

ON STAGE AT PARK SQUARE THEATRE

September 29 and September 30, 2015



ELLIOT, A SOLDIER'S FUGUE

Written by QUIARA ALEGRÍA HUDES

Directed by ROBERT ROSEN

Study Guide

3M STUDENT
SERIES



PARK SQUARE
THEATRE

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Elliot, A Soldier's Fugue Study Guide

Contents



The Play and the Playwright

Plot Summary.....	4
Meet the Characters.....	5
Meet the Playwright: Quiara Alegría Hudes.....	6

Classroom Resources

Glossary of Terms for <i>Elliot, A Soldier's Fugue</i>	8
Reference Map: Locations and Conflicts.....	12

Classroom Activities

Tossing Lines : A Pre-Play Class Activity.....	13
Scene to Read Aloud : A Pre-Play and Post-Play Class Activity.....	15
Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) : A Post-Play Class Activity.....	19
PTSD and The Code of Silence: A Post-Play Discussion Activity.....	21
Music Activity: The Fugue : A Pre-Play and Post-Play Class Activity.....	23
Post-Play Discussion Questions.....	27

Plot Summary

Designed as a fugue (a musical form), *Elliot, A Soldier's Fugue* presents its characters as weaving their counterpoints through scenes that show the mystery, horror, and the legacy of war. The voices of a Puerto Rican family — Elliot, his father, his mother, and his grandfather — are all connected to war in some way as veterans who carry the scars, figuratively and literally, of active service. The play explores the legacy of silence that often envelops military families.

Elliot returns from the Iraq War injured, and questions why his father and grandfather never spoke of their time in Vietnam and Korea. As the play progresses, the story of each character is presented traditionally while other scenes in the play mimic the structure of a fugue. As playwright Hudes notes, "In the 'fugue' scenes, people narrate each other's actions and sometimes narrate their own." Through the course of the play, the real legacy of war, post-traumatic stress, as well as the nature of military service are revealed through the lens of the characters' Puerto Rican identity.



Image of a jungle path in Puerto Rico

By Alexandra Howes

Twin Cities Academy High School

Meet the Characters

Elliott Ortiz is a veteran of the Iraq War, having served with the 1st Marine Division. He is 19 years old and has returned home after he was injured. A first generation American, he grapples with the legacy of his Puerto Rican family's military tradition and the silence surrounding the reality of his family's service.

Pop is a veteran of the Vietnam War, and during his service with the U.S. 3rd Cavalry Division, he was injured. While in the hospital, he met his wife, Ginny, an Army Corp Nurse. He has never talked about his experience in Vietnam, but his letters written to Ginny are given as a gift to his son, Elliot.

Grandpop is a veteran of the Korean War, having served with Puerto Rico's 65th Infantry Regiment. Elliot's grandfather, he is an accomplished flute player, an instrument that he brought with him during his tour of duty. When asked if he remembers the war, he responds that he remembers the music that he played.

Ginny is a veteran of the Vietnam War and served in the Army Nurse Corps. While in Vietnam, she met her husband, Elliot's father, while he was recovering in the hospital. An avid gardener, her patience extends from nurturing her plants to nurturing her family members.



Copyright: Page 73 Productions 'Elliot, A Soldier's Fugue', 2006

By **Alexandra Howes**

Twin Cities Academy High School

Meet the Playwright: QUIARA ALEGRÍA HUDES



Image of Quiara Alegría Hudes by Ande Whyland, 2015

Quiara Alegría Hudes, award-winning author of *Elliot, a Soldier's Fugue*, has written numerous plays, musicals, screenplays and other literary works for young people and adults. Hudes was born and raised in Philadelphia, and much of her writing comes from family stories set in neighborhoods similar to those she knew as a child. She began writing while she was still in school, and her first play was produced in the tenth grade by Philadelphia Young Playwrights, where she now serves as a board member and mentor to young writers.

“When I talk to young writers they always want to know how do you make it, how do you know if you are good enough, or how do you become a writer?” Her advice? “...figure out some way that you can live spending your life writing. And after two years you will know. If you don't like waking up every day and writing, you will know. Writing is an incredible way to spend your day, and if you don't love it, it's not for you.”

Her love for writing is partly influenced by her love for family stories and events. During a 2012 *New York Times* interview, Hudes talked about creating her characters as she paged through old photo albums. These albums are filled with images of her family that have inspired her stories, especially the plays contained in the Elliot Trilogy.

CONTINUED...

Meet the Playwright CONTINUED

Hudes sets her plays in a very real world, yet her lyrical writing is musical and poetic. She has said that her plays combine fact with fiction in an effort to find a balance between the experiences of her relatives and the dramatic requirements of the play. She wants people to understand her work as interpretive rather than literal.

Hudes takes notes as she interviews her relatives, but when it comes to writing, she focuses more on “why their stories matter than what the particulars of the stories are.” Concerned about crossing personal boundaries, she sends drafts of her plays to those she has interviewed. Several years ago, when she realized that a relative was uncomfortable with a play, she canceled two future productions. “I try to be respectful,” she said.

Originally trained as a musician, Hudes studied music in college and spent a few years performing with a band before her mother told her that she could have more impact as a writer and that she had a responsibility to tell the stories of people in her family. Thus, her innovative plays are based upon family experiences, yet they are also strongly influenced by the musical traditions she studied, including Western Classical, Afro-Cuban, and jazz.

Hudes has not only written stories based on her family, but she has generously included them in her awards and recognition. After she received the Pulitzer Prize award check of \$10,000, she shared it with relatives who had inspired two of her characters.

Though Hudes writes about details and people from her Puerto Rican background and neighborhood, her plays also extend toward other cultures and communities. While she says she feels a bond with other Latino dramatists, she prefers not to limit or define herself only as a Latina writer. “I think ‘playwright’ is the larger family I feel most at home with,” she said. Her work truly crosses cultural boundaries and extends beyond borders.

An important and influential contemporary American playwright, Quiara Alegría Hudes tells stories that reach out to all of us and help us better understand our world and ourselves.

Adapted from the following sources that include interviews with Quiara Alegría Hudes:

Gardley, Marcus. “Music is Her Muse: Quiara Alegría Hudes and her path to the Pulitzer.” *The Brooklyn Rail*. 1 August 2012. Web. 28 July 2015.

Hudes, Quiara Alegría. Quiara Alegría Hudes. Web. 2 August 2015.

Soloski, Alexis. “A Family’s Story Spans a Trilogy, and Beyond.” *The New York Times*. 28 Nov. 2012. Web. 28 July 2015.

By **Virginia McFerran**

Perpich Centre for Arts Education

Glossary of Terms for *Elliot, A Soldier's Fugue*

Spanish Terms

Boricua: a Puerto Rican, especially one who lives in the U.S. Borinquen is the original name of Puerto Rico

chuleta: pork chop

mi culito: my cute little butt

danzón: genre of music and dance that originated in 19th Century Cuba and spread to Puerto Rico where it is still popular today

Dios mío: my God, OMG

gringos: refers to U.S. people who are not Latino

montón: lots of; a pile of

morsilla: blood sausage

pasteles: similar to tamales, but made from plantain rather than corn dough

quiero: words spoken by a person as in "I want" or "I love"

sopa de fide: noodle soup

sorullitos: deep-fried cornmeal sticks

Puerto Rican Place Names and Battle Sites in Korea, Vietnam, and Iraq

Arecibo: municipality in Puerto Rico

Bayamón: municipality of Puerto Rico

Dong-Ha: city in Vietnam



Image of Pasteles.
Copyright Gentl & Hyers



Image of Arecibo.
"DSCN1762". Licensed under CC BY-SA
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CONTINUED...

Glossary of Terms CONTINUED

Fallujah: city in Iraq

Inchon: port on west coast of Korea

Kunu-ri: village in North Korea

Tikrit: city in Iraq



Image of Tikrit, Iraq

Music Terms

Bach, Johann Sebastian: a German composer and musician of the Baroque period

C major: one of the most common key signatures used in western music

concertina: a free-reed musical instrument, similar to an accordion. It has a bellows, and buttons typically on both ends

counterpoint: the relationship between voices that are interdependent harmonically yet independent in rhythm and contour

dissonance: lack of harmony among musical notes

fugue: a contrapuntal composition in which a short melody or phrase (the subject) is introduced by one part and successively taken up by others and developed by interweaving the parts

major key: key based on the major scale resulting in a cheerful, happy sound

military cadence: a traditional call-and-response work song sung by military personnel while running or marching

minor key: a key based on the minor scale resulting in a dark, sad sound

Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus: a prolific and influential composer of symphonies, concertos, and operas during the Classical era. He composed his first musical work when he was four or five, and at 17, he was engaged as a musician at the Salzburg court

Nas: Nasir Jones is an American rapper, songwriter, record producer, and actor who is from New York City

Reggaetón: music genre, which has its root in Latin, Caribbean music

CONTINUED...

Glossary of Terms CONTINUED

General Terms

clematis: perennial climbing flowers that grow on vines

expletives: swear words

euphoric: feeling of intense excitement and happiness

heliconia: flowers usually grown in tropical regions

Lenny Dykstra: popular but controversial Phillies baseball player

raghead: (slur) ethnic or religious slur for member of a group that traditionally wears a headdress, such as a turban or keffiyeh

Shirley Temple: non-alcoholic cocktail named after the child film star

tourniquet: tight bandage or strap



Image of Heliconia



Image of Artist sketch of Clematis



Image of US Army training on tourniquet application

CONTINUED...

Glossary of Terms CONTINUED

Military Terms

Army Nurse Corps: One of the six corps of medical specialists that make up the U.S. Army Medical Department

code of silence: a condition in effect when a person or group of people choose to withhold information or keep quiet about something

corpsman: an enlisted person in the Medical Corps who accompanies combat troops into battle to give first aid, carry the wounded, etc.

C-rations: canned food formerly used by U.S. soldiers

helmet stew: food cooked in and eaten out of a helmet

Lance Corporal: Elliot's enlisted rank in the Marine Corps, equivalent to a Private First Class in the Army. Marines promoted to this rank are expected to show a degree of leadership and skill in serving as role models for newly enlisted recruits

Purple Heart: a U.S. military decoration for those wounded or killed in action

Third Light Armored Recon Battalion First Marine Division: a fast and mobilized armored terrestrial reconnaissance battalion of the U.S. Marine Corps

Military time: uses the 24-hour method of describing time. Noon is 1200 hours and midnight is 2400 hours. Example: 0600 hours is 6:00 AM

USS Eltinge: transport ship for the Navy in WWII

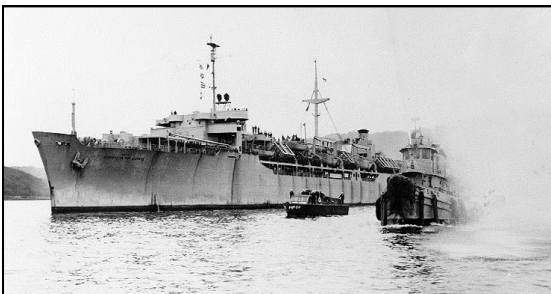


Image of the USS Eltinge leaving Sasebo for the U.S. in 1951
Copyright US Navy US National Archives photo # 80-G-428659



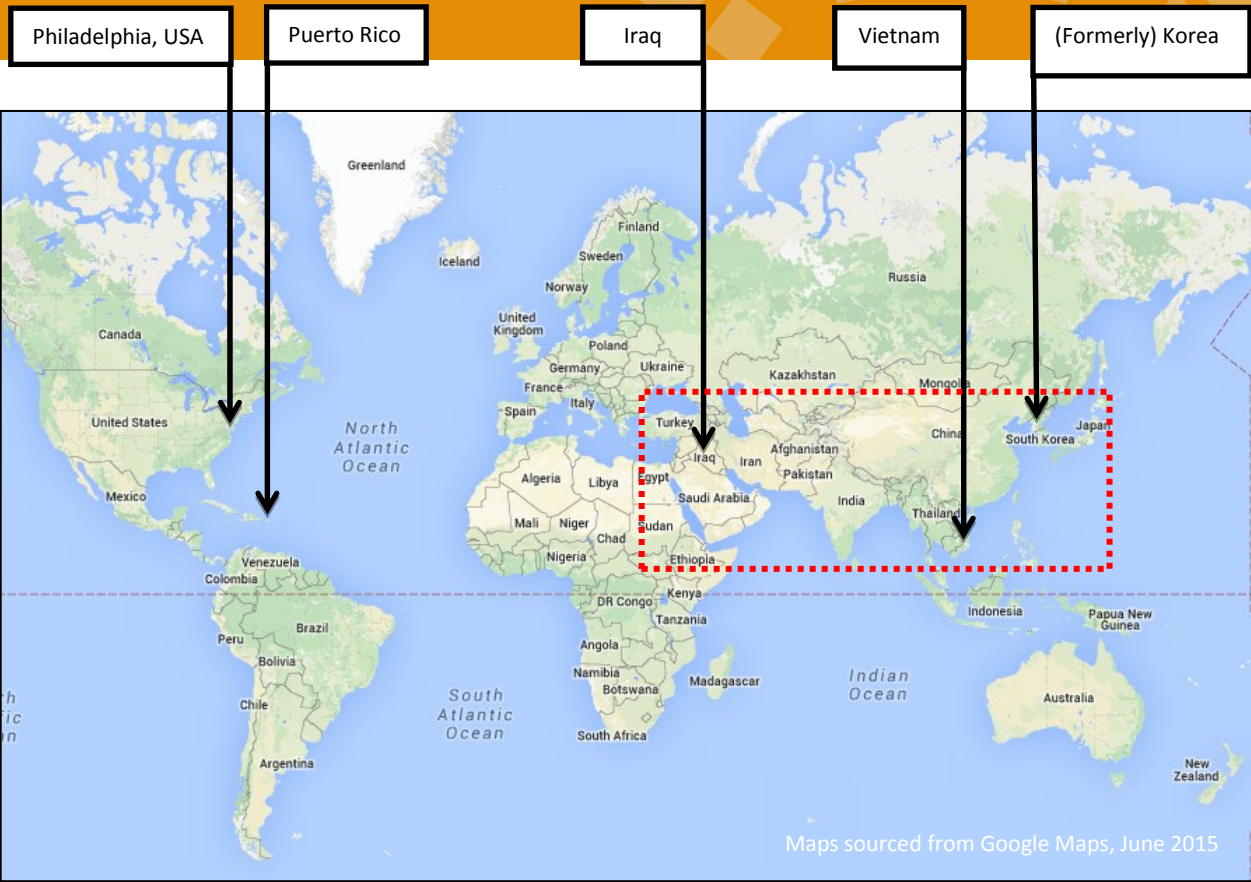
Image of Army Nurse Corps recruitment advertisement



Image of a Purple Heart

By **Virginia McFerran**
Perpich Centre for Arts Education

Reference Map: Locations and Conflicts



KOREAN WAR 1950 - 1953

VIETNAM WAR 1955 - 1975

IRAQ WAR 2003 - 2011

By Naomi Campion
Park Square Theatre

Tossing Lines

A PRE-PLAY CLASS ACTIVITY

Objective

To familiarize students with the play by working with lines from the script and based on these excerpts to elicit predictions and discussion about the play's conflict and characters. This activity helps students form questions, gain insight, and build excitement for seeing these lines spoken in the play. This activity serves the students best if completed before they attend the play.

Time allotted

20-30 minutes

Materials

Tennis ball or hacky sack

Slips of paper, cut from Tossing Lines Resource on the next page

Procedure

Cut and distribute the slips of paper (see Tossing Lines Resource) to sixteen volunteers. Give students a few minutes (or overnight, if appropriate) to memorize (or prepare a dramatic reading of their line with no memorization). Have these sixteen students form a circle and give one student the ball. After he/she speaks the line, the student tosses the ball to another student who speaks his/her assigned line. Students toss the ball throughout the circle until all lines have been heard a few times. Encourage students to speak the lines with varying emotions, seeking out the best way to perform the lines.

Optional

Reassign lines within the group (or to other students in the classroom) and continue for another round.

Discussion

1. Where do you think the play takes place? In what time period(s) do you think the play is set?
2. Can you predict themes that may be portrayed in this production based on the lines you've heard? Which lines support your ideas?
3. What can you infer about how the characters feel about themselves or each other?
4. What different emotions are expressed in these lines?
5. Which line is your favorite? Why? How do you think it will fit into the story?

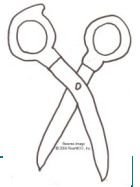
Activity adapted from:

O'Brien, Peggy. *Shakespeare Set Free*. New York: Washington Square Press, 1993.

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Tossing Lines Resource

CUT THESE APART AND
DISTRIBUTE TO YOUR
STUDENTS.



Don't look at his wound, look at him like he's the man of your dreams.

A seed is a contract with the future.

Light as a feather.... free as a bird.

Military code. Remove ID and intel from dead hostiles.

In Korea, my platoon fell in love with Bach.

You can't sit around and feel sorry for yourself or you're gonna die.

Every soldier has something you take with you, no matter where you go, you take that thing.

In the event of extended blood loss. Reflect on a time you were happy.

Reflect honor upon yourself and your home country.

You see so much death, then someone's lips touch yours and you go on vacation.

Nightmares every night... A dream that doesn't let you forget a voice.

Every night we took weapons to bed, like a wife.

Through the window, views of Vietnam that look like Puerto Rico.

Some say there's a code of silence after returning home.

But I won't let my son enlist, that's for sure.

Back then they kept the Puerto Ricans separate.

By Cheryl Hornstein

Independent Theatre Educator

Scene to Read Aloud

A PRE-PLAY AND POST-PLAY CLASS ACTIVITY

Reading Scene 10/ Fugue

In music, a fugue is a contrapuntal composition in which a short melody or phrase (the subject) is introduced by one instrument or part and successively taken up by others and developed by interweaving the parts.

Objective

The students will experience the differences between the first reading of a scene and a more fully acted version of the scene.

Introduction

In Scene 10 of *Elliot, A Soldier's Fugue*, the playwright uses all four characters to narrate and describe the horrors of war. Their dialogue is rapid and straight forward, creating a sense of both the urgency and futility of a soldier's life in the field.

To the Teacher

Prepare the students for reading the scene by having them read the character descriptions.



Image of the 65th Regiment of Puerto Rico in Korea.
Copyright Berkeley University

CONTINUED...

Scene to Read Out Loud CONTINUED

First Experience: Read

Place four chairs at the front of the room facing the class. Assign roles and chairs in the scene to four students. Ask the students reading Pop, Grandpop, and Ginny to read with restrained emotion. Have the students read through the scene once. Ask the rest of the class to focus on the following questions:

1. What is happening in the scene? What can you tell about the situation?
2. Which characters are in “real time” and which are narrating and describing the event?
3. What can you tell about the character’s relationships with each other?
4. Why would a playwright choose to have some characters narrate a scene like this?
5. What is the effect of the scene on you the audience member?

Second Experience: Add Emotional Life

Choose four other students. This time place three chairs in a small semi-circle or row, and have the fourth actor (Elliot) sit on the floor.

Ask the students reading Pop, Grandpop, and Ginny to read in a way that shows the intense feelings the character would have when seeing Elliot in this situation. They must read only what the playwright has written, but use those words to show feeling. After reading the scene a second time ask the class:

1. Why would a playwright choose to have some characters narrate a scene like this?
2. What is the effect of the scene on you the audience member?
3. What changed in the reading when the “narrators” were grouped together, but above Elliot?
4. What changed when the “narrators” used their relationship with Elliot to influence how they spoke the dialogue?
5. What can you tell about the characters’ relationships with each other?
6. In what way is this scene like a piece of music?
7. Why is this scene called “Fugue”?

Third Experience: Reflect on the Performance

1. When you saw the play, how was your experience of the scene different from when your class read and performed it?
2. What did the actors add to the scene?
3. Did seeing the performance help you to understand how the playwright uses the musical structure of a fugue to inform the structure of the play? Explain.

CONTINUED...

Scene to Read Out Loud CONTINUED

Scene 10/Fugue from *Elliot, A Soldier's Tale*

(This scene recounts how Elliot is injured during the war.)

GINNY: A road outside Tikrit.
A mile short of Saddam's hometown.

GRANDPOP: Cars are allowed out, but not back in.

POP: The boy was standing guard.

GRANDPOP: He saw an incoming car.

GINNY: The headlights approached.

POP: He fired into the car.

GRANDPOP: The horn sounded.

POP: The car collided into the barricade.

GINNY: The concertina wire slinkied onto his legs.

GRANDPOP: Two seconds ago.

ELLIOT: Sarge! Sarge! Waikiki!

GINNY: Seventy four thorns dig deep into his skin.

POP: Seventy four barbs chew into his bone.

GRANDPOP: It is not a sensation of rawness.

GINNY: It is not excruciating pain.

POP: It is a penetrating weakness.

GRANDPOP: Energy pours out of his leg.

GINNY: Like water from a garden hose.

ELLIOT: Sarge!

CONTINUED...

Scene to Read Out Loud CONTINUED

POP: The boy knows he is trapped.

GRANDPOP: He doesn't know he is injured.

GINNY: He does a military style inspection. (Elliot reaches up his pants leg.)

GRANDPOP: His hand enters the warm meat of his calf.

ELLIOT: Oh shit. Stay calm. Put the tourniquet on. Lay back. Drink a cup of water. (Elliot pulls a strip of cloth from his pocket. He wraps it like a tourniquet around his thigh. Tight.)

GINNY: Forty-one percent of all injuries are leg wounds.

POP: Military code.

GRANDPOP: Carry a tourniquet at all times.

GINNY: Instructions in the event of rapid blood loss.

GRANDPOP: One.

ELLIOT: Stay calm.

POP: Two.

ELLIOT: Put the tourniquet on.

GRANDPOP: Three.

ELLIOT: Lay back.
Four...four?

GINNY: Drink a cup of water.

ELLIOT: Someone get me a cup of water.

By Cheryl Hornstein
Independent Theatre Educator

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

A POST-PLAY CLASS ACTIVITY

A Brief Explanation of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

What is PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder)?

PTSD is a psychiatric disorder that can occur following the experience or witnessing of a life-threatening event such as military combat, natural disaster, terrorist incident, serious accident, or physical or sexual assault. Most survivors of trauma return to normal given a little time. However, some people will have stress reactions that do not go away on their own or may even get worse over time. These individuals may develop PTSD. People who suffer from PTSD often relive the experience through nightmares and flashbacks, have difficulty sleeping, and feel detached or estranged, and these symptoms can be severe enough and last long enough to significantly impair the person's daily life.

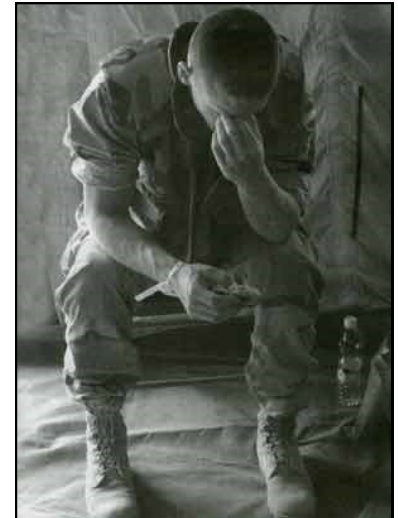


Image of soldier demonstrating possible signs of PTSD

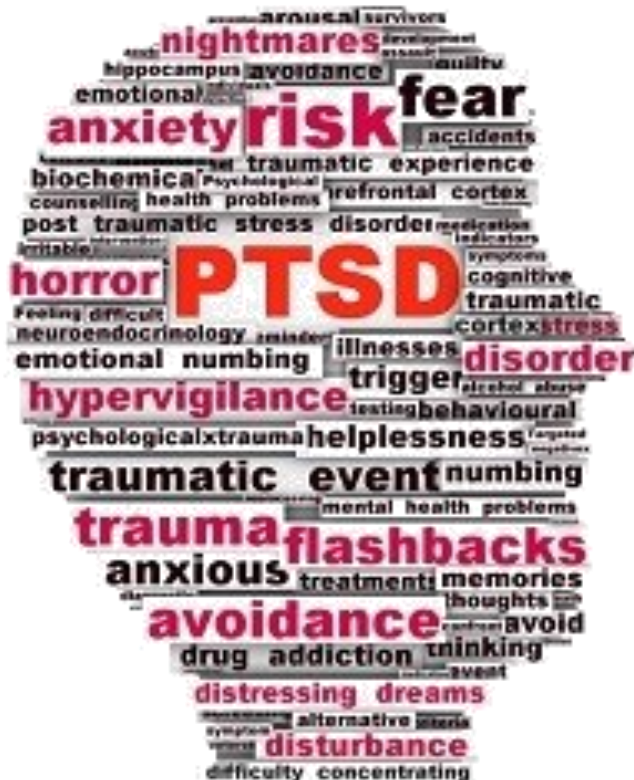


Image by Mental Health Support UK

PTSD is complicated by the fact that people with PTSD often may develop additional disorders such as depression, substance abuse, problems of memory and cognition, and other problems of physical and mental health. The disorder is also associated with impairment of the person's ability to function in social or family life.

PTSD can be treated with psychotherapy ("talk" therapy) and medicines such as anti-depressants. Early treatment is important and may help reduce long-term symptoms.

CONTINUED...

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) CONTINUED

What are the symptoms of PTSD?

Although PTSD symptoms can begin right after a traumatic event, PTSD is not diagnosed unless the symptoms last for at least one month and either cause significant distress or interfere with work or home life. To be diagnosed with PTSD, a person must have four different types of symptoms: re-experiencing symptoms, avoidance symptoms, numbing symptoms, and arousal symptoms.

Re-experiencing symptoms are symptoms that involve reliving the traumatic event. There are a number of ways in which people may relive a trauma. They may have upsetting memories of the traumatic event. These memories can come back unexpectedly or they may be triggered by a traumatic reminder such as when a combat veteran hears a car backfire or a motor vehicle accident victim drives by a car accident. These memories can cause both emotional and physical reactions.

Avoidance symptoms are efforts people make to avoid the traumatic event. Individuals with PTSD may try to avoid situations that trigger memories of the traumatic event. They may avoid going near places where the trauma occurred or seeing TV programs or news reports about similar events. They may avoid other sights, sounds, smells, or people that are reminders of the traumatic event.

Numbing symptoms are another way to avoid the traumatic event. Individuals with PTSD may find it difficult to be in touch with their feelings or express their emotions toward others. For example, they may feel emotionally "numb" and may isolate themselves from others. They also may be less interested in activities they once enjoyed.

Arousal Symptoms are those which occur when people with PTSD feel constantly alert after the traumatic event. This is known as increased emotional arousal, and it can cause difficulty sleeping, outbursts of anger or irritability, and difficulty concentrating.

How common is PTSD in the military?

About 30 percent of the men and women who have spent time in war zones experience PTSD. An additional 20 to 25 percent have had partial PTSD at some point in their lives. More than half of all male Vietnam veterans and almost half of all female Vietnam veterans have experienced "clinically serious stress reaction symptoms." PTSD has also been detected among veterans of other wars. Estimates of PTSD from the Gulf War are as high as 10%. Estimates from the war in Afghanistan are between 6 and 11%. Current estimates of PTSD in military personnel who served in Iraq range from 12% to 20%.

From the following source:

"What is PTSD?" Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, 2007. Web. 1 August 2015.

By Jennifer Parker
Falcon Ridge Middle School

PTSD and the Code of Silence

A POST-PLAY DISCUSSION ACTIVITY

After reviewing the article about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), read the following excerpts from the play, and discuss the questions at the end.

Note to the Teacher: There is some profanity in Scene B.

Objectives:

- To gain deeper insights into the character motivations of Pop and Elliot
- To better understand the symptoms and indicators of PTSD

Scene A. Monologue Excerpt from *Elliot, A Soldier's Fugue*.

(This scene describes Elliot's feelings after returning home from war.)

ELLIOT: ...On the airplane flying home. All I could think was, I have to talk to pop.... He never sat me down and told me what it was like, for real. The first night I got here, I was like, pop, I need to hear it from your mouth.... Wednesday rolled around, I'm like, pop I'm only home a week. Did you have nightmares, too? Every single night? Did you feel guilty, too? When you shot a guy? Things he never opened up about. Finally I got him real drunk, I'm like, now's the time. I was like, did you shoot anyone up close? Did you shoot a civilian? Anything. He threw the table at me. Threw his beer bottle on the steps. Marched up the stairs, slammed the door.

Scene B. Scene: Pop's letter to Grandpop from *Elliot, A Soldier's Fugue*.

(The lines overlap as characters recognize their related experiences.)

POP: Dad, I just want to say I'm sorry.

ELLIOT: I was like, pop, I fucking walked in your shoes.

POP: I threw your flute away.

ELLIOT: Pop, we lived the same fucking life.

POP: All these thoughts were going through my head like thinking about the Bronx, you, mom.

CONTINUED...

PTSD and the Code of Silence CONTINUED

ELLIOT: It's scary how much was the same. Killing a guy. Getting your leg scratched up. Falling in love.

POP: They got Hess and Joe Bobb.

ELLIOT: Nightmares. Meds. Infections. Letters to your father.

POP: One instant. Their bodies were covered with dust. Tree bark. Their eyes.

ELLIOT: Even ripping them up, taping them back together. It was like the feeling from Puerto Rico, but not a peaceful feeling.

POP: It was like shoot someone, destroy something. I threw your flute in the river.

ELLIOT: You see all the shit you can't erase. Like, here's who you are, Elliot, and you never even knew.

POP: You can't sit around and feel sorry for yourself or you're gonna die. I had to do something, so that's what I did. (Pop's letter is done.)

PTSD Discussion Questions

1. What are the four symptoms or behaviors that are described in the article on PTSD?
2. What symptoms of PTSD does Elliot reveal in specific lines above?
3. What actions show evidence that Pop suffers from PTSD? What lines lead to this conclusion?
4. Did you notice other characters in the play also struggling with PTSD? Give specific examples.
5. Do you know someone who suffers or has suffered from PTSD? What symptoms have they demonstrated? How do they cope?



By Virginia McFerran

Perpich Center for Arts Education

Music Activity: The Fugue

A PRE-PLAY AND POST-PLAY CLASS ACTIVITY

Using the Music of the Fugue and Hip Hop to Explore Characterization

Objective

To understand how different musical forms are used to inform the dramatic structure of *Elliot, A Soldier's Fugue*, and how these structures help draw parallels across different generations of the Ortiz men.

Rationale: Why Introduce Students to Hip Hop and Fugue as Musical Forms?

Music plays a pivotal role in *Elliot, A Soldier's Fugue*. The playwright, Quiara Alegría Hudes, uses the musical structure of these two types of music (Hip Hop and Fugue) to draw parallels between characters and to reflect the effects of war. Understanding the structure and parallels between these two types of music will help students more deeply understand and analyze the relationships between the Ortiz Men: Grandpop, Pop, and Elliot.

Before Seeing the Production

Step One: Have students first read the article below.

The Sounds of the Generations

What is a Fugue?

In technical terms, a fugue is a composition of music in which the main melody (or theme) is imitated by different instruments into multiple parts. (These parts are often modified so much that they could function as different musical pieces.) At the same time, these separate melodies are also dependent on each. The fugue is a challenge to composers because it requires them to follow strategic rules to create a singular piece that consists of multiple independent parts. It is considered to be one of the most difficult and complex forms of musical composition. In the play, Grandpop compares the fugue to the act of untying knots between the varying melodies. When watching the video for Beethoven's "Great Fugue," it is possible to see the illustration of knotting and unknotting.

Johann Sebastian Bach was a composer during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who excelled at fugues. As a composer for the church, he wrote many fugues for the organ. Grandpop plays multiple compositions by Bach, namely fugues, on his flute.

What is Hip-Hop?

Hip-Hop is a modern form of music that originated in New York City in the 1970s and has developed its own subculture. Its cultural aesthetic consists mainly of using a turntable and rapping, supplemented by break dancing and graffiti art. This type of music includes complex beats that are mixed to

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Music Activity: The Fugue CONTINUED

create melodies as a base for a musical artist's words. Not only was hip-hop a groundbreaking subculture in America, it was also an opportunity for the disenfranchised to find a voice, and for many people was a movement towards equality for people of color. In many ways, traditional hip-hop serves as a means of protest, or argument, against discrimination. However, because of the content or lack of defined guidelines, most popular, mainstream rap that is heard today is not considered hip-hop by the experts (Zuberi).

Nasir bin Olu Dara Jones, commonly known as Nasty Nas or simply Nas, is a composer of hip hop. He began his career in the early 1990s and is still active today. Nas is considered one of the most talented artists in the genre. Collaborating with Tupac and other artists during the "golden era" of hip-hop in the mid-1990s, he is considered to be one of the most talented lyricists in modern music (Zuberi). Growing up in Queens, New York, many of Nas' songs are about his experiences with street violence and racism. In the first scene, Elliot listens to rapper Nas while he is getting ready before his deployment.

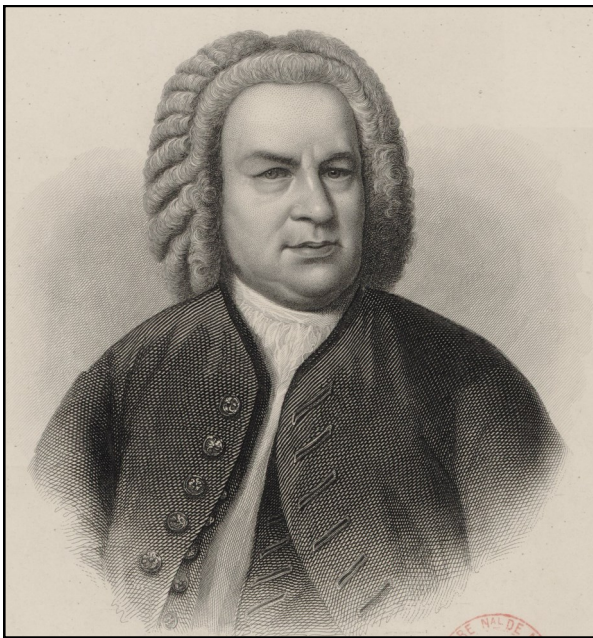


Image of J.S. Bach by August Weger

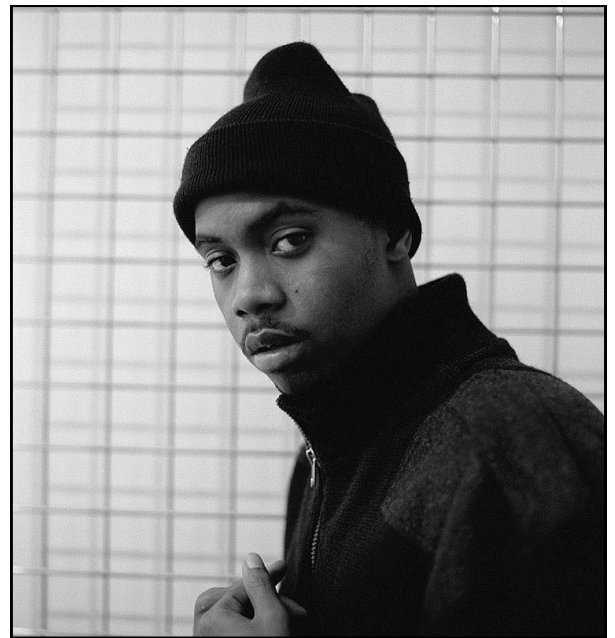


Image of Nas in 1998 by Mika Väisänen.

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Music Activity: The Fugue CONTINUED

Step Two:

Now, have students go through the playlist and images in the link below and answer the questions that follow. This is to introduce students to both the fugue and hip hop. Students will learn about the technicalities that go into creating a fugue or hip hop song.

Link to Samples of Hip Hop and Fugue with Visual Images*:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8JDWdk7Qv6PG-ukkHn1eKU76GmuU9kMe>

**Warning: "Got Yourself A Gun" by Nas includes adult content. Please preview the song before playing it for students.*

During Listening Activity: As you watch and listen to the music, answer the following questions.

1. As you watch Beethoven's composition, what do you notice about the movements of different parts and instruments?
2. As you listen to "The Great Fugue," of what do the sounds remind you? What are some words or images that come to mind?
3. After listening to Bach's "Fugue in G Minor," discuss how the fugue is an appropriate or inappropriate soundtrack to war.
4. As you listen to Nas' "Got Yourself A Gun," what do you think this song is about and why might Elliot listen to it before his deployment to Iraq?



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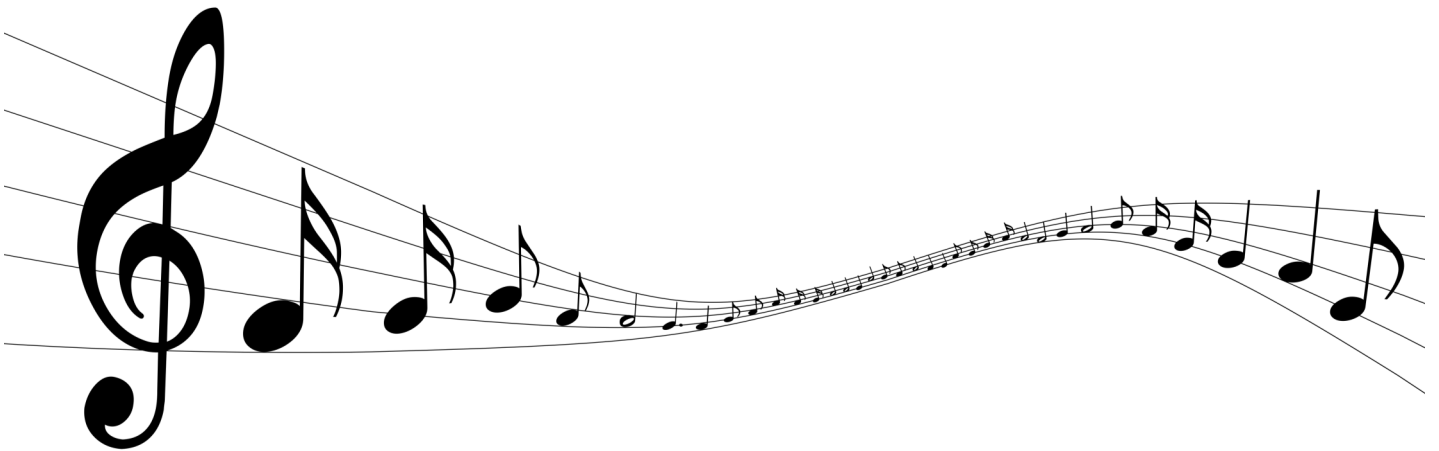
Music Activity: The Fugue CONTINUED

After Seeing the Production

After they watch the play, the information and discussion questions below will help students draw conclusions based on the dramatic effect of its musical structures. These questions may be used for discussion or for further exploration as an essay or project.

Post-Play Discussion Questions

1. How is the music of this play symbolic of the men's individual experiences during war?
2. Compare hip-hop and the fugue. How are the compositions alike in sound and purpose in connection with the play?
3. What are some differences between Grandpop and Elliot's musical selections? How do these differences reflect their personalities? How do these differences reflect the social climate surrounding the wars they were involved with?
4. Pop experiences little music and throws away the flute during the Vietnam War. Why do you think he does this? Explain.
5. Compare and contrast the musical definition of a fugue and the medical definition of a fugue state. How are these both represented in the play?



Works Cited:

Amati-Camperi, Alexandra. "What is a Fugue?" San Francisco Bach Choir. n.p., 2009. Web. 6 July 2015.
"History of Popular Cuban Music." Orquesta La Moderna Tradición. n.p., n.d. Web. 7 July 2015.
Hudes, Quiara Alegría. Elliot, A Soldier's Fugue. Culture Project: New York, 2006. Print.

By Maggie Quam

Post-Play Discussion Questions

1. In what way was this play's structure different from other plays you have seen?
2. The playwright uses the dialogue both to show scenes that are happening in real time and to narrate events that have happened in the past. Why do you think the playwright would do this?
3. How did the use of lighting, music and sound effects help structure the scenes and flow of the play?
4. What were some of the themes of the play? What "lesson" is the playwright trying to show us with this play?
5. How was time treated in the play?
6. What objects are used by the playwright in the play, and what do you think they represent? Why are they important? (There are five or six symbolic objects in the play.)
7. Several scenes in the play are in the form of letters sent from the soldier to his loved ones at home. In what way did the actors use these letters to show emotions or events? Why do you think the playwright would include letters as part of the play?
8. When and why did Ginny originally plant her garden? In talking about planting her garden, Ginny tells us that a "seed is a contract with the future." What does she mean by this and what does it foreshadow in the story? How do living plants represent healing and nurturing, and how was this demonstrated in the production?
9. How did characters in the play participate in a "code of silence" when it came to their experiences? Why do you think people often refuse to speak about traumatic events in their life? What effect does the code of silence have on an individual, a family, or a community?
10. A fugue is defined as a contrapuntal composition in which a short melody or phrase (the subject or theme) is introduced by one part and successively taken up by others and developed by interweaving the parts. As different themes are introduced, how does the play's structure weave together each character's story, reveal their relationships, and draw parallels between the generations?
11. How many times did you hear a character mention Puerto Rico? How is their Puerto Rican heritage evident among the generations and what insights does the play give us about Puerto Rican culture and pride?
12. Why do you think the playwright entitled her work *Elliot, A Soldier's Fugue* focusing the thematic structure on Elliot himself instead of his father or grandfather? How is the play his fugue?

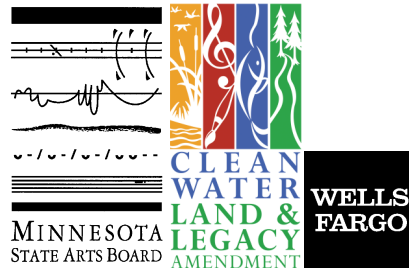
Acknowledgements



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To Our Teachers,

Thank you for giving the gift of the-
atre to your students, and the gift
of your students to our theatre.

Yours sincerely,

The Staff at Park Square Theatre