



Wagner College
Holocaust Center
INSPIRE COURAGE



Presents

St. George Theatre

The Wagner College Holocaust Center
and The Wagner College Theater
proudly present

STATEN ISLAND
AGAINST
HATE
SI LOVE ORG

RISING UP:
YOUNG HOLOCAUST HEROES

Directed by Mickey Tennenbaum

APRIL 18 @ 10 AM

ST. GEORGE THEATER

35 Hyatt Street, Staten Island

for grades 4-12

for rsvp and information email: holocaust.center@wagner.edu

In honor of Margot Capell. And in memory of Rabbi Romi Cohen, Gabi Held, Rachel Roth, Egon Salmon and Hannah Steiner

Warsaw Ghetto Uprising

Jude

St. George Theatre, Staten Island, 2024
In honor of the 80th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising

The play—dedicated to six Staten Island Holocaust survivors-- was co-authored in 2018

by *Theresa McCarthy, Martin Moran and Lori Weintrob*. It was commissioned with the support of the Leonard B. Kahn Foundation.

STUDY GUIDE

An Educator's Guide to Framing the Piece in the Classroom

Introduction

RIISING UP: YOUNG HOLOCAUST HEROES is an original play that seeks to address the question: “How do we resist hate and prejudice?” The play follows Tali, a student, who shares with her friends and neighbors a curiosity about how young people their age survived the hardships of World War II and the Holocaust. Through Tali’s eyes, we experience the true testaments of survivors who provide us with a timely message of unity and resistance.

There were many kinds of resistance in the Holocaust, from refusing to offer the Nazi salute to smuggling food to fighting the German soldiers with weapons. All kinds of resistance require courage. Often they require empathy for others who are different. What lessons can we learn from their experience of persecution to help us today? We hope that students will see themselves in Tali, and that they will be inspired to uncover stories of the Holocaust from the shadows, and share their discoveries with their peers..

Before the Play

Before attending the play, consider asking your students the following questions:

1. *Who is a “survivor”?*
2. *What is the first thing you think of when you think of the Holocaust?*
3. *What tools did your teachers use to teach about prejudice, anti-Semitism and hate?*
4. *Do you think you could teach your peers about the Holocaust?*

Encourage discussion, but be sure to moderate it closely. These questions don’t have definitive answers, and that’s alright. It’s valuable for your students to do a self-inventory on their relationship with the Holocaust before attending the show. Please consider using the following texts, graphics, and timeline to spark discussion among your students.

Theatre Exercise One:

Divide your students into groups of 3-5, and provide each group with a set of markers and a piece of paper. Assign one of the following words to your students, and have them work with their group to write 5 words that they associate with their assigned word, such as:

- FAMILY, HOLIDAY, CELEBRATE, LOSS, LEGACY, EMPATHY, COURAGE, CHOICE

Once the groups have created their lists, challenge them to create a 2-5 minute scene that uses those five words. Have the groups perform for each other, and follow it up with a discussion on why they created the skits they did, and what all of the skits had in common.

MEET THE SURVIVORS: OUR NEIGHBORS

What is Kristallnacht?

Both Margot Capell (now age 102) and Egon Salmon, Jewish children in Germany, were age 13 and 9 when Hitler came to power in 1933. Their friends slowly stopped speaking to them

and, with the passage of the 1935 Nuremberg Laws, they could no longer go to many schools, movie theaters or parks.



READ THIS PART ALOUD:

Oh it wasn't taken seriously. That was the whole problem...as I think back. The sad fact that nobody took it serious. "So what, some marching around in uniform, want to show off. It'll pass." That's it. It'll pass. That was the attitude that prevailed right along. It's hard to understand, but that's the way it was.

--Margot (Wolf) Capell, 1937, age 17 in photo

DISCUSS:

WHY WERE VERY FEW GERMANS WILLING TO HELP
THEIR JEWISH NEIGHBORS?

WHAT NAZI IDEAS MIGHT HAVE APPEALED TO SOME GERMANS?

Margot and Egon were eyewitnesses to Kristallnacht, known as the "Night of Broken Glass." On November 9-10, 1938, the Nazis and Hitler Youth broke

store windows, burned over 250 places of worship and killed 91 Jews. Egon's father was one of 20,000 Jewish men arrested by the SS and sent to Dachau, a Nazi concentration camp. After his father was released, Egon's family were not accepted to come to the United States at first, which had put up many barriers to Jewish refugees of Nazism.



Egon Salmon: 1938, Germany, age 14: Soon after Jews lost their citizenship status, Egon's passport was marked as "Jewish" by the Nazi government. He was initially turned back from the U.S. and Cuba but later used this passport to come to Staten Island in 1940.

Theatre Exercise Two:

Directors, designers, and actors are often challenged with portraying fantastical moments on stage. From staging scenes with ghosts to time travel, *RISING UP: YOUNG HOLOCAUST HEROES* features many moments that require a lot of imagination to achieve. Start a discussion with your students on how they would stage the following moments:

- Tali (a grad student researching the Holocaust) encounters haunted memories of survivors
- The characters in the play take the audience from time period to time period, sometimes in the same scene!
- Actors are required to play multiple characters back to back

Did Anyone Fight Back Against the Nazis?

Ruchama Rachel (Rothstein) Roth (upper left, at age 13 in 1940) moved with her family into the largest Ghetto in Europe, in Warsaw, Poland. She studied Chemistry, but later was forced to work for the Nazis. She was able to help in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of April 19, 1943, when almost 1,000 young people--including many women--heroically fought off German soldiers for 21 days. Defeated, they were sent to Majdanek and then Auschwitz, both Nazi death camps.



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READ THESE LINES ALOUD.

As you read, try to act out this part. Tap your shirt and boots to show where things were hidden.

And we were ready to resist. And once I went on the street, I met a friend. A friend that I went together with him to the theatre and to chemistry courses. And I asked him where have y--(Oh I am so happy you are still alive) I ask him where have you been? He was on the Aryan side. He was blond. He was blue eyed. But he says is very difficult to hide there...They used to chase the "Jew, Jew, Jew". Then the Gestapo came after you and they took you to Gestapo. And he came back and he is in the resistance. He is working on the place outside the ghetto in the airport O-Kin-Che Polish airport, for the German. And he is smuggling arms. So I told him, listen, so I told him I want to help also. He said no you are a girl, you don't know, they will catch you they will kill you. But finally I convince him and he promise he is going to take me. And I-I-I went out from the house very early in the morning, everybody was sleeping and I came to the gate and he took me in. and I said I don't want to know who will give me, what is the name of the resistance, who in case they will capture me. If I don't know, I will not say. They put me in the toilet to clean the toilets.... and then Paul came in and gave me a little package. It was a a gun, a little gun. And I put the gun in my...I had high shoes, boots. And then somebody gave me two packages and told me to put this in my coat on my body, on here, under the dress in the coat. And then when the work was finish. The German check me and he founded butter and bread and he smack me, but he didn't found this (the gun)...

Jews Also fought in partisan units against the Nazis. Romi Cohn, age 16 in 1944, got false papers under the name Jan Kovic and used them to escape to take up weapons in the Slovakian resistance movement.



What were conditions in Hungary?

Gabi Held

READ THIS PART ALOUD:

And we were at the camp and one day they told us everybody get out. Oh but before I forget, every morning we had to get up at 4 or five in the morning and stand in front of the barracks because the German soldiers came there at 9 o'clock and counted the people. Every single morning. We got up early in the morning and we were waiting until they came to count the people then we went back to the barracks. So many people died and it was so natural to see them just collapse and they put them in a wheelbarrow and put it outside the gate. I was standing always beside the gate when transport came and I told them "maybe you have some food" to throw us some, whatever they could give me. --Gabi Held, who later became a boxer in Hungary after the war.



Hannah Steiner with her boyfriend Abraham. They were separated during the war when Hannah was in Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen with her mother. Hannah Steiner and her mother have a remarkable story because they were not separated at all throughout the war. Until her mother died after liberation, they did not part. After the war, Hannah and Abraham found each other once again. They have a beautiful love story, for the type of love her and her husband shared could have been taken from a film. After marrying in Israel, they moved to Staten Island.

What is the Holocaust?

By 1945, the Germans and their collaborators killed 6 million European Jews as part of the "Final Solution," the Nazi policy to murder the Jews of Europe.

The six death camps, including Auschwitz, were in Poland where one-third of the Jews of Europe once lived. After World War II began, Jews were placed in overcrowded and unsanitary ghettos and forced to work for the Third Reich. Thousands died of hunger and disease and many more of Nazi brutality and violence. Only 10% survived. After September 1941, with the onset of the Final Solution of the Jewish Question—genocide— all Jews were required to wear the yellow Star of David. They were murdered in pits hidden in the forests or deported to the death camps. Many Jews did resist -- spiritually, through cultural organizations, or in armed uprisings.

Almost 2 million non-Jewish Poles were also killed, along with other non-Jews persecuted by the Nazis. What *different* groups were persecuted? Mentally and Physically Disabled and Roma (“gypsies” were also targeted for genocide. In addition, Nazis persecuted and killed thousands of Communists and homosexuals. Afro-Germans were sterilized so they could not have children and many were killed.

We suggest taking your students through the following timeline, to make sure that they understand the basic principles of the Holocaust:

1900–1933 Rise of Fascism

1915: Armenian Genocide

1922, October: Benito Mussolini’s National Fascist Party “March on Rome”

1923, November 9: Beer Hall Putsch–Nazi Party Attempt to Overthrow the Weimar Republic. While in jail, Hitler writes Mein Kampf.

1929, June 12: Anne Frank born in Frankfurt, Germany.

1933, January: Adolf Hitler appointed chancellor

1933–1939 Nazi Segregation Policies

1933, February: Reichstag Fire

1933, April: Boycott of Jewish-owned businesses last 3 days

1935, June: Revision of Paragraph 175 facilitates persecution of homosexuals

1935: September: Nuremberg Race Laws (Margot Capell)

1936: Olympic Games with Jesse Owens

1938, March: German annexation of Austria

1938, July: Evian Conference –32 countries refuse to accept Jewish refugees

1938, September 29: Munich Agreement

1938: Kristallnacht “Night of Broken Glass”

1939, May 13: Voyage of the St. Louis (Egon Salmon)

1939–1941: War, Ghettos, T-4 Program and Killing Fields

1939, September 1: Germany invades Poland

1940, November: Warsaw Ghetto sealed

1941, June 22: Germany Invades Soviet Union

1941, August 24: Hitler orders end of centralized “Euthenasia” (T-4) killings after Bishop von Galen denounces murder of the disabled.

1941, December 7: Japan bombs Pearl Harbor

1941, September 1: “Jewish Badge” required in Germany and Poland

1941, September: Babi Yar (Einsatzgruppen murder 34,000 Jews outside Kiev)

1942–1945: Death Camps and Final Solution

1942, January 20: Wannsee Conference with Heydrich

1942, March 1: Auschwitz-Birkenau Camp Established

1942, July: Gassing Operations begin at Treblinka

1943, April 19–May: Warsaw Ghetto Uprising

1944, March: Germany troops occupy Hungary; by summer, 400,000 Hungarian Jews deported (Hannah Steiner)

1944, June 6: D-Day Invasion led by American, Canadian and British forces

1945, April 29–30: American forces liberate Dachau

1945, August 6: U.S. drops bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki

1945–Present: Genocide and Human Rights

1951: United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide

1994, April 6–July: Rwandan Genocide: 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus murdered in 100 days

2016: U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry denounces genocide by Islamic State (IS) of Yazidi Christian and Shia Muslim groups in Iraq and Syria

During the Play

Allow your students to fully engage and respond to the play by having them turn off their phones, and tune into the world of the Survivors. This might be an overwhelming experience for some students, so be sure to keep in tune with the class and how they are responding. There is nothing wrong with politely escorting a student out of the performance hall should they need a moment to catch their breath.

After the Play

Encourage reflection and discussion with your students by using the following questions and activities as a guideline:

Free-Response Questions:

1. At the beginning of the show, the main character Tali sings her question song in which she “wants to know”. What does she want to know and why is it so important that she knows? In what ways can you relate yourself to Tali and find similarities?
2. Recall upon ONE survivor monologue from the show: Would you be able to act the way he/she acted in the face of danger? Why?

3. The play takes place during Passover, a time to honor when Jews escaped from slavery in Egypt. Why is this an appropriate setting for the play to take place?
4. In the play, a group of students get together to discuss the Holocaust and act upon what they learned. Do you believe there is strength in numbers versus acting by yourself?
5. At the end of the show, Tali asks the audience for ways to resist hate and spread love. What would your answer be? What are important issues today (regarding hate) that need to be confronted?

THEATRE EXERCISE THREE:

OPTION A: Provide the following THREE monologues to your students, and give them the option to choose one of them to study and then perform for the class. When studying the monologues, ask the students to do the following:

- Highlight the “beats”, or everytime the character goes from talking about one thing to another
- Underline the words that are most important to communicate to the audience
- Write down questions that you might have about the character that are not addressed in the monologue

OPTION B: Have the student research ONE survivor, and challenge them to write their own monologue as the survivor introducing themselves to their classmates.

MONOLOGUES:

HANNAH: [In Budapest, Hungary, in 1941] “You know that is funny because he- they left me back there - but don’t laugh. In Hungary they didn’t let the girl go out with the boy alone, especially when she was 16... barely 16. You didn’t... just with a chaperone. So we then talked one day and with my mother and we went dancing. There they danced, you know - - the parents all the parents, sat on the side or parents or chaperone you know... on the side. So he went to my

mother and asked its very hot, if he can go somewhere to have a cold drink. So my mother said ok we going. So we went like a Luna Park you know like a - you know where the rides are. And we sat down by a table and we drank - I don't know what - cold, and a boy came with a - they used to go around with flowers you know - with a little - flower - violet... you know and he came to the table and my husband [Abraham] bought a bouquet of violets but Violet is my name, because violet - my name is a flower - you know violet so he bought me a violet... and he took us home and he asked if he could come to see me.”

GABY: A typical Shabbas was like I had to take the, Friday afternoon I had to take the, my mother always made *cholent* for Shabbas and, of course, chicken soup, and eh, she couldn't make it at home so we brought it to the, we brought it to the baker as he was baking bread, so he put the whole pot inside the oven. It was there from Friday night 'til the next morning. So I used to run pick it up, pick it up eh, Shabbas after shul, used to go and get the *cholent* and the pot, and it was a funny part about it, because we were very, very sport minded children, [especially my older brother who was playing in the international team in Israel], and eh once we picked up the pot of *cholent* and eh I brought it home. Meanwhile our friends called us to play a little soccer, so we put the pot down: there's a gate, a make believe gate, and one of them all came and put the pot over, hit the ball, the pot, I mean the ball hit the pot and the shallot poured out a little bit so I was scared so i picked it up and put it back to the, put it back to the pot and I brought it home, and my mother was , my father was complaining to my mother "How come you didn't select the beans, it's full of rocks", and we, eh, kept quiet.

And I'm never gonna forget this *cholent* in my life, and that's one of the happiest memory of my life. And that's it.

ROMI: The Nazis encouraged all kinds of low-lives, hooligans. They knew the Jews had no civil rights, but they continued to attack them, to rob them. I remember I came home once from the synagogue in the evening, walking with my father and we were very vigilant to make sure we don't encounter these low-lives. We were making our way around the corner and then we were facing maybe a dozen so-called "Hitler Yuden" or Hitler Youth. So they saw my father and started to jump at him. They started to beat him up, he was laying on the ground bleeding. I kept screaming "Police, help! Police, help!" These people just make believe they don't see it, and the other ones were just cheering them on. "Kill the Jew! Kill the Jew!" they yelled. He was almost unconscious... conscious, then they left. This kind of experience happened almost every day.

What is a Passover Seder?

Passover is celebrated every year to mark the Jewish exodus from slavery in Egypt many centuries ago.

On the first two nights of Passover, Jews gather for a *seder* or ritual meal, which includes songs. During Passover, only unleavened bread or matzah is eaten. One form of resistance was maintaining faith and ritual in the ghetto despite a lack of food.



Passover in the Warsaw Ghetto.

Note white armbands with blue stars.



Wagner College
Holocaust Center
INSPIRE COURAGE

Our **mission** is to empower future generations in empathy, courage, and ethical decision-making in order to combat antisemitism, racism & all forms of prejudice.

For questions, to make a donation or to arrange tours of our permanent exhibit, the Holocaust Education and Action Gallery, please contact:

Holocaust.center@wagner.edu

Or our director, Prof. Lori Weintrob,

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718-390-3253/646-345-4507.

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