualism, liberalism, materialism, selfishness, imperialism, and all the other traits the Japanese believed characterized the bankrupt Western tradition. Centered on Confucian principles, pan-Asianists stressed themes such as regional cooperation, harmony, selflessness, and the subordination of the individual to the community.” The New Order philosophy also offered to “advance the lot of lesser peoples by bringing them under the care and guidance of the emperor, the only sovereign who was also a god, and the only god who was also a sovereign.” The Japanese and Chinese resented the “Old Order,” and viewed it a system of international relations created and enforced by Western imperialists.

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543 Ibid., 145.


As Akira Iriye notes in his book, *Power and Culture*: “During the late 1930s Japanese propaganda laid tremendous stress on rebuilding, regenerating, reawakening, and rebirth, indicating their self-consciousness about ending Western–dominated patterns and restoring Asia to its past greatness.”

Formalized under the name the “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere” (GEACPS), Japanese officials saw pan-Asianism as an opportunity to break dependence on U.S. imports and create “… a policy of national self-sufficiency.”

Although Japanese officials proclaimed the pan-Asianist New Order would allow Japan to share its strength and to provide security for the weakened Middle Kingdom, many Chinese doubted the legitimacy of Japan’s promises. Some felt pan-Asianism was merely a foil for Japanese ambitions. “At the peak of its expansion in early 1942, Japan bestrode Asia like a colossus, one foot planted in the mid-Pacific, the other deep in the interior of China, its ambitious grasp reaching north to the Aleutian Islands and south to the Western colonial enclaves of Southeast Asia. Japan’s ‘Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere’ briefly embraced the Netherlands East Indies, French Indochina, the British colonial possessions of Burma, Malaya, and Hong Kong, and America’s Philippine colony. There was talk of reaching further to take India, Australia, possibly even Hawaii.”

Many Chinese felt that Japan’s growing interest and development in East Asia was just as aggressive and self-imposing as the Western imperialists. Escalating resentments regarding a regional pan-Asian New Order came to a head on July...
7, 1937 when Japanese and Chinese forces clashed near the Marco Polo Bridge near the outskirts of Peking. This event precipitated a prolonged war between Japan, focused on pan-Asian regional expansion, and China, who resisted such encroachment.549

Although Japan did not officially declare a state of war until December 1941, the fighting in China simply became known as the “China Incident.” In the West, the fighting also was referred to as the Sino-Japanese War.550 Today, many Japanese historians refer to a “fifteen-year war;” beginning with the Manchurian Incident in 1931, continuing through the Sino-Japanese War, and finally leading to the Pacific phase of World War II after December 1941.551

The Western powers perceived Japan’s expansionism with growing trepidation. “A terrifying image took shape in the minds of Europeans: a militarily aggressive Japan harnessing the vast resources and hordes of other Asian peoples under their domination, challenging an outnumbered and complacent West.”552 If left unchallenged, a “greater East Asia” could extend “… not only through East Asia but Southeast Asia and Pacific island territories as well, from the borders of India eastward all the way to Australia…”553 U.S. officials paid particular attention to Japan’s expansion. “If Japan were allowed to carry out its regionalist scheme while Germany was doing the same in

549 Iriye, Japan And The Wider World, 73.
550 Boyle, Modern Japan, 183.
551 Ibid.
552 Ibid., 136.
553 Ibid., 193.
Central Europe, the relative position of Great Britain and hence of the United States would diminish, especially if the European and Asian blocs should combine.”

Although the Japanese never were successful in establishing a new framework of Asian politics to carry out their vision, pan-Asianist doctrine didn’t disappear until the end of the war. One factor that led to the deterioration of the GEACPS was Japan’s continued dependency on Western economic resources, diplomacy, and military forces.

Because of Japan’s depressed resources and unemployment levels, immigration to the United States by the Japanese increased after 1900. Japanese immigrants recognized opportunity in the miles of fertile California farmland, many deciding the land was wasted or underused. As Boyle writes, “They saved, rented land, often the very cheapest land, purchasing the marshy portions of the Sacramento delta, for example, from the railroads.” Instead of encouraging the Japanese work ethic and diligence in taking care of the land that contributed to California’s economic growth, their Caucasian neighbors, hurt by the competition, sounded the cry of “yellow peril.” This fear rested on the assumption that the Japanese and Chinese people one day would join together and attempt to engulf the Western world. Based on this belief, as well as on fear of competition, Japanese immigrants were treated as suspect and considered a threat to national security.

In 1913 the California legislature passed The Alien Land Law, which prohibited “… ‘aliens ineligible for citizenship’ from owning land in the future and limited leases to

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554 Iriye, Power and Culture, 22.
555 Boyle, Modern Japan, 148.
556 Ibid., 149.
just three years. Although the law did not specifically target the Japanese immigrant, many thought it was directed at them because of previous legislation that made it impossible for Japanese to become American citizens. The yellow-peril sentiment continued to provoke feelings of jealousy, hatred, and paranoia in the American public towards the Japanese immigrant and demands were made for further discriminatory legislation. In 1924, fear prompted an immigration act that specifically shut the door to future Japanese immigration to America. This legislation provoked protests from the Japanese people who considered it a dishonor. What further outraged them was the fact that, while other nations were allowed a quota of immigrants, Japan was singled out for exclusion.

Meanwhile the Nazi invasion of Poland in September 1939 announced the beginning of World War II. Many Japanese felt the conflict in Europe presented a unique opportunity to create their ideal Asian empire. Assuming that Adolf Hitler and Italian dictator Benito Mussolini would defeat their European enemies; this would allow Japan to take control of the European colonies left unprotected in Asia. Signed and enacted in September 1940, the Tripartite Pact was an alliance that “[…] provided that if Japan, Germany, or Italy were attacked by any third party not then engaged in the European War or the China Incident, the other two Axis powers would aid the victim of the

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557 Boyle, Modern Japan, 149.

558 Ibid., 150-151.
attack."559 The treaty, also known as the Axis Pact, was intended to serve as a warning to the United States and other foreign powers.

At the beginning of World War II America remained an isolationist power. As Boyle writes, “Americans convinced themselves that those countries of the Old World were a predatory lot and could be expected to quarrel forever over their boundaries and empires. The United States, by contrast, was not threatened by its neighbors and was securely isolated from the Old World by two vast oceans.”560 American citizens, tired of war, felt they had learned valuable lessons from World War I. A 1935 public opinion poll revealed that 95% of those interviewed believed their country had no business being involved in foreign disputes.561 Also, due the Great Depression of the 1930s, America’s impoverished economy prevented a large military budget and armed forces buildup. As Boyle explains, “When Germany invaded Poland in September of 1939, launching World War II, the U.S. Army was quite simply the smallest and worst-equipped army of any major power.”562

U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s main concern was that if America was drawn into a conflict in Europe, it might be required to face the Japanese in the Pacific theater soon after. Although America was not ready to become actively involved, U.S. government officials were well aware of the necessity in ensuring national security and maintaining good relations with Great Britian. “Starting with the repeal of the arms

559 Boyle, Modern Japan, 205.
560 Ibid., 195.
561 Ibid., 197.
562 Ibid., 195.
embargo in November 1939, official United States policy became more and more interventionist, hoping to ensure British survival without actually getting involved in the war." This act was followed by Congressional approval of the “Lend-Lease” legislation in the spring of 1941. This law allowed America “… to finance the purchase and supply of military equipment to any government “whose defense the president deems vital to the U.S.”

Along with Great Britain, China was becoming equally important to America’s security. During this period, the United States began providing China with political and economic support in order to deter Japanese expansionism. The Japanese were resentful of these policies and considered the United States the main obstacle in realizing their ambitions. “In November 1940, as persistent rumors of impending collapse of Chinese resistance circulated everywhere, FDR approved a $100 million loan to Chiang Kai-shek, the most massive U.S. financial-aid package yet for China.” U.S. support for the government of Chiang Kai-Shek did not bode well with Japan. Many Japanese felt that only faith in American support was keeping the Chinese Nationalists recalcitrant, and they believed if America should cease its assistance, the Chinese would be quick to surrender and cooperate with Japan. Despite Japanese dissuasion, China was officially linked to the Lend-Lease Act in April 1941.

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565 Ibid.
566 Ibid.
It became apparent to Japanese officials that their resource poor country would soon be placed in a difficult position. In a ratio calculating people to inhabitable land, Japan was found to be one of the most densely populated nations on earth. During a world war, the country’s lack of natural resources, combined with its massive population, could prove to be one of its biggest pitfalls. As historian Akira Iriye suggests,

… Even with the conquest of Manchuria and Inner Mongolia, Japan had to continue to import large quantities of cotton, iron, petroleum, copper, and other raw materials from the United States and the European colonies in Asia. So long as self-sufficiency remained a basic national objective, this was an untenable situation, and it would be imperative to try to control the resources of Indochina, the Dutch East Indies, and their environs. That would entail military action in the South China Sea and beyond, with the result that conflict with Britain, France, the Netherlands, and the United States would become possible.\(^{567}\)

On June 22, 1941, Germany launched Operation Barborossa and attacked the Soviet Union. Although a Japanese offensive into the eastern USSR might have meant Russia’s defeat, Japan upheld its recent nonaggression pact with the Soviet Union and instead made the fateful decision to implement its pan-Asian policy and occupy the whole of Indochina. The conflict between the United States and Japan escalated as the United States then froze Japanese assets and imposed a “de facto” tax on U.S. petroleum shipments to Japan. While Japan would seek to develop and widen its pan-Asian sphere, the United States would attempt to block its growing influence by cutting off all trade with Japan.\(^{568}\)

In the summer of 1941, the United States placed an embargo on all oil exports heading to Japan. Even though the Japanese Imperial Navy had anticipated a U.S.

\(^{567}\) Iriye, *Japan and the Wider World*, 76.

\(^{568}\) Ibid., 84.
embargo and had been reserving oil months in advance, the nation still only possessed a two-year supply of petroleum if the embargo was not lifted. If war broke out, the nation’s entire oil supply would be in jeopardy. The United States also requested the Dutch government ban the sale of oil from the Dutch East Indies to Japan. Dutch officials agreed, and Japan’s oil-purchasing emissaries returned home from the islands empty-handed.\textsuperscript{569} When the United States demanded Japan’s withdrawal from China as a price to pay for ending the U.S. embargo, Prime Minister Hideki Tojo declared that compliance with this request would render Japan a third-rate power.\textsuperscript{570}

In November 1941, Japanese ambassador to Washington, Nomura Kichisaburo, joined by special envoy Kurusu Saburo, attempted to negotiate Japan’s increasingly frustrated demands to U.S. Secretary of State, Cordell Hull. The primary stumbling block between Japanese and American relations was China. As Boyle notes, “… China had suddenly become the keystone of American foreign policy in Asia. Now, as the Hull-Nomura talks progressed, Japan was notified of U.S. demands that Japan withdraw from China. Nomura was told the oil pipeline to Japan would be opened only if and when Japan agreed to pull its armies from China.”\textsuperscript{571}

On November 20, 1941, the Japanese emissaries in Washington were instructed to present Japan’s “final proposals” to Hull. The envoys presented the Secretary of State with two proposals. The first proposal, “Proposal A,” suggested that the Japanese “… withdraw from parts of China within two years of the signing of a truce. Certain parts of

\textsuperscript{569} Boyle, \textit{Modern Japan}, 210.

\textsuperscript{570} Pyle, \textit{Japan Rising}, 65.

\textsuperscript{571} Boyle, \textit{Modern Japan}, 214.
China, however, including the vital north, would remain occupied for twenty-five
years.”\footnote{572} When the Americans refused to consent, the Japanese then submitted “Proposal
B” for consideration. “Proposal B” submitted more amenable conditions in that, “…
Japan promised to begin withdrawing its army from the southern part of French
Indochina immediately and from the rest of the peninsula in due order.”\footnote{573} Additionally,
the Eastern Empire also agreed to “refrain from any other advances in Southeast Asia.
However, with regards to China, Proposal B was “… conciliatory only in that it
attempted to put the troop-withdrawal issue aside for the time being.”\footnote{574} In return for
these Japanese concessions, the United States was to promise not to “do anything which
might prejudice Japan’s endeavors to restore peace with China.”\footnote{575}

Hull responded to these proposals with what the Japanese refer to as the “Hull
ultimatum.” In his response, Hull reasserted the principles he had been forwarding to the
Japanese for months. The Secretary’s statement “formally rejected the Japanese Proposal
B of November 20 and called on Japan to evacuate not only French Indochina but China
as well. In addition, both the United States and Japan would be obligated to support the
Nationalist government of China- Japan would be required to disown the client state it
had established under Wang Ching-wei. Only when Japan assented to these demands
would the oil begin to flow again ….”\footnote{576} Upon receiving the “Hull ultimatum” in

\footnote{572} Boyle, Modern Japan, 215.
\footnote{573} Ibid., 214.
\footnote{574} Ibid., 215.
\footnote{575} Ibid.
\footnote{576} Ibid., 217.
response to Japan’s proposals, “the Japanese Navy, always cautious of going to war with America, joined the consensus in the belief that Japan had little choice but to fight or become a third-rate power.”577

While preparing battle plans against the United States, Navy Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto recognized that Japan’s only hope of winning included the element of surprise. With this in mind, Yamamoto’s plan of attack focused on immobilizing the U.S. Pacific fleet stationed at its new Pearl Harbor, Hawaii headquarters. While Washington waited on a response to the November 26th Hull ultimatum for further negotiations, “… six carriers, two fast battleships, two heavy cruisers, a light cruiser, eight destroyers, three hundred fifty fighter aircraft, dive bombers, torpedo planes, and a train of auxiliary vessels …” slowly plowed across the North Pacific.578

On December 6, 1941, when American military intelligence officers (MAGIC) had finished processing 13 parts of a 14-part intercepted message from Tokyo, they immediately delivered it to the White House for Roosevelt’s examination. Part 14, which contained details concerning Japan’s plan of attack, was available on the morning of December 7, 1941, but Chief of Staff George Marshall was horseback riding in Rock Creek Park and unavailable to act on MAGIC’s discovery that war was imminent. By the time Marshall reported to his office and read the MAGIC cables, announcing that the


578 Ibid., 220.
military theaters including Hawaii be put on alert, there were only 80 minutes of warning
time remaining until the Japanese attack.  

Because of poor atmospheric conditions and heavy static, the Chief of Staff’s
coded radio message was re-routed and dispatched via Western Union and RCA circuits
to Honolulu. Because the normal teletype link between the downtown RCA office in
Honolulu and Army headquarters at Fort Shafter also was down, an RCA clerk turned the
message over to a bicycle messenger for delivery. The war began before the messenger
reached Fort Shafter. In Washington, the two Japanese ambassadors also were
experiencing delays and were forced to wait while an inexperienced Embassy officer
typed and retyped the 14-part message. Nomura and Kurusu arrived for their meeting
with the Secretary of State more than an hour late, at a few minutes past 2 p.m., and by
this time Hull already had received news of the Pearl Harbor attack.

Within minutes, 33 of the 70 planes on Ford Island’s airfield had been destroyed
in the attack. Having been struck by at least three Japanese bombs, Hangar Six lay
smoldering. The battleships docked at Pearl Harbor fared little better than the
wreckage experienced on Ford Island. By 8:10 a.m., 15 minutes after the bombs struck,
the Pacific Fleet had been destroyed. In the anchorage familiarly known as “Battleship

579 Boyle, Modern Japan, 223-224.
580 Ibid., 224-225.
581 Ibid., 224.
582 Toll, Pacific Crucible, 18.
Row” on the eastern shore of Ford Island, multiple ships were found torn apart and burning.\(^{583}\)

As anticipated by the Japanese military, the attack on Pearl Harbor the morning of December 7\(^{th}\) caught everyone by surprise. Because Oahu was heavily crowded with military bases, residents on the island were used to military “simulated combat exercises,” which were a chance for the different U.S. services to hone their skills in mock battle against one another. When the bombings began, many thought the explosions they heard on Ford Island and in the neighboring harbor were part of these military exercises.\(^{584}\)

American servicemen also felt safe on Oahu, believing that the real threat resided in Europe with Hitler and his Germanic army. After the second Japanese attack, rumors circulated and many feared that a Japanese invasion was underway. Fearful of how they would be treated by the approaching Japanese militants, some nurses carried pocketknives with them and resolutely decided to take their own life if the hospital was taken.

Approximately nine hours after the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor, General MacArthur’s forces in the Philippines also were caught unprepared, which led to an easy Japanese victory.\(^{585}\) When news of the military’s successful campaign against the United States reached Japan, the somber mood that had engulfed the nation since the start of the

\(^{583}\) Toll, *Pacific Crucible*, 9-10.

\(^{584}\) Ibid., 7.

\(^{585}\) Dower, *Cultures of War*, 95.
war in China lifted. The Japanese celebrated a renewed faith in their army and navy. As historian John Dower writes:

Popular response to reports of smashing victories at Pearl Harbor and in Southeast Asia and the Philippines was captured in ubiquitous clichés along the lines of the sun breaking out from behind dark clouds. Later, this ephemeral euphoria became sardonically known as the “victory disease”—the metaphor of disease, carrying psychological connotations of ultranationalism, delirium, delusion, and to some degree sheer blood lust.\(^{586}\)

Stateside, the attack on Pearl Harbor galvanized many young Americans and “thousands of young men packed recruiting stations across the country….”\(^ {587}\) Even though the navy had sustained roughly 1,999 casualties at Pearl Harbor with another 710 men wounded, 300,000 tons of shipping were lost including eight battleships (although six managed to be repaired and relegated back to service), and 188 planes (two-thirds of the total military aircraft in the Pacific) had been destroyed, a vital part of the U.S. war-industry machine was awakened; that being the American spirit and fortitude in the face of the enemy.\(^ {588}\) The period of U.S. isolationism was ended, and Congressional support for America’s entry into World War II was nearly unanimous. Political divisions were forgotten in the wake of the attack.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor, the U.S. war machine roared to life, out-producing the Axis. Within the 3-year period between 1940-1943, the United States expanded its productivity by a factor of 25.\(^ {589}\) Historian Max Hastings observes that, “At peak production in March 1944, an aircraft rolled out of an American factory every 295

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\(^{586}\) Dower, *Cultures of War*, 133.


\(^{588}\) Toll, *Pacific Crucible*, 159.

\(^{589}\) Ibid., 489.
seconds. By the end of that year, almost one hundred U.S. aircraft carriers were at sea.”

Unemployment levels also plummeted and the national income more than doubled, from $81 billion in 1940 to $181 billion five years later.

With an estimated exchange rate of one U.S. casualty for six to seven Japanese, it soon became apparent that on December 7, 1941 the Japanese had launched a war against an enemy superior in resources, manpower, and potential. Still, the Japanese continued to fight, and Americans were alarmed when it was found that on Iwo Jima and Okinawa, the Pacific enemy fared better, with a loss of 2.5:1 or 3:1, respectively.

Historians believe that the only reason Japan was able to extend the conflict in the Pacific over a period of more than three years was due to America’s concerted effort in the European theater. The tide turned with the Battle of Midway, where it was estimated that over 3,500 Japanese, including 100 Navy pilots, lost their lives. Japan also lost four ship carriers, one heavy cruiser, and 332 planes. Due to the depleted state of its wartime economy, Japan was never able to fully recover from this devastating loss of ships and manpower. The Battle of Midway was the Japanese Navy’s last offensive action and, from here on, the tide of war began to turn in favor of the Allies. These events also relieved pressure on President Roosevelt, who was preparing to transfer more American

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592 Hastings, *Retribution*, xxvi.
forces to the Pacific in order to avoid the risk of another Japanese attack on Hawaii or on the west coast of the U. S. mainland.  

The fall of the Marianas in the summer of 1944 effectively brought Japan’s home islands in close proximity to the fighting, even as U.S. submarines already were cutting off the country’s supply lines. According to historian Mary Hanneman:

[T]he Japanese— including military personnel, were getting an average of 1,050 calories per day on rationed food. Younger urban children were evacuated to the countryside, where they were safe from the air raids, but no better fed. Boys as young as 15 were recruited for military service, while women, children and the elderly trained with bamboo spears to fight off the anticipated invasion of the home islands.

Even though the war-weary Japanese had been fighting China for the past seven years, defeat remained unthinkable as they continued to fiercely defend their remaining island outposts.

As the war waged on into the years 1944 and 1945, it became clear that the Japanese resolve was strengthened, not weakened, by the military crisis. They unrelentingly continued fighting in defense of their homeland, extending from the islands of Saipan to the battles Iwo Jima and Okinawa. The Japanese also trained and sent pilots on suicide (kamikaze) missions, attacking American ships in the Pacific. An historic tradition, the Yamato spirit, called for human sacrifice and encouraged Japanese military and civilians to abhor retreat or surrender. These horrific acts resulted in a devastating loss of life for both the Americans and the Japanese. Although America clearly surpassed

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594 Ibid., 79.

595 Dower, *Cultures of War*, 213.
Japan in resources, Japanese military advisors believed that such severe and drastic measures like *kamikaze* suicide missions would dishearten the American spirit and that the “blood price” paid for each military gain would be too great, leaving the United States little choice but to negotiate the war’s end, rather than face the large human cost of invading Japan’s main islands.  

In the spring of 1945, a Japanese edict mobilizing all adult men and women into a homeland defense force validated the rumor of Japan’s tenacious resistance of a “hundred million” army soldiers and citizens, all willing to gloriously die in defense of their nation and emperor-God. The Japanese army, navy, and air forces also had planned to meet the anticipated homeland attack with a strategy code-named *Ketsu-Go* (literally, Decisive Operation), which would combine the strength of these military branches to fend off the approaching invasion of U.S. forces. 

During this time, Emperor Hirohito quietly was advised by his closest council members to support a “change of course.” The most urgent entreaty was made in February 1945 before the firebombing of Japanese cities began, but many military personnel and citizens remained loyal to their Emperor and his position and believed that fighting in defense of the homeland remained the best policy.

For U.S. military strategists, an amphibious land invasion of Japan’s homeland was much less preferable than a continued air bombardment and naval blockade. However, it soon became apparent that these military tactics were insufficient in bringing

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597 Dower, *Cultures of War*, 216.

598 Ibid., 109.
about an end to the war in the Pacific within an acceptable time frame and with the
lowest cost of life. Therefore, President Harry S. Truman, who succeeded to the
presidency on April 12, 1945 after the death of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, was
faced with the decision either to proceed with a land invasion of Japan or to drop a newly
devised lethal weapon.

Originally designed for use against the German army, the atomic bomb was
engineered soon after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 and
shortly after the Germans declared war against the United States. A top-secret agency
named the “Manhattan Project” was created to produce the essential fissionable materials
necessary to make an atomic weapon.\(^{599}\) The cities selected as potential targets for the
atomic bomb were chosen by an “Interim Committee” and included Kyoto, Hiroshima,
Kokura, Niigata, and, eventually, Nagasaki. It was only at the urging of Secretary of War
Henry Stimson that Kyoto was removed from the list. Stimson had visited Kyoto and
believed that attacking this ancient cultural capital would only galvanize the Japanese
people towards further resistance.\(^{600}\)

At 8:15 a.m. on August 6, 1945, a uranium bomb, nicknamed “Little Boy,” was
dropped by parachute over the city Hiroshima. According to historian John Dower, the
bomb was “timed to explode some 1,900 feet above ground” with the thermal heat
released at the hypocenter between “5,400 to 7,200 degrees Fahrenheit.”\(^{601}\) While tens of
thousands of people were immediately incinerated, serious burns resulting from the


\(^{600}\) Dower, *Cultures of War*, 197-198.

\(^{601}\) Ibid., 198.
blinding flash of light were experienced by unshielded individuals “within a radius of 1.9 miles (3 kilometers), while lesser burns were incurred as far away as 2.8 miles (4.5 kilometers).”  

Author Wilson Miscamble explains, “the first atomic bomb killed approximately eighty thousand people while wounding a similar number. Many of the maimed died soon thereafter from the effects of their exposure to the radioactivity let loose by the explosion. The bomb caused carnage and devastation for five square miles.”

On August 6, 1945 at 8:00 a.m. Japanese office and factory workers either were en-route to or settled at their place of employment. School children and industrial workers were busy clearing the city of debris, creating firebreaks, or transporting their belongings to the countryside. Many saw the B-29s flying high above the city, but assumed they were U.S. reconnaissance planes.

Historians Haruko and Theodore Cook write:

At precisely 8:15 a.m. on August 6, 1945, one of a group of three B-29s dropped a bomb over the center of Hiroshima from an altitude of 8,500 meters. The bomb was three meters in length, 0.7 meters in diameter, and weighed 4 metric tons. It was detonated at an altitude of 590 meters. The fission of the 0.85 kilograms of uranium contained in the bomb released energy equivalent to the explosive force of 13,000 tons of TNT.

An intense blast immediately followed the explosion: “…theoretically, the blast at the hypocenter had a maximum velocity of 440 meters per second. At 1.3 kilometers from the hypocenter the blast attained a force of seven tons per square meter and a wind

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602 Dower, *Cultures of War*, 198.


velocity of 120 meters per second. The explosive wind reached a distance of eleven kilometers about thirty seconds after the explosion.”\footnote{Cook and Cook, Japan At War, 383.} The blast violently tore through burned skin, ruptured organs, stripped people of their clothing, and drove glass into the victims’ bodies. Wooden buildings “within a radius of 2.3 kilometers” were leveled and “over half of all such buildings within 3.2 kilometers were destroyed.”\footnote{Ibid.} Even concrete buildings located near the hypocenter of the explosion collapsed from the blast.

Several Hiroshima witnesses compared the expanding fireball to the sweltering heat of the sun, with a temperature of “several million degrees Centigrade or Celsius, and an atmospheric pressure of several hundred thousand bars…The fireball maintains its brightness for approximately ten seconds.”\footnote{Naomi Shohno, introduction to Hibakusha: Survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, trans. Gaynor Sekimori (Tokyo: Kosei Publishing Co, 1986), 18.}

For the people of Hiroshima, the shock and horror of the unnatural explosion could only be compared to a monstrous natural disaster. It was unimaginable that such a weapon could be engineered and utilized by man. As the afternoon progressed it became clear that the horror was far from over. Those who survived the explosion were witness to such human pain and suffering that, years later, their visual accounts reveal feelings of helplessness and frustration in dealing with those suffering around them.

Those who managed to survive the atomic blast received a significant dose of internal radiation, either from inhaling a large amount of dust while clearing up wreckage or from handling the dead. Afraid of ingesting food or water contaminated by the bomb’s residual radioactivity, many families were found in need of water and starving.
Two weeks after Hirohito’s imperial broadcast, the war in the Pacific officially came to an end on September 2, 1945 on deck of the battleship USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay. Signing the instrument of surrender were General Douglas MacArthur; representatives of the nine other Allied powers; Japanese General Umezu Yoshijiro, and imperial diplomat, Shigemitsu Mamoru.\(^{608}\) Living conditions for both the Japanese military and civilians were rendered deplorable, and the entire country was in desperate need of external support and resources. The Japanese imperial navy, as well as the air force, had been demolished. Most of the country’s major cities had been firebombed, leaving many of the emperor’s loyal subjects homeless. The defeated imperial army was forced to disband. Military personnel were later found scattered throughout Asia and the Pacific islands.

Prisoners of their own war rhetoric - “of holy war, death before dishonor, blood debts to their war dead, the inviolability of the emperor-centered ‘national polity,’”\(^{609}\) the Japanese had underestimated the resilience and resources of the Allied powers. Nearly 3 million Japanese lives had been lost to the “demonic Anglo-Americans.”\(^{610}\) According to the new constitution adopted in 1946, as outlined in Article 9, Japan’s days of militarism and regional power had come to a close. The empire would be redefined by the U.S. occupation and the Imperial Japanese army and navy would cease to exist. This provision was met with little resistance from the Japanese people, many of whom felt betrayed by


\(^{609}\) Ibid., 22.

\(^{610}\) Ibid.
their Imperial Government and distrustful of any further interference by government with
regards to their “peace and security.”

While many of the Emperor’s Japanese army and navy officials were arrested and
interned, awaiting trial for conspiracy and crimes against humanity, Admiral Douglas
MacArthur urged President Truman to absolve Emperor Hirohito of any war
responsibility in order to maintain the imperial institution. As the constitutional monarch,
Hirohito would become the bridge between two very different East and West cultures.
Retaining the title of Emperor would help ease the painful political process of
reconstructing Japan under U.S. occupation. Japan’s defeat meant the disappearance of a
huge empire, whose power had influence over Korea, Taiwan, South Sakhalin, the
Kuriles, Manchuria, most of China, and Southwest Asia. With the loss of the war in the
Pacific, a new regional order would result - one that would be influenced and monitored
by the United States.

After World War II, the United States sought to eradicate all vestiges of Japan’s
nationalist doctrine and revolutionize its political and social structures. Given unilateral
control, the United States recognized that Japan’s new system should be based on a
system of international liberalism. The path would be one of “universalism, rather than
particularism, or of internationalism rather than nationalism.”

By 1948, a blueprint for Japan’s economic recovery and eventual incorporation into the world economy was
created. By accessing raw materials and technology from the world market, Japan

611 Yutaka Kawashima, Japanese Foreign Policy at the Crossroads: Challenges and Options for

612 Iriye, Japan and the Wider World, 96.

613 Ibid., 104.
eventually would regain its independence and link itself to the rest of the world through “cultural” and “economic” relations, not armed force. According to historian Akira Iriye, this strategy “expressed the hope that the nation could make a contribution to the well-being of humankind through cultural exchanges and cooperative programs undertaken with other countries.”

**Conclusion: Memory in History and Performance**

How events are remembered, written, archived, staged, and performed helps determine the history they become. More than enacting history, although it certainly does that, documentary theatre also has the capacity to stage historiography. At its best, it offers us a way to think about disturbing contexts and complicated subject matter while revealing the virtues and flaws of its sources.

> -- Carol Martin, “Bodies of Evidence”

Many of those who endured the traumatic events of World War II succinctly recall them as if they recently occurred. It has been found that through performance their testimonies of loss are “tied in a multi-faceted way into the minute history, identity, emotional well-being and personal narratives of each person….”

> When referencing Anna Deveare Smith’s *Crown Heights*, author Gregory Jay further explains, “In figuratively swearing to never forget these losses, each community both endures a kind of melancholy of unresolved grief and, at the same time, strengthens its identity by keeping alive the memory of what has been lost.”

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616 Gregory Jay, “Other People’s Holocausts: Trauma, Empathy, and Justice in Anna Deavere Smith’s Fires in the Mirror,” *Contemporary Literature* 48, no.1 (Spring 2007), 120.
By adding eyewitness accounts to factual history, history is not only *illuminated* (as the dramaturg would be quick to point out) but, as is the nature of oral history, is made *personal*. Oral histories or personal testimonies give credence to the printed text by metaphorically framing it in a new light. These oral histories have shown that “an awareness of the past which is not just known, but personally felt” is more apt to impact “social change.”617 Through theatre, where oral histories are *re*-presented through the voices and gestures of the actors onstage, personal stories have the ability to involve the audience both cognitively and emotionally, affecting change.

Recent studies have shown that the elderly are more likely to recall memories of events experienced during late adolescence and early adulthood than at any other period. These are the emerging adult life stories that we carry with us, largely unchanged, for the remainder of our lives.618 It is therefore more easily understood why the elderly survivors of World War II who were teenagers and late adolescents at the time of the attacks, vividly recall their experiences. These “rehearsed memories… form the core of our life stories - narratives of self that help us define and understand our identity and our place in the world.”619 Even though facts such as names and dates eventually fade and are forgotten, on the whole, as Schacter has discovered, “our memory systems do a

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remarkably good job of preserving the general contours of our pasts and of recording
correctly many of the important things that have happened to us.”

Although facts surrounding eye-witness accounts may be altered or reconfigured
with the passage of time, a large number of personal histories or “communal memories”
that contain the same basic facts are more likely to be accepted as “truths.” Schacter
explains, “…preserving testimonies from thousands of rememberers can help to ensure
that forgetting and distortion- which can infiltrate any individual rememberer’s story are
counteracted by the overwhelming truths that emerge from core elements that are shared
by numerous rememberers.” Carol Martin points out that even though the “assertion
that truth is not entirely verifiable, most people live guided by convictions about what
they believe to be true. It’s this world - the world where truth is championed even as we
experience our failure to know it with absolute finality - that theatre of the real attempts
to stage.”

Personal testimonies are capable of adding to and enriching historical accounts.
“History becomes, to put it simply, more democratic. The chronicle of kings has taken
into its concern the life experience of ordinary people.” By giving voice to those who
ordinarily might not be heard, and by placing the respondents in a dialogue containing
many viewpoints, the oral historian “offers audiences a more democratic conception of
the power of discourse than the monolithic “us/them” rhetoric and dehumanization of the

620 Schacter, Searching for Memory, 308.
621 Ibid., 305.
622 Martin, Dramaturgy of the Real, 3-4.
623 Thompson, The Voice of the Past, 9.
It often has been repeated that “history is written by the victors,” but in
documentary, as we have learned, this is not always the case. Whether among the
“winners or losers” or positioned in between, personal interviews and testimonies
“…validate personal life as an essential part of history. Subjective experience emerges as
important as the more visible events. The interviews reveal not only what people did, but
what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing, and what they felt about
having done it. What someone believes- or believes what happened is important
historically.”

Once these personal histories are collectively gathered into a cohesive “whole,” it
becomes the playwright’s responsibility to project them onto a platform where they can
be openly shared and discussed. Ryan M. Claycomb finds,

These oral history plays take the discourse of history-and life-writing, and shift
their discursive conceptions of the subject from the single protagonist to the
greater community. This radical approach to subject formation not only disrupts
the empowered status of the subject’s authority, but also encourages the
integration of the audience into the tenuous sense of community created by the
theatrical event itself.

In his 1994 article, “Epic-cure: History that Heals,” Todd London notes that
American documentary playwrights such as Anna Deveare Smith, Suzan-Lori Parks, and
Tony Kushner are reviving a return to history, “urging the theatre from its obsession with

624 Martin, Dramaturgy of the Real, 56.

625 Diane Carson and Lester D. Friedman, eds., Shared Differences: Multicultural Media and

626 Ryan M. Claycomb, “(Ch)oral History: Documentary Theatre, the Communal Subject and
the self and family to an investigation of the nation and its legacy. They are re-exploring sweeping epics reminiscent of Piscator and Brecht in order to face “the racial, ethnic, and sexual gulfs so visible from the precipice of century’s end. Each offers a tentative, suggestive, inconclusive vision of healing and redemption….” By tackling relevant issues such as these, these authors “aren’t content to sketch the problems, they dream of solutions, healing cures.”

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628 Ibid.

629 Ibid.
Chapter 5

A Study in Dramaturgy: Promoting Peace and Understanding

Through Documentary

We must try harder to understand than to explain. The way forward is not in the mere construction of universal systematic solutions, to be applied to reality from the outside; it is also in seeking to get to the heart of reality through personal experience. Such an approach promotes an atmosphere of tolerant solidarity and unity in diversity based on mutual respect, genuine pluralism and parallelism. In a word, human uniqueness, human action and the human spirit must be rehabilitated.

-- Václav Havel, “The End of the Modern Era”

Development of With Their Voices Raised Play-Script

*With Their Voices Raised* (Appendix A) was conceived in the spring of 2010, when I was introduced to Dr. Patricia Liehr, Associate Dean for Nursing Research and Scholarship in the Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, Florida. Dr. Liehr, in collaboration with Dr. Rytuaro Takahashi, Vice Director at the Tokyo Metropolitan Institute of Gerontology and colleagues, had collected, audio recorded, and transcribed (in Japanese and English) 51 Hiroshima and Pearl Harbor testimonies. All 51 Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima participants signed consent forms before sharing their stories. The Hiroshima interviews then were translated into English by Japanese researcher Chie Nishimura so that the American researchers were able to understand and access their testimonies.

As suggested in *A Lifelong Journey of Moving Beyond Wartime Trauma for Survivors From Hiroshima and Pearl Harbor*, this collaborative research “… sought to systematically study health stories shared by survivors, extending research into cross-cultural arenas, where an understanding of living through and with wartime trauma could
be pursued with participants from countries that had been aggressors toward each other."

In addition to conventional methods of research dissemination such as those found within journal articles and textbooks, the researchers were interested in reaching a broader audience through theatre. Because of my background as a doctoral student at Florida Atlantic University in the Comparative Studies Fine and Performing Arts Program with a focus in theatre, dramaturgy, and script-development, they approached me to write a play or “peace performance” based on these interviews. Because of the urgency of the project (the subjects interviewed are well into their 80s and 90s) and because of the relevancy of the subject matter (survivors of the Mid-Eastern conflicts, victims of 9/11, and the recent Boston Marathon bombings are undergoing similar traumas), I was eager to comply. Their stories and histories needed to be heard, not as culturally segregated entities, but as one.

Due to the delicate nature of both the Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima bombings and the lasting trauma inflicted upon the survivors by these two events, I felt the only way to share these eyewitness accounts was through the survivors’ own voices. Adhering to the documentary format of verbatim theatre, I transposed segments of the respondents’ narratives, taking care to keep the survivors’ testimonies within their original context.

These personal experiences and memories would not have elicited the same emotional response if their words had been incorporated into a drama-based script. The dialogue of With Their Voices Raised was taken directly from the Hiroshima and Pearl

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Harbor survivors’ personal testimonies, with linking verbs or conjunctions added to create smoother transitions, if needed. Whenever possible, the original syntax was honored and maintained. By working within the documentary framework, the survivors’ narratives appeared more approachable, believable, and personal, creating an emotional bond between actor and audience.

The next step in the script’s development was to find a cohesive, prevailing thread that united both the Hiroshima and Pearl Harbor stories. I decided to focus on the similarities rather than the differences between the Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima experiences. For example, both Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima survivors suffered physical and mental hardships during the WWII wartime period. Hiroshima survivor (22) explains,

You kids, when you get hungry, you go “Mom, I’m hungry! I want snacks!” Right? But when I was like your age we used to say “We wouldn’t want until we win.” You get smacked if someone heard you say “I’m hungry.” They’d yell at you “Aren’t you a Japanese man?” and make you repeat “We wouldn’t want until we win.”

Pearl Harbor survivor (19) shares: “It always remains. A lot of times I sob … not only cry, but I really sob about it … of different things in the world … war, besides that.”

Consequently, both Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima survivors are committed to never having a “younger generation” experience the same hardships they had to live through.


632 Ibid., 20.
States Pearl Harbor survivor (20): “I told my own children, I said, ‘Years later, I just hope you never have to go through something like that.’”

Hiroshima survivor (29) expresses a similar sentiment: “Someday, once nuclear is again used, people will have the same fate as we had, even worse than us probably. We have to prevent that with all cause. For that goal we have to tell our hibaku experience, that’s why I tell my story. We who experienced it speak out that we want you to live in the safe world.”

Both Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima survivors lived through a tumultuous period in history and at times their lives seemed determined by forces (social and political) outside of their personal control. Pearl Harbor survivor (15) describes the experience:

During the Depression, it was very important to do what you could to feed yourself and your family. There were some people that had plenty of money, but the majority of people at all levels were in really dire straits. Some were downright down-and-out. So the important thing was to do what you could to better your life. And then the war came along and it was the same situation. So I think we were a very serious group but I think that the Great Generation title given to us was not so much that we were different or better than anyone else. It was just a necessity and a desire and a dream.

Hiroshima survivor (23) adds,

It’s the order from country. You absolutely have to do exactly as you were told. You’d get caught if you ran. For the emperor everyone fights selflessly. Kaiheidan is nothing but the school for the war. You’d get trained there and sent off to the frontline. Someone got into the training center a month ahead of you? He’d be a senior soldier, order from the senior soldier was the order from Chin, you may not know this but Chin is the emperor, see? The orders from the emperor, absolute obedience is all there is to it. ...Miserable, that is how the time had been then.

633 Morris, With Their Voices Raised, 20.
634 Ibid., 19.
635 Ibid., 20.
The Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima survivors were victims of sudden, violent attacks. Throughout their testimonies, these survivors recall feeling confused, afraid, and disoriented during and after the bombings. Barbara Jones remembers:

So Mom went walking down to the church, and I forget how many minutes after that, there was all this noise and terrible smells. And they were flying down our road… . The neighbor lady could see them and had us all huddled together … but it was just all chaos and confusion. Well, soon as they cleared out of there, about 8:15 I guess, my mom came and she found me. And we just got in the car and started going.\textsuperscript{636}

Haruki Kimura also shares his disorientation:

After probably an hour had past, I got outside and walked around, then someone brought some information. School has been destroyed, you are to go back to the school right away and rescue the Goshinei. The picture of the Emperor. We walked … in full residual radiation, we walked all the way about 2.5 miles to central Hiroshima. The smoke, all around, and in the smoke we didn’t know what they were, but you see something like ghosts. Hundreds of ghosts. We were walking in formation, freshmen and the second year students, so all together probably two hundred of us. We were in better shape than military men. This old grandma, looking like a beaten-up rag, she walked up to us and said “You, Mister, Mister Student, avenge, please!” I remember saying something like “Avenge how?”\textsuperscript{637}

However, both the Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima survivors ultimately rose above their painful traumatic memories and instead focused on rebuilding their lives. Kiyoshi Watanabe remarks:

Losing one eye, scars all over the body, I just couldn’t bear the thought of going out in public. So I thought about suicide. My father had said to me “It was good.” I thought “What? Good? “Here’s your son all bloody and messed up here.” “What’s good about that?” I thought “How can he say that?” But he said, “Try to turn it around, think what would have happened if those injuries were deeper, what if you lost both eyes?” “It’s good, right?” … It didn’t sink in right away, I’d been mad at him thinking “How selfish can he be for saying such thing to me!” But after a couple of days I kind of got to thinking “You know, instead of losing both eyes, losing sight completely, I can still see and that is a lucky thing if I think

\textsuperscript{636} Morris, With Their Voices Raised, 12-13.

\textsuperscript{637} Ibid., 12.
about it.” And when I came to that point, for the first time the feeling of wanting to die disappeared.638

Third Class Petty Officer Richard Anderson remembers: “We got out and we had orders to proceed north. And I’m not ashamed to say the tears was running down my face, I was scared. The friends of mine on the bridge, they didn’t say nothing. They looked at each other, just had to turn their heads away. They were numb. I know I was.”639

When developing the format for With Their Voices Raised, I focused on three distinct sections. The first section, titled “Surprise,” describes the Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima survivors’ immediate reactions to the surprise attacks encountered on December 7, 1941 and August 6, 1945. The “Surprise” section is comprised of nine different Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima survivors’ segments or voices. In this section both the Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima survivor/characters remain nameless and are identifiable only through their sequentially ordered numbers, 1-9. The intention was to place emphasis on the collective and communal wartime experiences the survivors shared as they faced the horror of the bombings. Without being “named” specifically, it is suggested that this type of aggression could happen to anyone – at any given moment in one’s life. Pearl Harbor survivor (2) reflects: “When I ran up topside, the planes were coming by our stern and over top of the ship and they would just go in slow and steady, tick tick tick tick, and you could see in the back of the ship was a little old Japanese

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638 Morris, With Their Voices Raised, 12.

639 Ibid., 14.
machine gun and I was supposed to go onto the stern of the ship. I didn’t go back there. I wasn’t crazy!”

Hiroshima survivor (8) adds: “Then we looked out as we heard the noise, there we see that mushroom cloud, you see? …Then after - noon trucks started coming in, trucks with injured people. But those people had nothing on, they are not wearing any clothes, patches of garments here and there, like rugs. Nothing to cover their naked bodies but nobody even cared, because they all had nothing on.”

The numbers assigned to the survivors serve a dual purpose by providing both prompt cues for the director/actor/reader and by distinguishing the separate remarks made by each individual Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima survivor. These representational remarks are drawn from all 51 Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima survivor testimonies and are meant to create a sense of shared experience, both within the Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima survivors’ stories themselves as well as for the audience members listening to these stories.

The second section of the documentary is titled “Aftermath” and is comprised of eight individual Pearl Harbor stories and nine individual Hiroshima stories. In this section I hoped to move the reader/audience member away from shared communal memories by tracing and recording the individual wartime experience. In “Aftermath,” the Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima survivors no longer are nameless; each character now has a specific and distinguishable name. Because the names of the original participants in the nursing research were de-identified and concealed when given to me for consultation, the

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640 Morris, With Their Voices Raised, 1.
641 Ibid., 3.
Pearl Harbor ‘voices’ in this script were selected from the most common first and last names taken from World War II (Pacific Theater) causalities lists and memorials. I then randomly combined these first and last names to form either a female or male Pearl Harbor survivor/character. A similar method was used to create individual Hiroshima survivor/character names, but these names were selected from a list of the most common first and last names during the World War II period (1941-1945) and not collected from a memorial list of Japanese wartime casualties. In both instances, the most common first and last names were placed together randomly in order to create a single Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima character to emphasize the distinction between the Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima ‘voices.’

The middle section was designed to suggest that the aggression faced on December 7th and August 6th also was an individual experience, not just a communal one. As the survivors relate their experiences, and as their narratives unfold, we see that these horrific events happened to specific people. As Akihito Suzuki remembers,

August 6th, back then I was sixteen, a sophomore in junior high school. No real classes at school anymore, we spent first half of the sophomore year at rice fields and vegetable farms because farmers were all taken to military as soldiers, and the last half of the year we went to work at military factories. Military had passed out the order to do building clearing on August 5th and August 6th. There were about thirty-five junior high schools in Hiroshima back then, and the order was passed onto all those schools. I was a president of the class then and we divided the class into two. President’s group, that’s my group, and vice-president’s group. We did rock, paper, scissors to decide whose group goes which day. I won and I chose the 5th. We went to the telephone center in Kakochou, 875 yards from epicenter. Nothing on the 5th but everybody from vice-president’s group, they went on the 6th and all twenty-three of them died.642

642 Morris, With Their Voices Raised, 4.
This section also highlights the fact that the survivors of December 7th and August 6th were ordinary people with hopes, dreams, and aspirations for the future—desires not dissimilar to that of the reader or audience member. Wartime aggression goes from being a shared experience to becoming an individual one. Seaman James Miller explains: “It was terrible, all that fire and the water was on fire, and guys jumping off, and ships – not on my ship – but off the Arizona and all the ships over there. It was just terrible, and if you went out there to get one of ‘em, why you’d just get him by the hand, that’s all you got.”

Through these survivor testimonies, we are reminded that behind every story there is an individual brave enough to share their experience. These stories become personal and could be shared by an audience member, a neighbor, friend, or family member. We also are reminded that these acts of aggression could occur at any time, in any form, and to someone with whom we all are personally connected.

The third and final section of the documentary, “Conciliation/Peace,” pulls away from the individual/specific experience and returns to the communal experience in an effort to remind the reader and audience member that the bombings are events that now are part of our shared history.

In the final section, the Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima survivors again are identifiable only by number. Through individual monologues, each survivor tells of his or her experience in the months and years following the bombings, describing how they were impacted and affected. As Hiroshima survivor (13) recalls,

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At that time information from the newspaper just said it was “New type of bomb.” “New type of weapon.” Nobody knew about radiation of genbaku. There was however the media, and of course people’s words of mouths also, that reported that there won’t be any trees and flowers growing back from Hiroshima soil at least for seventy-five years. Rumors then, all over town, were “It must be poison, people who had been in Hiroshima got poison in their systems.” Understandable, because people with severe burns in neck, back, head toe, all over the body were moaning in pain but still alive, whereas people with no visible burns or injuries what so ever all of the sudden just dropped dead. 644

The Hiroshima survivors also clarify what it means to be a “hibakusha” by explaining the stigma that accompanies this label. Hiroshima survivor (19) better describes it:

I didn’t want to talk about it. But when you go to school, kids, they ask you, “What happened to you?” I’d say “Oh yeah, I was gotten by genbaku, was gotten in Hiroshima.” I didn’t understood what genbaku was you know? . . . I had nothing that’s inferior to them and I never was bullied or isolated by others for that. Kids at school I could tell, but when it comes to marriage? I couldn’t. 645

The reader or audience member also receives further insight into the emotional and physical scars that come from witnessing and surviving the bombings. Pearl Harbor survivor (13) explains: “Remember, we had no post-trauma treatment. . . . They just would grin and bear it and I think maybe that’s why I never have recovered from the memory. That’s why it’s very emotional for me.” 646

The “Peace/Conciliation” section focuses on what it means to be a wartime “survivor” living with permanent memories of wartime aggression. Although life never will be the same after the loss of their friends and loved ones, many of these men and women feel an obligation to pass on their shared history, in the hopes that what occurred

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644 Morris, With Their Voices Raised, 17.

645 Ibid., 18.

646 Ibid., 19.
in the past won’t be repeated in the future. Hiroshima survivor (11) states: “In human society, everybody lives not being able to judge. No matter how much we talk and discuss, nobody can judge black or white. Then how do we know what’s right? By listening to someone who’s already shown the way in the past, you have to decide how you should be. That’s what I think.”

The final section describes how the survivors feel regarding their past and how they have elected to lead lives filled with “hope” rather than “hate.” After living through the fear and horror experienced during the bombings, many chose to focus on the possibility of a bright and hopeful future for younger generations instead of dwelling on the past. Hiroshima survivor (29) believes: “Someday, once nuclear is again used, people will have the same fate as we had, even worse than us probably. We have to prevent that with all cause. For that goal we have to tell our hibaku experience, that’s why I tell my story. We who experienced it speak out that we want you to live in the safe world.”

This emotional sentiment is recognized and echoed by Pearl Harbor survivor (31), who states: “I hope everybody, people like you and like my kids and everybody else … I want you to have a good life and hope nothing happens. I hope that everybody gets that dream come true.”

*With Their Voices Raised* will be remembered because it is personal. The respondents have carried their “truths” with them for over 60 years. They have lived not only *with* but *through* these truths. Their hopes for *peace* have not waned. The survivors’

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647 Morris, *With Their Voices Raised*, 17.
648 Ibid., 22.
649 Ibid.
memories may have dulled over time as details are forgotten, but feelings about the traumas remain forever embedded. Documentary theatre is one vehicle that is capable of passing those feelings along to the next generation in the hopes that the aggression previously experienced never will happen again.

**Semiotics of Performance: With Their Voices Raised**

When developing *With Their Voices Raised* for performance it was important that stage elements such as; lighting, sound, photographs, videos, costuming, and set design, not overshadow or detract from the survivors’ words and stories shared onstage. Therefore, all production devices were kept to a minimum and were used only when they clarified or enhanced the survivors’ testimonies.

Eight actors at the FAU and Morikami performances, and seven actors at the Miami-Dade performance, were representative of all fifty-one of the survivors interviewed. In order to clarify who was speaking, the names of the Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima characters were projected onscreen. These names first appeared in the “Aftermath” section as each character was introduced, and continued to appear as their individual stories unfolded. By projecting the names along with the dialogue, confusion was avoided.

The actors dressed in black for all three performances. By wearing black, the actor is considered a ‘blank canvas’ for the character he or she is portraying onstage. This uniformity and lack of visual identification allows the audience member to better relate to the character and not the actor “playing the character” as Brecht’s theory of distanciation indicated.
For all three performances of *With Their Voices Raised*, held at Florida Atlantic University Theater (11/11/12), the Morikami Museum and Japanese Gardens (12/6/12), and Miami Dade College, Medical Campus (11/13/13), basic lighting techniques were incorporated depending on the venue. At the FAU performance, the house lights were turned off and spot-lights were used to focus on the individual speaking. Between the three sections of the play-script, “Surprise,” “Aftermath,” and “Peace/Conciliation,” there were onstage black-outs to separate these sections. However, due to limited lighting options and onstage space at the Morikami and Miami Dade performances, the audience house lights remained on throughout and there were no spot-lights or black-outs onstage.

Director Susan Cato created the sound design for all three performances. For the Florida Atlantic University and Morikami performances, music was incorporated to emphasize a break or transition between the play-script’s sections. It was also used at the end of the performance to draw attention to the characters closing remarks concerning peace. At the Miami Dade performance, music was not used to transition between sections but was used as a background to the actors’ closing remarks.

Based upon audience feedback from the previous FAU and Morikami productions, during the Miami Dade performance, I incorporated several short historical video clips into the PowerPoint presentation. Accessed online, these videos separated and distinguished the three play-script sections. Before the actors began their testimonies, two videos depicting the devastation resulting from the bombings at Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima were shown. These videos incorporated some of the history leading up to the two attacks, and therefore provided the audience with some background information in which to place the testimonies. Between the “Aftermath” and “Peace/Conciliation”
sections, videos were shown signifying the end of World War II and the beginning of peace between Japan and the United States in the Pacific.

Emblematic of each respective country, all three performances displayed both the American and Japanese flags. This helped the audience member visually separate the Pearl Harbor characters from the Hiroshima characters onstage. True to the sparse nature of documentary theatre, the actors sat on stools unless they were sharing the survivors’ stories, in which case the actor would rise and (depending on whose story they were sharing) stand in front of the American or Japanese flag.

Placards or images to identify the characters were incorporated whenever possible. Similar in style to Emily Mann’s documentary, The Delaney Sisters, a PowerPoint presentation was developed to display pictures and identifying character names onto a large onstage screen. These images included historical photos collected online and were used to further emphasize the survivors’ stories. For example, many of the images used in the “Surprise” and “Aftermath” sections depicted the devastation that occurred as a result of the Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima bombings. Images used in the “Peace/Conciliation” section showed pictures of American and Japanese Pacific World War II memorials, such as the USS Arizona or the Hiroshima Genbaku Dome. Also pictured in this section were universal symbols of peace such as Japanese paper-cranes and white American crosses. Pictures for the “Surprise” and “Aftermath” play-script sections were in black and white to denote trauma and loss, while pictures for the “Peace/Conciliation” section were in color. These color photos were representative of the survivors’ hopes and dreams for a more peaceful future for us all.
Florida Atlantic University and Morikami Museum and Japanese Gardens

Performances

In May of 2012, I arranged for eight actors to join in a “cold reading” of the first edited version of *With Their Voices Raised* at a local hair salon/coffee parlor called Salon Resta, situated in Delray Beach, Florida. In attendance was my academic advisor, Dr. Richard Gamble, members of the original nursing team involved in collecting the Pearl Harbor transcripts, my dissertation advisors, and others involved in the theatre program at Florida Atlantic University (FAU). Due to the informality of the setting and a gathering sense of collaboration among the participants, the reading proved to be an invaluable lesson in dramaturgy. Suggestions to shorten the script to present it within the time frame of a classroom setting and to transpose the order of some of the testimonies in order to make the storyline more “linear” and therefore better understood, were indispensable to the project.

After the first reading, I approached Susan Cato, a current adjunct theatre professor at FAU, to direct future productions of *With Their Voices Raised*. Because of her expertise in lighting, sound, and direction, Susan proved an invaluable asset to the project. Together we approached both current FAU graduate students and former theatre and dance alums to participate in the project. We were fortunate enough to retain eight talented and committed actors, along with a dependable stage manager who coordinated our rehearsal times and ironed out scheduling conflicts.

After two months of rehearsals and several changes in script, performances of *With Their Voices Raised* were staged at University Theater on the FAU campus in Boca Raton on Veterans Day, November 11, 2012 and at the Morikami Museum and Japanese Gardens.
Gardens in Delray Beach, Florida on December 6, 2012, one day before the anniversary of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

Military veterans and their families within the communities of Boca Raton and Delray Beach were invited to attend both performances. Donations from the FAU performance went to the FAU Veteran OWLS student organization to aid returning servicemen from the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts. This organization played an active role in the project, with members in full uniform ushering at the FAU venue.

Also attending the university performance were Japanese researchers Dr. Ryuatro Takahashi, Chie Nishimura, and Mio Ito, along with film documentarian, Mana Kikuta and Mrs. Noriko Takashashi. The FAU researchers in attendance included Dr. Patricia Liehr and Dr. Lisa Marie Wands, along with Mr. Andrew Binder, a member of FAU’s College of Education who was in the process of creating an I-pad application based on the Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima research testimonies.

Along with creating a documentary script, my responsibility as playwright and dramaturg was to develop a questionnaire and survey (Appendix B and Appendix C) to encourage audience response and feedback and to arrange a talk-back after each performance. The talk-back included researchers Dr. Liehr and Dr. Takahashi, director Susan Cato, and me. By encouraging audience participation after the performance, I hoped to underscore the efficacy of documentary theatre as a means to pedagogically inform as well as to heal cultural divisions by promoting peace through understanding.

**Miami Dade College, Medical Campus Performance**

Because of the positive feedback received from both the FAU and Morikami performances, Dr. Patricia Messmer, a consultant to the School of Nursing at Miami
Dade College who had attended both performances, believed that *With Their Voices Raised* would be of educational benefit to the medical community at Miami Dade.

Due to Dr. Messmer’s continued interest in the survivors’ stories, Dr. Liehr and I visited the Miami Dade Medical Campus in February of 2013 and met with the Dean of Student Services, Dr. Kim McGinnis, and several of her colleagues in Student Activities. After much discussion and careful consideration, it was decided that Miami Dade Medical would commission a performance of *With Their Voices Raised* for the Miami Dade Medical Campus on November 13, 2013, two days after Veterans Day.

**Audience Response to *With Their Voices Raised* Performances**

The memory of past experience, however, is not the only possible guide to future action; in fact, it may not be the most important. In projecting a future course we should know more than what, individually and collectively, we have been; we should also know what we hope to become— and what we are capable of becoming.

-- Martin Duberman, “The Limitations of History”

One indication that the Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima survivors’ stories were presented successfully to the attending audience was through the survey questionnaires distributed to the public at the three performances. From these performances, a total of 312 of the approximately 450 audience surveys were returned. Of those, 127 surveys contained handwritten substantive comments.
Figure 1 shows the combined audience age demographics from all three performances. The surveys indicate that 11 audience members were under the age of 18, 16 were between the ages of 18 and 24, 53 were between the ages of 25 and 34, 38 were between the ages of 35 and 44, 47 were between the ages of 45 and 54, 60 were between the ages of 55 and 64, 46 were between the ages of 65 and 74, and 41 were above the age of 75.

Figure 2 shows that out of the 312 audience surveys, 224 audience members were female, while 86 were male. Of these individuals who responded, 37 were veterans of the United States military, while 227 were non-veterans.

Figure 3 shows the results of four questions asking audience members to rate the theatre performance they had just attended. Audience members were asked to circle their answers based on a weighted scale ranging from numbers 1 to 5, with 1 being the least positive response and 5 being the most positive response. As shown in the graph, the majority of survey respondents circled number 5 for each question.
Figure 1. Audience age demographics, based on 312 audience surveys.
Figure 2. Audience characteristics of age and military service, based on 312 audience surveys.
**Audience Survey Questions**

**Question 1:** Overall, to what degree were you absorbed in this performance? Did you connect with the material onstage?

**Question 2:** To what extent did this performance allow you to better understand the Japanese and American experience on Dec 7, 1941 and Aug 6, 1945?

**Question 3:** As a project of peace, did you think this performance promoted cross-cultural understanding?

**Question 4:** Do you think *With Their Voices Raised* would be an effective teaching tool if used in a high-school setting to educate students about the Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima bombings?

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**Audience Survey Results Figure**

![Graph](image)

**Audience Survey Results (Not At All 1 ------ Very Much 5)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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<td><strong>Question 1</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
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<td><strong>Question 2</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Question 3</strong></td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
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<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Question 4</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>53</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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*Figure 3.* Audience question survey and results, based on 312 audience surveys.

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The Miami Dade College (11/13/13) survey questionnaire (Question 4) is as follows “Do you think *With Their Voices Raised* is an effective teaching tool to bring history “alive” for providing education to high-school and college students about the Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima bombings?”
Overall, I believe these survey results reflect a positive and encouraging response both to the verbatim documentary *With Their Voices Raised* and to documentary theatre as a whole. When asked to mark how “likely” the audience member was to attend another documentary performance in the future, 85 people checked that they were “most likely,” while 205 people checked that they were “definitely likely” to attend another documentary performance in the future. At the Miami Dade performance, where a third criterion of “not likely” was offered, only six survey participants checked this option.

Table 2 indicates a positive audience response to *With Their Voices Raised* serving as both a teaching tool and as a vehicle for cultural healing based upon understanding. Selected from the 127 handwritten survey comments, this table reflects the pedagogical and healing aspects of documentary theatre in general and of the performance of *With Their Voices Raised* in particular.

Another important element in the documentary presentation includes the post-performance talk-back session, which gives audience members a chance ask questions and offer feedback in reaction to what they have witnessed. This allows audience members to play an active role in the theatre–making process. Engaging the audience post-performance also permits theatre artists an opportunity to receive immediate commentary and criticism, which can prove beneficial to future performances. The talk-backs staged after all four reading/performances of *With Their Voices Raised* (including the reading held at Salon Resta) were recognized as crucial to the continued development and progression of this documentary.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEACHING THROUGH DOCUMENTARY</th>
<th>HEALING/UNDERSTANDING THROUGH DOCUMENTARY</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“An extraordinary project - the testimonials are an effective way to communicate the suffering imposed by these events and to warn future generation.”</td>
<td>“I believe this experience made me understand this from a personal point of view rather than just out of a textbook. And yes, we are beginning to forget this episode in our history. I am glad it is being re-examined.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thank you, thank you! I learned more today from this documentary than any movie/news/reports ever heard or written. This should be filmed and be shown in schools all over the country to stress the importance of remembering.”</td>
<td>“It is important to raise awareness through emotion. We all have a heart and soul. Even though our skin is different.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Very moving. A wonderful teaching tool to a younger generation that does not know the effects of war if not involved in it.”</td>
<td>“There is nothing like the human experience. Whatever one can possibly write or record in textbooks as chapters, and on television as script, will never reach the experience of a human being feeling the experience, the terror, anguish, and hope for the future.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Wonderful educational tool. Very good teaching tool for older as well as the young. Drew you in emotionally - heart wrenching. Loved the way the playwright switched back and forth between experiences and divided into before, during and after. It must have been monumental. Everyone should see it - valuable lessons.”</td>
<td>“Prior to this documentary, I knew the history of Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima but this documentary touched my soul.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“A powerful performance! Poignant memories. Specific individual stories are effective way to make important point and deal with critical events in history.”</td>
<td>“It is important that we never forget and that we make sure the individual stories are recorded and told to the younger generations. The conflicts in the Arab and Middle Eastern nations that are continuing today have a long history of tribal war. Perhaps they can learn from the healing that exists between Japan and the United States.”</td>
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<td>“The performance was excellent. Its objectives clearly met, and sets a clear standard for the educational goals described. As an educator, I believe it should be used at all levels in secondary ed.- not just high school.”</td>
<td>“Extremely well done - realistically expressed the feelings and experiences of the survivors of these 2 events in history, with the high purpose of inspiring peace in the future.”</td>
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<td>“I think it would be an excellent tool for teaching high school students about Pearl Harbor/Hiroshima - was enlightening and enjoying.”</td>
<td>“Thank you - excellent presentation, very humanistic presentation. Japanese / American stories need to be told”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Great insight into events surrounding and following Pearl Harbor. I had no idea about what exactly happened. I appreciate the story.”</td>
<td>“The story was performed so well that it kept my interest, despite how fatigued I was. The psycho-social and health effects of this “one” act had such a huge impact with such lasting effects. I had no idea - But I do now. Thank you.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It was an excellent delivery and having both sides of the story was very informative.</td>
<td>“Thank you for the performance. I think is responsibility of every human being to take conscious actions. We have enough information in our culture to teach us build more peaceful and prosperous society.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>“I truly enjoyed this piece. Would have appreciated something like this in high-school (grade school). I would have had a better appreciation for history.”</td>
<td>“Very eloquent. Very well delivered. May human kind never witness the destruction and devastation of war again.”</td>
</tr>
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</table>
The three research questions posed at the beginning of each talk-back and moderated by Dr. Liehr were:

1. “What meaning did the performance hold for you and how were you touched by the stories you heard onstage?”

2. “Did this performance help you better understand the other side, creating a cross-cultural perspective?”

3. “How useful do you think this performance might be in educating younger high-school students about the events occurring on Dec 7th and Aug 6th? What value might this work have in educating younger people?”

These questions permitted the director, actors, researchers, and me to better understand how the With Their Voices Raised documentary was received by the attending audience. The audience members’ immediate responses and reactions allowed us to better identify the efficacy of documentary theatre as a vehicle to both teach and heal based upon a better understanding of the “other” in an effort to promote peace.

In reaction to Question 1, one audience member from the FAU University production said,

Hello, as a fifteen year old sophomore in the Boca Raton High School we have just down the way, I’d like to say that this was definitely a very enlightening experience and I enjoyed seeing both sides of the equation, you never really get that, for me what you get in the history textbooks these days is just a little footnote that they dropped the bomb, that’s all you get. It’s very definitely enlightening to see the human side behind this and its nothing like I’ve ever seen before. You said you wanted to take this to the younger audience and I guess a word of warning, a lot of the students today sort of have this almost self-centered approach and you have to be careful when you present this message – it may not be necessary on the adult level that everyone is used to but you can work with the students and find a way that touches everyone and that would be something I would actually like to see at my school and all across Florida if not the country.

Another FAU audience member added,
Well, I’m not young but I was thinking about something that I had thought about for years. And back then when the war started and the Japanese did all these terrible things, I can remember thinking “oh how horrible, what terrible people they are, terrible people. And then our boys had – that was in the days when we just had little radios and I had five brothers and they of course, couldn’t wait to go to war. And it wasn’t till years later that I thought, we’re not any better than they are. We thought that they were so terrible, they were so vicious people, but then when we fought … boys did what they were told to do. And those Japanese boys they did what they were told to do. They had to go ahead and fight and win the war. And our boys had to do the same thing. So the Japanese boys weren’t any worse than our boys were. I mean this war is such a terrible terrible thing, and you can’t blame. That’s my thought.

In response to Question 1, an audience member from the Miami Dade performance explained,

I also serve in the Army Reserve and I think that a lot of this is important. Some of us who were born a long time ago had the privilege of learning some of this in school but it is good to bring back the history to the young folk. Because the experience that we had in the past help us appreciate how we have it now. Because a lot of folks really don’t know how good they have it, so they don’t grasp the opportunities that they have. All of us should take this away, our grandchildren, soon to be my great-grandchildren; we should share this with them, so that they know a little bit about their history. If we don’t really know the history, how can we appreciate what we have now? And that is what happened I think, that we don’t really appreciate what we have. So thank whoever did this, this was wonderful.

In reaction to Question 2, an audience member at the FAU University performance said,

I guess my thoughts, my experience when watching this. War, whether it be Japan or the United States, any people in the world –this is an expression of the dark side of human nature. We use war to justify whatever kind of ambitions that exist, whether they be religious or economic, we justify war. And only after its taken place do we look at the horror of it. But I think that’s something, that’s a part of being human, our dark side.

Another FAU audience member stated,

Hi everyone, I think the overall production of this play was great, and the message and even the stage, you see the American flag on one side and then you see the Japanese flag on the other. And it just felt like you guys did a great job, even the detail of the script and the mushroom clouds, and even though there was a picture
on the screen, I just felt it mentally in my head, what you guys were trying to convey this in particular and I feel like it really touched everyone because they were speaking to us, they were so close to us, literally so close, their emotions, I felt like it was real, it is real – it happened to people in the past who were both Americans and Japanese I felt a connection towards the actors and everything else.

One Morikami audience member responded to Question 2 by saying,

For me this brought up a myriad of things – what transcending, specifically was the two sides and it really touches upon much broader issues, far bigger. And I’ve traveled all over the globe and there is commonality between our cultures that is strong. The diversity is also beautiful, but common threads are extremely important and I think our oral tradition has been lost – so I think the medium which you are presenting this is wonderful, and a wonderful way to bring this information about the two cultures to light.

In response to Question 3, one Morikami audience member remarked: “…I would like to see the children, not only the children here, but the children of the world be more connected. Children giggle because they don’t know. My hope is that children could react positively to children of all nations; they should be shown the best of every nation, of every idea.”

Another Morikami audience member added,

The actors did a great job- amazing. I am a Social Studies teacher- I teach World History, U.S. History…History is taught but the amount of curriculum as the years go on, I don’t have time to cover the information in detail. On a university level, you have a whole semester to cover WWII. In high-school we might teach WWII in little over a week. I am also a military veteran, US Army. American students say, about the US/Afghanistan conflict, “We should nuke them.” I have a visceral reaction to this… they have no concept of their words. And there is only one country who has used weapons of mass destruction and it is the U.S. – on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Get it people, before we get on our own high horse. I think if you modify [the script] it can be taught K-12. You can teach physics in kindergarten. You just have to adapt it.

At the Miami Dade performance, in response to Question 3, one audience member stated,
Where the young people are concerned, I’ve never been in the military or air force, thank God. …I’ve heard Pearl Harbor stories so many times. And I think what you did today was one of the best, very excellent, telling the sides of the Japanese and what their real experience was and young people today they don’t really know these stories. They don’t really know what happened. And they really need to get a hold of what war is and how to do your best to stay away from war. Do everything not to promote war but promote peace. And to live on the peaceful side. Peace starts right in your home with your brothers and sisters, with your neighbors. Promote peace, peace on earth. The problems associated with war, they really need to know and we really need to have more events to let them know more history, so that they can see and know that they really need to promote and appreciate peace.

Another Miami Dade audience member responded,

In regards to that question I think it’s imperative for those in our generation to learn about things like this, to be honest; I don’t think we hear about it enough. We get the general overview…. However we don’t go in detail about it. So for us to move on into the future, I think a lot of times, particularly when I see our youth today, it’s important to question – Why are you here? What is your purpose? What are you trying to fulfill? But if you don’t understand what your ancestors have done for us –you might not be able to answer that question clearly, or you might understand it. So I think it’s important that we see this, and to be honest I wish I had this in school. …Because a lot of the times it’s a one sided story. It’s predominantly one-sided. You might hear it once or twice, but the older generations don’t speak to the younger generations because of being ashamed and things like that…it makes it difficult for younger generations to understand what was endured in the past.

A Personal Conclusion

It has been an honor working on a documentary that has added such value and personal meaning to my life. Working with the Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima survivors’ testimonies has involved learning the history of past generations, and giving this history new life and meaning onstage. Much of this project has been about making connections – personal, cross-cultural, and historical. To share one’s personal story in order to reveal the horror of wartime aggression in an effort to promote peace for future generations requires both honesty and humility. There were several times during the interviews that U.S. and Japanese nursing researchers had to stop recording in order to give the survivor
a moment or two to compose him or herself after reliving their painful memories. It was this personal connection that the director, actors, and I tried to depict onstage. Behind every story, every memory, there was a Pearl Harbor or Hiroshima survivor brave enough to share their wartime experience. By placing the audience member in the position of “interviewer,” we hoped to share these emotions and validate these memories. As suggested in *Translating Research Findings to Promote Peace*, “When characters share deeply personal conversations onstage, responsibility is then conferred to the audience and their involvement intensifies. Audience members *care* what happens to the characters onstage because their own experiences are similarly real and likewise based on personal knowing.”

By choosing to emphasize the similarities of the survivors’ experiences rather than their differences, I hoped to create a cross-cultural connection based upon their shared hardships. As suggested by one of the survivors, war is indeed “hell,” not only for those fighting – but for the mother, father, sister, and brother civilian back home, waiting for the return of their loved one. The pain and sadness residing in the memories of those who survived WWII transcended race, nationality, and duty to their country.

As Dr. Takahashi suggested in the talk-back following the FAU performance, the nature of this project was not to compare the experience of the Japanese and American people, but instead to show the “absolute human experience” regardless of whether the survivors lived in Japan or the United States. He went on to add that through their shared testimonies, the “making of two stories” made “one absolute answer” that concerned a hope for peace for us all.

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EPILOGUE

As David Savran notes in *The Playwright’s Voice*, “If the playtext is indeed a kind of memorial, then theatrical performance must be akin to awakening the dead. For both performing and reading are ways of remembering; they jog the memory and help restore what has been lost.”^652

Within the theatre community there are many superstitions regarding the nature of the dead, and particular homage often is paid to the “ghosts” of past performances. In certain theatre venues, after the performance is over, and the audience has returned safely to their homes for the evening, an electric light is placed in the center of the stage. Some believe that this light provides safety for the theatre practitioners who need to make a late evening appearance. There also are those who believe that every theatre has a ghost, or even several ghosts, that traipse across the floorboards late at night reenacting past performances. In this instance, the “ghost light” is meant to pacify these spirits, allowing them to relive the memory and glory of past performances.

To all of the Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima “ghosts” who volunteered their stories and who paced the theatre floorboards on the performance nights of *With Their Voices Raised*, I thank you. May we never forget the memories you have shared.

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APPENDICES
Appendix A

Play-script of *With Their Voices Raised*

“With Their Voices Raised”

A documentary by: Kate Morris

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Index/Terminology

Chin - the emperor, Hirohito

Chine – white ointment/paste

Flak - anti-aircraft fire

Genbaku – short for Genshi-bakudan, Atomic Bomb

Hibaku – A- bomb exposed. Being subjected/exposed to the bomb/radiation

Hibakusha – A- bomb survivor. One who was subjected/exposed to the bomb/radiation

Hidankyo - Japan confederation hibakusha organizations

Ikigai - reason for living

Incendiary - (of a device or attack) designed to cause fires

Kaiheidan - Navy training center

Kinrouhoushi – supposedly “volunteer service” women and men who didn’t pass physical for military participation

Muster - come or bring (troops) together, especially for inspection or in preparation of battle

Pikadon – nickname of A- bomb, pika is the sound expressing the flash of the bomb and don is the sound expressing the heavy thud

Shinajihen – Mukden Incident in 1931, same as Manchurian Incident

Strafe – attack with machine-gun fire or bombs from low-flying aircraft
PEARL HARBOR and HIROSHIMA CHARACTERS *

Pearl Harbor Survivor (1-9)  General Composite Character Statement: M or F

Hiroshima Survivor (1-9)  General Composite Character Statement: M or F

Seaman James Miller  Navy, Dobbin: M

Akihito Suzuki  Civilian, Tsurumi Bridge: M

Nurse Hitomi Tanake  Navy Hospital; Nikou Park, Kure: F

Nurse Naomi Katou  Army Hospital; Ujina, Hiroshima: F

Nurse Shirley Davis  Army Hospital, Army Nurse Corps: F

Third Class Petty Officer Richard Anderson  Navy, Hall: M

Recruit Ryosuke Hayashi  Army Soldier, Hiroshima, Sakashita in Akitum: M

Private First Class John Allen  Army, 46th Fighter Squadron: M

Keiko Nakamura  Civilian, Home (4km from epicenter): F

Nancy Smith  Civilian, Federal housing; outside Hickman field: F

Kiyoshi Wantanabe  Civilian, Hiroshima station near Koujin bridge: M

Airmen Apprentice Charles Wilson  Navy Aviation, attached to USS Raleigh: M

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Kentaro Sato  
**Civilian, Kure:** M

Seaman Recruit William Harris  
**Navy, West Virginia:** M

Haruki Kimura  
**Civilian, Sendamachi, Hiroshima:** M

Fumiko Sasaki  
**Civilian, Train Station, Matobaichou:** F

Barbara Jones  
**Civilian, Neighbor’s house, one mile from Pearl Harbor:** F

Hiroshima Survivor (10-31)  
General Composite Character Statement: M or F

Pearl Harbor Survivor (10-31)  
General Composite Character Statement: M or F

**Note:** Names of all characters are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead is entirely coincidental.

* The manuscript is intended for eight (8) actors; three (3) male and one (1) female actor(s) for Pearl Harbor and two (2) male and two (2) female actor(s) for Hiroshima.
CAST

Three (3) females and five (5) males to play all roles.

SETTING

Minimal stage design with eight chairs/stools for actors to sit on.

TIME

The present. Pearl Harbor survivors remember Japan’s attack on December 7, 1941 at Pearl Harbor, Oahu Hawaii. Japanese survivors (hibakusha) recall the U.S. atomic bombing on August 6, 1945 at Hiroshima, Japan. Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima testimonies conclude with a shared hope for a more peaceful future.
“With Their Voices Raised”

Kate Morris: docudramakats@gmail.com

Surprise:

Pearl Harbor Survivor (1)
I remember going to breakfast after a shower. And I went to church. Then, all of a sudden, the bombs were dropping. And I was strafed a couple of times before I got back to the barracks. When I was changing from my whites to my dungarees, they were strafing our barracks. When I went out I looked at the hangars … it was all blown up.

Hiroshima Survivor (1)
I finished cleaning up the house, tidied up everybody’s shoes and I watered the front yard. I could hear cicadas already going over, it was a hot day even in the morning, I was just about to go out to the street, then the bright light came Flash!

Pearl Harbor Survivor (2)
When I ran up topside, the planes were coming by our stern and over top of the ship and they would just go in slow and steady, tick tick tick tick, and you could see in the back of the ship was a little old Japanese machine gun and I was supposed to go onto the stern of the ship. I didn’t go back there. I wasn’t crazy!

Hiroshima Survivor (2)
I was on the platform at station waiting for my transfer train, then I saw B-29 flying above. Strange, I thought. “There’s a B-29 flying but why isn’t there an air raid alarm going off?” We have done it so many times every day, we were trained to automatically go into the bunker to evacuate when we heard the alarm. So it was very abnormal. Most of the people were looking up. Right at the moment I thought “Hey, something white dropped!” That strongest light beam got into my eyes. Body reflex, I ducked, but I must have been blown away. I completely lost consciousness for a while.

Pearl Harbor Survivor (3)
And I can see the little old Jap sitting up there … coming in treetop high, coming in with his bomb, and we had ammunition then, so we began to shoot. And we shot him, and he fell over in the pineapple field with his plane. But, he dropped his bombs right at the edge of the ship, didn’t hit the ship, but the shrapnel hit the ship and killed I’d say about thirteen guys. …And the one right behind him – there were two of them there – the other
one, he came over with his bomb, and he dropped his at the tail end. And when it exploded, the ship rears up and went back down. I'll never forget that.

Hiroshima Survivor (3)
Parachutes, I saw three of them falling down from the sky, I said "There!" "What is that?" Nobody never even close to imagine A-bomb was dropped with parachute.
"Japanese military must have shot down American plane, must be the parachute that pilot ejected out from American plane." The moment I was saying such thing, at eight-fifteen I got hibaku outside.

Pearl Harbor Survivor (4)
While I was loading the airplane with bombs, right over my head, the airplane got a whole bunch of bullet holes come through, and the tail of the airplane caught fire, so I got down and started running. I was running across the ramp to get away from the hangars where the bombs were falling and I saw the fighter coming. Well, I felt that he was firing, and the bullets was hitting the concrete around me, and the concrete was hitting me on the legs, 'cause I had shorts on, and I could feel that concrete burning my legs, you know, stinging.

Hiroshima Survivor (4)
As I was watching the parachute come down, it emits such bright beam of light, that light put you out instantly, it's just unimaginably bright light. I later heard that if you were standing at 10km from epicenter, the light was ten times brighter than the sun.

Pearl Harbor Survivor (5)
And the building is shaking and we are waiting for the building to cave in. Doctors, people, everybody was down. And it shook, but it didn't fall. It was delayed action, huge bomb. ...So then we got up and somebody said, "There went headquarters!"

Hiroshima Survivor (5)
People called it Pikadon, flash like "Pika!" And the thud sound "Don!" They didn't call it A-bomb in Hiroshima. People whispered "Pikadon people are here!"

Pearl Harbor Survivor (6)
We heard bombing and they were shooting the planes up, and the planes were going up in flames and this one plane came from around the mountain, came towards us, because there was a lot of people around the Ordinance and he was strafing everybody. When he did, he was so low, that you could pick up a rock, throw it, and you could probably hit the plane. And then, when he went by, we saw water going on the side of the fuselage. He's hit. Sure, enough, he went right into the side of the hill and blew up. That was that Lieutenant from the Japanese Air Force. ...All the stuff that they got from him the Navy sent to Japan to his kinfolk ... and the kinfolk wrote back and thanked the Navy for it. That was real good.
Hiroshima Survivor (6)
I was inside of the building. There was a partition and epicenter was on my right, all of
the shattered pieces of glass were blown toward me with the blast. There was a counter
about this high so my hip down I didn’t get many injuries but pieces of glass, to my head,
to my face, to my back, my arms, they didn’t go into like “Pon!” Glass didn’t stab me in
those places but rather they flew through passing by me, that’s how I felt.

Pearl Harbor Survivor (7)
We had two hits. It was leaning like that. … If they hadn’t of moved it, we’d have been
there still with the Arizona.

Hiroshima Survivor (7)
Split second, can’t see anything, couldn’t breathe, thinking in my head “This must be
death.” When things got calm, Hiroshima had already turned into ashes. All those people
who were there just seconds ago were there no more. Really, in that split second, people
were divided into the dead, the injured, and the alive. I just stood there.

Pearl Harbor Survivor (8)
Cot springs we used to pick up bodies that were floating in the water. … We didn’t have
box springs and mattresses, we had a spring for a cot. They had the three cots up this
way, you’d just fold them up. Well, they took those springs and they was picking up the
bodies … trying to cut ‘em out of some of the ships.

Hiroshima Survivor (8)
Then we looked out as we heard the noise, there we see that mushroom cloud, you see?
… Then after noon trucks started coming in, trucks with injured people. But those
people had nothing on, they are not wearing any clothes, patches of garments here and
there, like rugs. Nothing to cover their naked bodies but nobody cared, because they all
had nothing on.

Pearl Harbor Survivor (9)
And it was a terrible, chaotic time, just absolute chaos. And we thought we were either
going to be captured or killed. … All the rumors fly when something like that happens.
And they really said the Japs had landed. And that we were going to be taken over by the
Japanese. … So we assumed that was right, because everything was in complete chaos.

Hiroshima Survivor (9)
It was the newest weapon America made, there’s only one in the world. Back then
nobody said anything about radiation, nobody said anything about heat wave. Just
another bomb, that’s what we thought. Just another incendiary bomb or any kind of bomb
that fires up and burns. Japan lost the war, I thought. By only that one bomb, wiped out
everything all the way to far away. Fires everywhere, growing burning. We ran, just ran
forever.
Aftermath:

Seaman James Miller

I went on out to Pearl Harbor and I asked for a transfer. So they put me on the Dobby. And that was the ship I was on December 7th. On Friday, we got word to put our ammunition up and let some of them, a lot of them, go ashore for the weekend. But I had duty that weekend. So we put our ammunition up and we also were told ... I read it in the paper that the Japanese were going to come and sign a peace treaty on Monday morning. They were going to Washington, D.C. ... Wasn’t going to be no problem with the Japanese.

Akihito Suzuki

August 6th, back then I was sixteen, a sophomore in junior high school. No real classes at school anymore, we spent first half of the sophomore year at rice fields and vegetable farms because farmers were all taken to military as soldiers, and the last half of the year we went to work at military factories. Military had passed out the order to do building clearing on August 5th and August 6th. There were about thirty-five junior high schools in Hiroshima back then and the order was passed onto all those schools. I was a president of the class then and we divided the class into two. President’s group, that’s my group, and vice-president’s group. We did rock, paper, scissors to decide whose group goes which day. I won and I chose the 5th. We went to the telephone center in Kakochou, 875 yards from epicenter. Nothing on the 5th but everybody from vice-president’s group, they went on the 6th and all twenty-three of them died. The night before, on 5th, my father and I were talking, he said “They are doing building clearing on that street, we may be able to get a bath tub cheap. Let’s go there tomorrow.” So me and my father, we took off early in the morning, had rented a boat, we went down on the river, headed to Tsurumi bridge. We were gathering bricks and bathtubs, that’s what we were doing, then genbaku ... about 1 mile.

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Nurse Hitomi Tanaka

I was at a branch hospital of a Navy hospital, Nikou park in Kure and now it’s all developed with all those warehouses all the way to joint city halls along Nikou river that used to be hospital property. Dormitories were there, hospitals, for Navy officers’ families. People were talking, there must have been an explosion at the gunpowder storage in Saka. It was a false rumor. And it must had been just little after noon, when we were having lunch, word came to us that city of Hiroshima was destroyed.

Nurse Shirley Davis

It was the Army Nurse Corps that was there at Hickham when they opened up. We had just been there three weeks. As I recall, we didn’t even have all the mattresses on all the beds. ...I’d been to the Pearl Harbor Officers’ Club the night before. Oh, it was so glamorous, all the ships there. ...The first time they had all been there since July 4th. ...That morning I’m on duty and at the desk. And I was out checking temps and this patient came up to me and he wanted an aspirin. He had a headache. So I said, “Well,
sure.” I was getting the aspirin and all of a sudden we looked at each other and we are
hearing planes and they’re getting closer and closer and then, “Bang!”

Nurse Naomi Katou
You know Hiroshima hospital in Ujina? That used to be Army hospital. After two years
of studying I was just fresh out of nursing school in March, I was just a baby nurse then.
We had a round from eight in the morning so I was there in Hiroshima, we were gathered
together and that’s when genbaku dropped … that great horrible thud sound, then
something “Phat!” flashed. …About 2 miles from epicenter.

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Third Class Petty Officer Richard Anderson
I’ll give you a little background from when I went in the service. I graduated from high
school in 1938. Of course that was depression time, was no jobs available. So I joined the
Navy, passed all the physicals … by God in six weeks I got called. Course I needed my
mother’s approval. She signed it. …I was seventeen-and-a-half and she says, “I have a
son in the Coast Guard and I have a son in the Army, and you want to go in the Navy?”
“Sure.” Course the pay at that time was big money. They paid the Army Private,
seventeen dollars. They paid the Marine Private, seventeen dollars. And for an
Apprentice Seaman in the Navy, they paid you twenty-one dollars. …See the Army done
the work, the Marines got the credit, and the Navy got the pay. …We got nine days leave
after we graduated and I went home, saw my mother and I said, “We’re being shipped
out. We’re going to the West Coast, California.” “All right.” Well, I never saw her after
that. …She died during the war. I was overseas. …Around March of 1941 I was on the
Hall, a destroyer. I operated on the bridge. And that weekend we had what they call
“Ready duty.” The task force had been out to sea for a while, and the whole transports
come in on the fifth. The battleships went to Battleship Row. …We tied up, the Arizona
was down here, the Oklahoma, the Ocala, and right over here was a nest of destroyers.
And the Dobbin was there, destroyer tender, and we was alongside the Dobbin, right over
from the Arizona. Saturday we had liberty. Went to shore in Honolulu. Sunday morning,
I didn’t have ready duty up on the bridge that Sunday. So I was in my sack, guy asked
me, “You gonna go to show?” I said, “No, I’m gonna sleep in a little bit.” We could sleep
in ‘til eight o’clock. And he no more than went up the ladder, started up the deck, and he
comes screaming down, “Come up!” “On deck!” He says, “The Japs are attacking!”

Recruit Ryousuke Hayashi
I was a soldier. About fifteen of us were going to Ushida at around seven-forty a.m. But
there was a bombing by American carrier-based aircrafts after breakfast. Once air-raid
alarm went off we couldn’t leave. Then all the sudden at 7:50 it all cleared up. There
wasn’t a single bomber out in the sky and the alarm stopped. We regrouped ourselves to
go to Ushida. …We went down to the pier and got on the ship. …Right around when we
got half way through Nino Island I saw this huge fire ball. Almost thought a sun was
coming out from the west. Ball of fire up in the air fifteen hundred feet from the ground.
Never even imagined it to be a bomb … bombs would go off as they fall down to the
ground and never like this one exploding right in the air, you see? Then I felt my face
really really hot, burning. I was at about 2.2 mile. I was rubbing on my face, then comes
the explosion blast. Four hundred and seventy miles per second. Can you imagine? Typhoons are probably like 50 miles, 60 miles even, big ones right? And you know typhoons you hear “goooo” like low roaring sound, but this blast it was “shaaaaa...”

Keiko Nakamura
I was supposed to go to work on building rubble clean-up duty that day but I didn’t go because I had a stomach ache. My friend stopped by my house around 6 to get me, we were going to the duty together, but I decided I’d take a day off ... I got hibaku in my house which is about 2.5 mile from epicenter.

Nancy Smith
My mother had me out in the backyard in a rocking chair, watching flak because they burned the cane fields on the Island of Oahu and they have planes flying all the time ...I was watching the big puffs of smoke from the shooting, from the airplanes going by.

Kiyoshi Watanabe
On August 6th, I was in Hiroshima station. I was an employee of National railroad. I was in the station facility so it’s a little away from train platform, about 220 - 230 yards to the east, there was Kojin bridge, that’s where I was. I had just finished my graveyard shift working in the electric control room so I was inside the building, the building had collapsed but I somehow made it crawling out.

Airman Apprentice Charles Wilson
I had nineteen years, seven months, and six days in the Navy. I joined the Navy ten days before I was twenty-one. September the twenty-second, I think it was, 1936. And from training I went directly to Europe for almost two years. And then I came back and was in port ship and that’s where I was when Pearl Harbor happened. ...The ship that I was attached to but not aboard was over the keys across from Ford Island, actually where the hangar was, that’s where our planes were, and so it was sunk ...The USS Raleigh. ...I was attached to the Raleigh in the Aviation unit which meant I would be on Ford Island. But, the night before Pearl Harbor, I had a tonsillectomy over on the hospital ship.

Seaman Recruit William Harris
I was nineteen, almost twenty years old. I had been in the Navy thirteen months and had been through machinist school and had been aboard ship six months almost to the day. I had been assigned to mess detail about two weeks prior to December 7th, I was in the process of washing dishes when the attack started. And we didn’t expect it, heard the bombing on Ford Island and we didn’t know what to make of it. We thought it was some kind of war game or something. And within a couple of minutes we knew what it was. The general alarm went off and called for battle stations.
Haruki Kimura

I was a junior high school student in Osaka, but I wasn’t studying in school, I was out working in the metal factory in Sakai by mobilization order. In the morning around 7:00 I woke up and took train to Hiroshima station, went to Toyo Industry, that’s precursor of the company now Mazda. It was Monday, we were all gathered for a briefing in the auditorium on the second floor. It had started at 8:00. The lecturer had written “What is mass production?” on the black board. That’s when that tremendous red flash from behind, we all looked back to see where the flash was coming. The lecturer had said “What is mass production?” again, then about in ten seconds, “Blaaaaast!”

Fumiko Sasaki

On August 6th I was at the street train stop at Matobachou, waiting. August 6th was a Monday, so, the train was packed, people coming into the city from suburbs for building clearing duty. Two trains passed, I remember that. I was supposed to get on the train going to Ujima, except I couldn’t get on it because it was packed so I had to wait for the next train, and that’s when they dropped genbaku.

Barbara Jones

My dad he was in submarines, he was a medic, and we didn’t know exactly when he was supposed to be coming home. They were over on the west coast getting repairs. So my mother was quite anxious. And we normally went with her to Sunday mass at a little bitty church that was within walking distance from the little house that we lived in which was about a mile from Pearl Harbor. And instead of taking me with her she decided for some reason to leave me across the street at the neighbor’s house.

Private, First Class John Allen

The night before Pearl Harbor I played a dance job at the NCO Club. I was a piano player and played with an eighteen piece band, playing all these old tunes you wouldn’t remember – Glenn Miller and all that kind of stuff. ...Anyway, the next morning at about 8:30, I was deciding whether to go up to church, I was supposed to go to barracks, that’s where the Catholic chapel was. ...So I was going to get up and I heard this explosion and I thought, “Well the Navy is ... is having some kind of a mock drill or war games with us – a surprise drill or something.” So I didn’t pay much attention. But the second time I heard it I got out of the sack and I looked out the door and there was a plane come right over our shack – we were only about fifty yards from the hangar line ... and this one was strafing and he also dropped a bomb on the hangar and so part of the hangar came through our roof. So everybody split. ...We had turned in our rifles and our gas masks when we went off the alert just the day before. We had nothing to do but hide. That was all you could do. I found out later that my best friend got killed when he was on guard duty. He happened to get shot as they were strafing the hangar. ...Soon as that first wave was over our orders were to go out to the end of the field, which is about a mile long, and open up communications with Fort Shafter. They were very anxious to get our
planes off the ground. So, we got six off the ground that first morning, and we lost one of the first pilots in the war – Sterling. I think he was about twenty years old.

Seaman James Miller

After throwing my paper down … I don’t know why I did it, but I got up and went down below where I worked. And I never heard such a commotion in my life. Before I was thinking how safe I was to be over there at Pearl Harbor, leaving the Atlantic where the Germans were sinking ships. I got back to my gun stations and looked up and there was two planes coming down, they turned and come at my ship, and when they did I seen the rising sun. I thought, “Oh my God. These are not Germans. These are Japanese.”

Akihito Suzuki

I lost consciousness. If my father hadn’t been there with me I would have died. He searched for me, I don’t know for how long, but he found me. He tried everything to wake me up, pinched me, shook me, threw water over my head. I finally regained consciousness. …Father told me to go back home immediately, so I started walking, but it was hell on the bridge. So many dead people and alive people screaming and calling for water and for help, “Water! Please give me water!” People trying to cling onto me saying “Please help.” I tried to get away, stepped on dead bodies, I had to, there were no open spots on the ground to put my feet on. I regret now thinking “I shouldn’t have done that.” I wouldn’t have in normal circumstances but that time then I could only think about myself. My mother was home, she had been worried about us thinking something must have happened. When I called to her “Mom, I’m home,” she came rushing, saw me, and started running around the house, just round and round, she must have lost her mind for a second. …An hour or so after I got home I passed out again, and I heard later I had been in life or death condition for next ten or so days running high fever. My father came home that night, the sixth, about nine – thirty. That means he had been out during those hours inhaling all the contaminated air and dust.

Nurse Hitomi Tanaka

Truck after truck they brought loads of injured people. We didn’t have much room available so we stuck everybody in infectious disease ward and the hall ways, the bunkers. In the bunkers severely injured ones we lost them one after another just continuously. Soon enough we didn’t have anything to treat people with, no gauze, no bandages, people just lying there, pus oozing out so much maggots wriggling you can’t pick them. Inside the bunker there were lights but it was so dark and that smell, all those injured people dying but there’s nothing you can do about it, no treatments. We were just students.

Nurse Shirley Davis

We ran out on the porch and here this black smoke was billowing up from Pearl Harbor. And the noise, dear Lord, it became just perfectly terrible. …And now they started bringing these wounded in for casualties and they were on doors, sitting on chairs,
anything that would transfer a body. ...And this guy came to me, “Oh, nurse, that’s my First Sergeant. Come, come over here.” He was in a pool of blood. He had passed away. And I had to tell him that. And he was screaming and looked devastated. And I had a terrible lump in my throat, but anyway it continued.

Nurse Naomi Katou

Cut injuries we just put on chine, we went through that ointment so fast. We had chine in fifty-five gallon drum containers in the hospital storage, we had several hundred thousand of them in the storage. We’d scoop it right out of drum containers and apply to people, but it felt like we went through all the ointment in matter of minutes. With chine on, people’s faces were red and white, just like devil, red and white face dripping blood all over their bodies, it was indeed hell.

Third Class Petty Officer Richard Anderson

Got out of my bunk. I grabbed my shorts, already had my t-shirt on. I got up on the main deck and by that time, two dive bombers was going right over the top, Jap dive bombers, they’d already dropped their bombs on the Arizona over there. Well when the attack started, the Dobbin, she cut off our power and our steam ... so all the guns had to be manned by hand. We had five five-inch guns ... and I would have to say after that first flight of planes went over we opened fired. They were dropping on the battleship and zooming over the top of us and heading over, up over the mountain on the other side. Just as I got up the bridge, I looked back, and the Arizona went up. She exploded. Well, I was only a young man, and this was a frightening experience for me. ‘Cause that ship, when that ship exploded. ... I don’t know whether people felt it, it was just “Boom-mm.” I’d say we were about eight hundred yards away from her, right across the water and water carries sound. ...I run around the port side, the Utah, which was on the other side of the island, it was capsizing. The fellows ran down her bottom and one plane coming down was strafing ‘em. About three planes came down after our nest of ships. The one dropped a bomb close aboard the Dobbin, killed every man on the gun crew back there. Then dropped another bomb right off our stern, lifted our stern right out of the water. Boom! Down again. The Oklahoma started capsizing and she’s gone. The battleships ahead of her, they were on fire. We couldn’t get underway ‘til we got steam up because the Dobbin had cut our power off. ...The Curtis was on fire, a plane had crashed on her. The Raleigh was hit. Utah turned over. ...We started to get out the channel. The Nevada was coming this way. ...She took a torpedo and started to sink. As we got around her three more Jap planes come after us, tried to sink us in the channel. We shot the first one down. The second one, he dropped a bomb, was no good. Third one, he changed his mind. He took off.

Recruit Ryosuke Hayashi

About five minutes in chaos we arrived at the pier and walked into the city. We should have headed the opposite direction but we didn’t know that then, so we walked right into it. ...Houses were collapsed but they weren’t on fire yet. As we were walking, injured
people all around, burned and blackened, eyes popped out dangling down, dead. People were stuck up like pyramid, all dead. “Water!” “Hurts!” “Help!” That’s all you hear. No other words. “Hurts!” “Help!” “Water!” For those people, what other words were there to say really. We got to Genbaku Dorm at 10:50 a.m. It was still burning. I could see raging fire burning the city behind the dorm and there was no way we could precede further into the city from there. You’d see people coming toward you, escaping from the fire. It seemed like everyone was holding something in their hands. Wasn’t something in their hands, but those were their hands. Arms and hands dangling. They themselves didn’t even recognize how their arms and hands were probably because they were too busy running for their lives. “Please Mr. Soldier, where do we run to?” They asked us, but I don’t know, I can’t answer that. I was surprised when I saw this person’s face, there was no skin left on his face, the heat blast burned it completely off. Face of a human without skin is indescribable. You’ve never had an experience to see that of course. Fat was oozing out on the surface. Still, I tried to attend to them when I hear “Help!” Then after while military trucks came to rescue. People rush to get on it. People, they are all naked really. There were children trying to get onto the truck but nobody gives hands to them. We were right there standing there watching it, like spacing out or something, you know? What happens is that they all were burned so badly and while climbing on the truck trying to get on it their bodies get rubbed against and skin would just peel off. I wonder where they took those people. By the time we left the Dorm it was about 3 p.m. It was already becoming dark.

Keiko Nakamura

We went into the bunker when the air raid alarm came on but around seven-thirty alarm stopped. And at 8:15, “Pika!” …The blast blew me up in the air with the building and everything around there and I fell on the ground.

Nancy Smith

We left in our Model T Ford and drove to the main gate of the Navy yard to go to Mass, it was always in a big arena there. There were fire engines all over the place, probably shrapnel. It’s a wonder we made it through. But when we got there there wasn’t anybody there but a microphone saying for all men to report to their stations. …I remember the sounds of the planes going over and I remember mostly the black puffs. …We lived in new federal housing outside of Hickham Field. And the district chairman, he was on Hickham Field and he asked me did I remember them coming to the door and telling us that you can take one suitcase, no animals, nothing else, and that was for Mother and three children. …One suitcase. And we went up in the hills full of Japanese people.

Kiyoshi Watanabe

The injuries in thirty-eight places on my left side of the body, glass was stuck, blood all over. I had no idea what’s cut into where, how many places, I didn’t know. I had surgeries, more than ten times, I had them taken out. I don’t know if I was lucky, because
I was inside of the building I didn’t have any burns. …My friends, four of them got me on the gurney, carried me. They all were bleeding, but not injured like I was. Back then, there were girls working for student mobilization, so there was one girl. They carried me on the gurney, when it got too heavy, they’d drag it sliding on the rail, but they took me with them.

Airman Apprentice Charles Wilson
At eight o’clock, with the stick in my mouth, they came through and asked if anybody could run a motor launch. And I took the stick out of my mouth and the nurse says, “Oh no, you’re not going.” But they wound up with me. And we went out and they didn’t have a full crew for this fifty-foot motor launch, but we had three, and so I was at the helm and we went over and picked up nothing but people who were alive and brought ‘em back to the hospital ship. The USS Solace. …I never got past the Arizona ‘cause there was enough people swimming and everything, and the crew off of the Sacramento, in between the Solace and the Arizona, we picked up the bodies there. I had a full crew the rest of the time, including a doctor aboard the launch and we brought back ninety-six all together. There were some floaters. But then there was another crew out there with a bigger boat picking them up. So we were just trying to save those alive because there was no use for us to pick up and take dead bodies to the hospital ship. Pretty horrible I think.

Seaman Recruit William Harris
All together we got seven torpedoes. I was on the West Virginia. And we were out right in the middle of things and exposed, I suppose, more than any of them. The Oklahoma was just ahead of us, ‘course, it ended up capsizing. We almost capsized, but the damage control gang was able to counter-flood the tanks and kept us from going that far. And our lights went out, our phones went out, and we didn’t know what we were gonna do. We’re in the dark. We just waited ‘til somebody opened the hatch, hollered down to us that the word was to abandon the ship. So we went up and found our way to the top side of the quarter deck and about the time we got up there, we saw some dive-bombers heading right for us, so we ducked in the ship’s library which was the nearest door we could find and closed the door. And dug it down – that’s a term we use for securing a door. While we were in there … a really large, I think, five hundred pound bomb hit our number three turret which was maybe fifty feet away from where we were. It did not detonate … it was a dud. And we kept hearing explosions. Didn’t know what was going on. But finally it quieted down enough that we got out. Went across the ship we were tied up to, which was the USS Tennessee, and went over to Ford Island where we were directed by some Marines to go to the barracks.

Haruki Kimura
After probably an hour had past, I got outside and walked around, then someone brought some information. School has been destroyed, you are to go back to the school right away and rescue the Goshini. The picture of the Emperor. We walked … in full residual radiation, we walked all the way about 2.5 miles to central Hiroshima. The smoke, all around, and in the smoke we didn’t know what they were, but you see something like
ghosts. Hundreds of ghosts. We were walking in formation, freshmen and the second year students so all together probably two hundred of us. We were in better shape than military men. This old grandma, looking like a beaten-up rag, she walked up to us and said “You, Mister, Mister Student, avenge, please!” I remember saying something like “Avenge how?”

Fumiko Sasaki
At first I thought it was a power outage, I was thinking “Couldn’t get on the train again ... I’ll be late again ... just great.” ... I was blown all the way to the Aragami bridge. There was a tree right next to the air raid bunker there by the bridge. When I came back to consciousness I was laying on the ground, laying there with a tree branch as a pillow.

Barbara Jones
So Mom went walking down to the church and I forget how many minutes after that, there was all this noise and terrible smells. And they were flying down our road. ... The neighbor lady could see them and had us all huddled together ... but it was just chaos and confusion. Well, soon as they cleared out of there, about 8:15 I guess, my mom came and she found me. And we just got in the car and started going.

Kentaro Sato
My wife is also a hibakusha from Kuroyama area. She came home from school, her white blouse had black dots with the black rain. “You should have taken your blouse off. This is not going to come off easily!” She remembered her mother scolding her. Black rain like that it must had been August 6th. And mid-May she had abdominal pain. “My abdomen hurts, my abdomen hurts” she said. ... She said “You know, if the doctor calls only you to the room it must be a bad news. But if he calls me in too then that means I must be going home soon. Tomorrow or day after tomorrow!” And the doctor came, said “Thank you for coming Mr. S. Please come in. Mrs. S you too please. Let’s talk in the other room over there.” My wife got so excited. “Oh I can go home soon!” She was so glad. But he said, “Pancreatic cancer. Since it’s already metastasized to liver we can’t operate. No chance of full recovery.” ... So the medication started and the pain stopped. But she had no appetite, her arms and legs were heavy and tired all the time. ... We live on tenth floor of city apartment, we had a little stool out in the patio, and on August twenty-ninth she stepped on that stool and jumped.

Seaman James Miller
It was terrible, all that fire and the water was on fire, and guys jumping off ships – not off my ship – but off the Arizona and all the ships over there. It was just terrible, and if you went out there to get one of ’em, why you’d just get him by the hand, that’s all you got.
Akihito Suzuki
I regained consciousness in about ten days. Two-thirds of my back and both my arms and legs, where joints are, I got burns. Symptoms were right around from tenth day, hair started falling off, bleeding from gum, diarrhea. And I had fever, doesn't get too high but constant. I had rash, reddish black, all over my body and on my face too. My father had pretty much the same symptoms. He died after about three months. I somehow made it. Maybe because I was young, I don't know. ...So about half a year had passed and I went back to school. But I constantly had throbbing pain in my head and I couldn't focus, my grades came down and I didn't feel like doing anything. That was every day. ...I tried to commit suicide three times. It's like, those feelings of guilt and blame, those come up in my head when my body is sick or not doing well. I killed my classmates, twenty-three friends, with that rock, paper, and scissors. Friends I had been close to, I remembered them, I felt so guilty, all those years, they have been in my heart.

◆

Nurse Hitomi Tanaka
Nursing students were the bottom of the hierarchy right? So washing bandages and gauze was our job, wash them with our hands, you have to stroke them like this. And if you as much as threw anything away you'd be scolded at, because there's no gauze or bandages period, you had to wash them and reuse them. ...But once in a while on our hands we had like a secondary infection, little blisters came up on our hands. It eventually went away but some of the older nursing students had those blisters on their backs because they piggybacked patients to transfer. ...That's secondary hibaku, of course we found out that's what it was years later.

◆

Nurse Shirley Davis
And that night ... we think the Japs are back. So we're running from upstairs. The doctors and the ambulatory patients, no elevator, no electricity, little flashlights with blue cellophone ...Some doctor said, "They're back!" And I had chosen a doctor to kill me. ...Remember the rape of Nanking? We talked about that. So I had chosen a doctor and he agreed. But they didn't come. ...Right after that, well ... we were nervous until May and we were on a strict alert. ...And they kept having air raid alarms. They would come over, "This is a real air raid alarm. Take cover." Then the hospital, oh my God, we'd all run. Everybody always felt safer at their place of duty when those alarms went off.

◆

Nurse Naomi Katou
The lobby was filled with dead bodies, mountains of dead bodies. I would try walking through the valley of those mountains. "Nurse, Nurse!" People call for me but all I could do was to encourage them saying "Hang in there, bear with me here." Hospital itself wasn't functioning anymore. Gas was broken, building was destroyed, no medicines. So they sent us back home.
Third Class Petty Officer Richard Anderson

We got out and we had orders to proceed north. And I’m not ashamed to say the tears were running down my face, I was scared. The friends of mine on the bridge, they didn’t say nothing. They looked at each other, just had to turn their heads away. They were numb. I know I was.

Recruit Ryosuke Hayashi

The next morning we went back out to the city, with whatever clothes we had on, no bath of course, dirty. Until 13th we went out every day and sort of triaged. Dead bodies were to be burned, injured but alert people, we’d write their names and addresses on piece of roof tiles or something on the street and have them hold onto that. People started coming to look for family members, but the faces, they were burned and their faces don’t look like they used to anymore. Hibakusha would call to them, “Uncle! Uncle! Here! It’s me!” Or, “Please, aren’t you my aunt so and so?” Then they finally recognize it’s their family members they are looking for and go “Oh my God, is that you? Oh, your face! What on earth has happened to you?” They break down in tears. I can’t forget those scenes even now. They start talking to their hands, you see? They stare at their hands and say something like, “So and so, I’m coming very soon.” That’s how you can tell, once they start looking at their hands they won’t last much longer. Gradually color of their faces change and they die.

Keiko Nakamura

The older students who had worked on cleaning up the school, freshman and sophomores, they were all out on the streets working on duty, everybody was killed. The few who survived went to the epicenter to look for anything, any little thing that had belonged to their dead classmates. I had a stomach ache that day, but I don’t know, I didn’t have time to think about it. I didn’t even notice pieces of glass had gone into my body. I just helped people. And the next day on I helped burn dead bodies. I stayed and guarded the fire so it didn’t extinguish. Injured people who were staying at the shrine and at the kindergarten, they died, constantly, so we dug holes at play-ground and burned bodies in those holes.

Nancy Smith

There were Japanese who were living on the island of Oahu. Probably civilians. But in this housing was a Japanese lady who had married a Navy man. And when we left, we went out to her home and we had one bed, a double bed for the four of us. And every time we’d sit down to eat the little Japanese lady would take some rice and put it in our hair and say different prayers for us. ...Japanese, that’s very vivid. ...I don’t think that really sunk in with us then. It was more survival at that time.

Kiyoshi Watanabe

Losing one eye, scars all over the body, I just couldn’t bear the thought of going out in public. So I thought about suicide. My father had said to me “It was good.” I thought
“What? Good? “Here’s your son all bloody and messed up here.” “What’s good about that?” I thought, “How can he say that?” But he said, “Try to turn it around, think what would have happened if those injuries were deeper, what if you lost both eyes?” “It’s good, right?” … It didn’t sink in right away, I’d been mad at him thinking “How selfish can he be for saying such a thing to me!” But after a couple of days I kind of got to thinking, “You know, instead of losing both eyes, losing sight completely, I can still see, and that is a lucky thing if I think about it.” And when I came to that point, for the first time the feeling of wanting to die disappeared.

Seaman Recruit William Harris
Back at the barracks, we all mustered in, see who was surviving. And we got work parties and I went back to the ship on a detail to fight fires. That was probably about nine-thirty or ten o’clock in the morning. …And we didn’t have any fire hoses because we had no pumps. So we used buckets, it’s called the bucket brigade, and spent the rest of the day there. We finally got relieved, I think, about dusk that evening.

Haruki Kimura
What this grandma said to me has stayed with me all these years. It’s more like, I didn’t get physical damage but I received more damage mentally. This country America, whom I had always liked very much and so longed for, committed such killing. And being told to “Avenge!” but having no means near to do so. And the war ended without any avenges done of course.

Fumiko Sasaki
I felt like I was inside of sand curtain. Last I remembered it’d been another sunny hot summer day, but what it was, was I was inside of the stem part of the mushroom cloud. It gathered all the sand and dusts in Hiroshima and blown it up to the sky making that mushroom shape cloud. …On the ground, inside of sand curtain, it was like eclipse, it lost the light of that sunny summer day. “How has this happened?” I slowly stood up. My face was covered with blood, all the hair sticking up like I had the strongest permanent done. Some parts were melted like coal tar. …I noticed I was holding onto something, it’s my textbook and lunch box. Everything else had been blown away, shoes, the sack, but textbook and lunch box I was holding them very close to me, that’s why those things had made it.
Conciliation/Peace:

Hiroshima Survivor (10)
My brother, he had a wife and a son, but he lost them to genbaku. He got remarried and now has new family, but he never talks about his previous family, he never talks about what’s in his heart. The sorrow these people hold, everything had to be in comparison to the life before they lost their own father and mother, brothers and sisters, and it is very difficult for them to just pour their hearts out and talk about these things. And these are the people, withholding the sorrow always in their hearts, who grew up and worked to rebuild this city. So who can talk and pass on the truth?

Pearl Harbor Survivor (10)
You know who they are? They’re survivors.

Hiroshima Survivor (11)
In human society, everybody lives not being able to judge. No matter how much we talk and discuss, nobody can judge black or white. Then how do we know what’s right? By listening to someone who’s already shown the way in the past, you have to decide how you should be. That’s what I think.

Pearl Harbor Survivor (11)
To be a Pearl Harbor Survivor, you had to be at Pearl Harbor. … You had to be either a military person, either Navy or Army or Marine or Coast Guard or whatever. You had to be in service the morning of December 7th within two or three miles. Now if you’re up in the air, tough, you’re not. And if you’re over at the big island vacationing at the Army retreat over there, no way. If you’re in a boat or a big cruiser, five miles out, no way. You had to be physically within two or three miles of Oahu where Pearl Harbor was located.

Hiroshima Survivor (12)
Back then, you had to have at least two witnesses to apply for hibakusha certification, but it had been more than thirty years and I didn’t know anybody. I had almost given up but people at Tokyo Hidankyou helped me. And I received hibakusha certification. Until then, I had never thought myself as a hibakusha.

Hiroshima Survivor (13)
At that time information from the newspaper just said it was “New type of bomb.” “New type of weapon.” Nobody knew about radiation of genbaku. There was however the media, and of course people’s words of mouths, that reported that there won’t be any trees and flowers growing back from Hiroshima soil at least for seventy-five years. Rumors then all over town were, “It must be poison, people who had been in Hiroshima got poison in their systems.” Understandable, because people with severe burns in neck, back, head, toe, all over the body were moaning in pain but still alive, whereas people with no visible burns or injuries what so ever all of a sudden just dropped dead.
Hiroshima Survivor (14)
Sixty-one years after hibaku Tokyo metropolitan government let us have a physical checkup twice every year. I go to that, I don’t miss it. You know they say that we hibakusha are more likely to get cancer, well, that’s true. Cancer, you have lung cancer, stomach cancer, liver, all kinds. Now at present time I do have prostate cancer. ...Twice a year they had been doing marker test so that they can detect cancer, numbers were looking good but gradually numbers started increasing and eventually went over the border. So they rushed me to take detailed tests and they found it was already stage two.

Hiroshima Survivor (15)
I got married and when my first son was born I didn’t understand why he had that stuff grown on the side of his abdomen. ...Right around this time last year Hidankyo had an international conference. At the conference I heard this hibakusha talk about her child being born with keloid. Finally it hit me, “That’s it.” “That’s what my son had.” All I had was bleeding from the gums, but those things coming out were manifesting on my children.

Hiroshima Survivor (16)
My daughter, she has three children, my three grandchildren. When my daughter told me that her baby is sick I said to take her to a large hospital. Later she called me back crying, said the baby might be suffering from leukemia and that they told her the baby at four months old might not make it through. I told my daughter, “You are a parent and you need to be strong now.”

Hiroshima Survivor (17)
My grandchild, it’s been six years since he passed away. He became sick in sophomore year of junior high. brain tumor, they couldn’t find the cause. They said he wouldn’t last a year but we wanted them to do everything they could, so I sent money to support. He had seven surgeries in three years at University. ...They’d gone as far as they could get affected issues out. He had radiation therapy, so he had no hair when he passed away, but the nurses there had taken care of that making him look decent. It was nice that they did that for us.

Hiroshima Survivor (18)
Hibakusha, as you know, would get fired when people find out that were hibakusha. Can’t get jobs once people know about you, can’t marry, people would break engagement once they find out you are hibakusha. That happened, so many hibakusha wouldn’t tell about themselves.

Hiroshima Survivor (19)
I didn’t want to talk about it. But when you go to school, kids, they ask you, “What happened to you?” I’d say “Oh yeah, I was gotten by genbaku, was gotten in Hiroshima.” I didn’t understand what genbaku was you know? ...I had nothing that’s inferior to them and I was never bullied or isolated by others for that. Kids at school I could tell, but when it comes to marriage? I couldn’t.
Pearl Harbor Survivor (12)
I didn’t want to talk about it. It was … if I got to talking about it, it brought back memories and what-not. I don’t know. I was a nervous wreck when I got back, no doubt of that.

Hiroshima Survivor (20)
People who didn’t get hurt physically, those kids, their lives after that, the psychological damage … it’s never the same as life used to be with parents, brothers and sisters. So, those who are supposed to be lucky that they survived, they grow up going through years with those damages.

Pearl Harbor Survivor (13)
Remember, we had no post-trauma treatment. … They would just grin and bear it and I think maybe that that’s why I never have recovered from the memory. That’s why it’s very emotional for me.

Hiroshima Survivor (21)
Of course there are physical injuries, burns, cancer, leukemia and genetic damages. Along with all of those conditions there are those injuries to hearts, we need to seek ways to get across to people about the damages of genbaku. … We need to seek ways to promote understanding.

Pearl Harbor Survivor (14)
We were defending our country and ourselves and our way of life and everything. And I think the whole country knew that. That event at Pearl Harbor united the country like you never saw before, probably never see again.

Hiroshima Survivor (22)
You kids, when you get hungry you go, “Mom, I’m hungry! I want snacks!” Right? But when I was like your age we used to say, “We wouldn’t want until we win.” You get smacked if someone heard you say “I’m hungry.” They’d yell at you, “Aren’t you a Japanese man?” And make you repent, “We wouldn’t want until we win.”

Pearl Harbor Survivor (15)
During the Depression it was very important to do what you could to feed yourself and your family. There were some people that had plenty of money, but the majority of people at all levels were in really dire straits. Some were downright down-and-out. So the important thing was to do what you could to better your life. And then the war came along and it was the same situation. So I think we were a very serious group but I think that the Great Generation title given to us was not so much that we were different or better than anyone else. It was just a necessity and a desire and a dream.

Hiroshima Survivor (23)
It’s the order from country. You absolutely had to do exactly as you were told. You’d get caught if you ran. For the emperor everyone fights selflessly. Kaibiden is nothing but the school for the war. You’d get trained there and be sent off to the frontline. Someone got
into the training center a month ahead of you? He'd be a senior soldier, order from the
senior soldier was the order from Chin, you may not know this but Chin is the emperor,
see? The orders from the emperor, absolute obedience is all there is to it. ...Miserable that
is how the time had been then.

Pearl Harbor (16)
I was frightened, frightened to death. But being trained to do these jobs, I went right to do
the work although I was scared and things happen, you do things to protect yourself.

Hiroshima Survivor (24)
I would have volunteered to go to the front if I were a man. I changed my job to work at
the fabric factory because I believed it was for the country. But I heard a man who was a
soldier say he was brain washed and deceived. I was disappointed to hear that. Those
people in Yasukuni shrine died deceived also? No, people went and died believing it was
for Japan.

Pearl Harbor Survivor (17)
We were very proud of being in the military. My father cried when they told him that he
was going to be discharged before his twenty years were up. He begged to be able to stay.
And, he was very proud.

Hiroshima Survivor (25)
You can imagine the guilt, to survive. It troubled me so very much, why couldn't I die
with everybody believing in Japan's victory in this war? That's why I didn't want to talk
about my hibakusha in Hiroshima, it meant, I am sorry I survived.

Pearl Harbor Survivor (18)
For the men who you were with there develops a feeling of comradeship. More than
comradeship, it's like you're almost blood related. ...I still think of those people and I try
to remember things about them. Most of them are gone now.

Pearl Harbor Survivor (19)
It always remains. A lot of times I sob ... not only cry, but I really sob about it ... of
different things in the world ... war, besides that.

Pearl Harbor Survivor (20)
I told my own children, I said, "Years later I just hope you never have to go through
something like that."

Pearl Harbor Survivor (21)
I feel bad for them boys going over yonder to war. And I know they's young ... about
like me when I was eighteen maybe a little older than that. But I feel sorry for 'em over
there.
Pearl Harbor Survivor (22)
I’d like to thank them for their commitment and their service, because it’s a terrible thing to do ... somebody go over and have to fight.

Pearl Harbor Survivor (23)
You’re giving back all that this country’s ever given to you ... which is an awful lot.

Pearl Harbor Survivor (24)
We support you. Everybody supports you. Hope you come home safely. We’re proud of what you’re doing.

Pearl Harbor Survivor (25)
And I hope that when they come back they all strive to find some way to establish peace in this country and the world.

Pearl Harbor Survivor (26)
I think there’s a lot of opportunity out there for everybody. There are opportunities that we don’t even know about yet. I’d like to see my generation get active in choosing who governs them and not just sit around and complain. ...Go vote.

Hiroshima Survivor (26)
Many of us hibakusha think of it as our destiny. We all have this thought that we have to raise our voices otherwise it will be disaster.

Pearl Harbor Survivor (27)
Roosevelt said, “They awakened a sleeping giant.” But I don’t want us to ever be a sleeping giant. And I want them, people to know the importance of that shock and that horrific day is getting less and less attention. And as long as I live they’re not going to forget it.

Hiroshima Survivor (27)
They say life is a repeat, we repeat just when we forget. We might do the same when hibakusha die out. I walk on such a life.

Pearl Harbor Survivor (28)
Our motto is “Remember Pearl Harbor. Keep America alert.”

Hiroshima Survivor (28)
They say there are more than enough weapons in this world at this point to destroy earth many times you know? To prevent that kind of termination in this life that has been passed on I would go out there and talk about my hibaku experience, not just talk but perform songs and poetries with young people, pictures ... raise it up to the art forms and connect to the world on that level ... “No More Hiroshimas.”
Pearl Harbor Survivor (29)
I think that one of the biggest factors that’s affecting our decision-making is having control of atomic weapons. I think that if we were to just get rid of that it would be a blessing for the whole world.

Hiroshima Survivor (29)
Someday, once nuclear is again used, people will have the same fate as we had, even worse than us probably. We have to prevent that with all cause. For that goal we have to tell our hibaku experience, that’s why I tell my story. We who experienced it speak out that we want you to live in the safe world.

Pearl Harbor Survivor (30)
I wish we could find a way to have peace, so we didn’t have to have any wars and conflicts. Probably unrealistic because we’ve never been able to do it so far. But that would be my wish.

Hiroshima Survivor (30)
No discrimination, all of us are just human, and we have to live in the spirit of equality and reciprocity. We can’t be snobby just because we are better at something than other countries, all of us; our cultures develop by helping each other.

Pearl Harbor Survivor (31)
I hope everybody, people like you and like my kids and everybody else ... I want you to have a good life and hope nothing happens. I hope that everybody gets that dream come true.

Hiroshima Survivor (31)
Same for my children, I want them to have fun living their lives in the ways they want to live. But there’s more to life than just to have fun. Contribute a little to society, have fun, and stay healthy and rich in your heart until you die.

The End
Appendix B

Survey Questionnaire, FAU and Morikami Museum

With Their Voices Raised: Survey

Please CHECK all that apply

1) Age:
   ___ Under 18  ___ 18-24  ___ 25-34  ___ 35-44  ___ 45-54  ___ 55-64  ___ 65-74  ___ 75+

2) Gender:  ___ Male  ___ Female

3) Are you a veteran of the United States military?  ___ Yes  ___ No

4) After watching the documentary theatre presentation of With Their Voices Raised, do you think documentary theatre is an effective tool for research dissemination?
   ___ Probably  ___ Definitely

Please CIRCLE the best response

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In regards to the performance (circle a #)</th>
<th>Not At All</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Very Much</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall, to what degree were you absorbed in this performance? Did you connect with the material on stage?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>To what extent did this performance allow you to better understand the Japanese and American experience on Dec 7, 1941 and Aug 6, 1945?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>As a project of peace, did you think this performance promoted cross-cultural understanding?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you think With Their Voices Raised would be an effective teaching tool if used in a high-school setting to educate students about the Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima bombings?</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>3</td>
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Comments and Reflections:

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________________

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your response will benefit my doctoral dissertation: Documentary Theatre: Pedagogue and Healer With Their Voices Raised. I hope to see you again at the theater! - Kate Morris -
Appendix C

Survey Questionnaire, Miami Dade College

With Their Voices Raised: Survey

Please CHECK all that apply

1) Ethnicity
   ___Hispanic ___Black non-Hispanic ___White non-Hispanic ___Asian ___Native American

2) Age:
   ___Under 18 ___18-24 ___25-34 ___35-44 ___45-54 ___55-64 ___65-74 ___75+

3) Gender: ___Male ___Female

4) Are you a veteran of the United States military? ___Yes ___No

4) After watching the documentary theater presentation of With Their Voices Raised, how likely are you to go see another theater documentary?
   ___Not likely ___Most likely ___Definitely likely

Please CIRCLE the best response

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>In regards to the performance (circle a #)</th>
<th>Not At All</th>
<th>Very Much</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall, to what degree were you absorbed in this performance? Did you connect with the material on stage?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent did this performance allow you to better understand the Japanese and American experience on Dec 7, 1941 and Aug 6, 1945?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a project of peace, did you think this performance promoted cross-cultural understanding?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you think With Their Voices Raised is an effective teaching tool to bring history “alive” for providing education to high-school and college students about the Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima bombings?</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments and Reflections:

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your response will benefit my doctoral dissertation: Documentary Theatre: Pedagogue and Healer With Their Voices Raised. I hope to see you again at the theater! - Kate Morris -
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