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City of Light: History on Stage

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THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF VISUAL ARTS, THEATRE, & DANCE

CITY OF LIGHT: HISTORY ON STAGE

By

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Introduction

Scrolling through the articles on the main Yahoo! page, a daily ritual for me, a headline caught my eye. “Fake City of Paris Found!” The fake city of Paris was discovered in 2011. I researched as much as I could find on this false city of lights, holding the story tight to my chest and waiting for the opportunity to explore it.

It was not until the 2013-2014 school year that I would again have the chance to investigate this idea. I decided to apply for a research award and in the summer of 2014, I was awarded a Mentored Research & Creative Endeavor Award under the sponsorship of Dr. Nathan Stoltzfus. I used this grant to travel to Paris and carry out first-hand research of the real, then the fake, city. I was able to interview the journalist, Peter Allen, who first discovered the existence of the Fake Paris when documentation was released to the French National Archives as well as visit many museums and landmarks recreated in the fake Paris. When I returned, this research culminated in a three act, 160+ pages play. In the fall of 2014, I hosted a public reading of the play.

Already then I had incorporated music into the performance. I took period Holocaust and French WWI/WWII era music/songs and threaded them throughout the play, giving the characters a purpose and reason to sing. However, the script still called to me to become a musical. When I found my first composing partner, I applied for another summer research award in order to adapt the play into a musical, and finally to produce it. Consequently, I was awarded the Undergraduate Research & Creative Art Award. I began to assemble a production team and begin working to create the music and lyrics, transitioning City of Light from a play to a musical.

I gained a lot of the experience that I needed in order to undertake this project when I spent the summer of 2015 working for the English National Theatre of Israel. I learned how

better to organize such a large company of people, about the casting process, and the logistics of putting up a show. I took what I learned and incorporated it into my process when I returned to the United States in fall of 2015. I spent the next two semesters up to the present locating and securing a performance location, dates, a full production team/crew, actors, as well as completing the script's transition from play to musical. I presented my research at several different conferences like at the FSU Presidential Showcase & Undergraduate Research Symposium in 2015, the Kristallnacht Commemorative Research Conference in 2015, the Florida Undergraduate Research Conference in 2016, and the FSU Spring Research Symposium in 2016.

Finally, City of Light will open the FSU School of Theatre's New Horizons Original Works Festival on April 13-14, 2016.

Timetable

November 2011: The original Telegraph article revealing the Fake Paris written by Peter Allen was released.

March 2014: I was awarded the Mentored Research & Creative Endeavors Award to travel to Paris, France and do first hand research to write City of Light.

March 2014-May 2014: Compiled research on the history of Paris and its involvement in WWII.

May 2014: Traveled to Paris, France for two weeks to do research for City of Light.

June 2014-September 2014: Compiled Research gained from the trip to Paris, did final Research, and wrote City of Light as a play.

September 2014: Held a public reading of City of Light at the Honors, Scholars, and Fellows building.

January 2015: Began studying playwriting at the FSU London Study Centre.

February 2015: Awarded the Undergraduate Research & Creative Activity Award to turn City of Light into a musical and produce it for the Tallahassee community.

April 2015: Visited the concentration camp, Dachau, on the 70th anniversary of its liberation, visited Nuremberg and the Nazi Party Rally Grounds, and The Eagle's Nest in Germany as research.

September 2015: Presented at the FSU Presidential Showcase of Undergraduate Research and showcased three songs from the musical.

August-December 2015: Worked with Composing Partners to begin creating music and assembling a production team.

January 2016: Cast City of Light.

February-April 2016: Began rehearsal for City of Light.

April 2016: Compiled Writings and Research for Thesis Defense.

April 2016: Performance of City of Light as part of the FSU School of Theatre's New Horizons,
an Original Works Festival.

Synopsis of Musical

“The most powerful weapon on earth is the human soul on fire.” ~Ferdinand Foch

In 2011, the existence of a Fake City of Paris came to light. The fake city had been built as a tactic during WWI to lead bomber pilots away from the real Paris by creating a display of lights to emulate Paris' nightlife. After the war, this city lay abandoned. City of Light is a musical that explores what might have happened in the fake city during WWII by focusing on the experience of two Jewish children in the midst of the Holocaust making their escape and trying to flee to Paris for safety; however they find themselves in the wrong Paris.

History of the Fake Paris

WWI took place during the advent of radar and was one of the first wars with air dropped bombs which caused the French to be terrified of the German Gotha bombers. The French government, in a top secret project, endeavored to build a fake Paris to lower the true Paris's chances of being bombed. The DCA (Défense Contre Avions) air defense group came up with the original scheme to trick German pilots to attack the wrong targets.¹

The fake city was built in WWI but the focus of my History minor has always been WWII and the Holocaust. I wanted to find a way to connect this WWI city to WWII and the Holocaust. This first required more research into the fake city.

The fake city was built 15 miles away from Paris in an area where the topography looked the same from a bird's eye point of view and where even the Seine River curved the same way.² Paris has grown so much that this area, Maisons-Laffitte, is now a suburb of the city. Officials chose three areas in the North East, North West, and East of Paris to serve as building blocks of the decoy.³ Radar was still in development in 1918, and the long-range Gotha heavy bombers being used by the German Imperial Air Force were similarly new and undeveloped.⁴ German Gotha bombers operated by having one of the team members hold bombs by the fins then drop them on any target they could see as they did quick flyovers over major cities. At that close range, the navigator would not have been able to tell the difference between the two cities either by radar or by eye.

1 Peter Allen. "Second Paris built towards end of First World War to fool Germans," Telegraph (UK), Nov. 9, 2011.

2 Ibid.

3 "So Today I Learned that France built a Replica of Paris in WWI," MessyNessy Chic, Apr. 3, 2013. <http://www.messynessychic.com/2013/04/03/so-today-i-learned-that-france-built-a-replica-of-paris-in-wwi/>.

4 Peter Allen. "Second Paris Built".

During WWI, such air raids were a legitimate concern. In Britain, more than 5,000 bombs were dropped, killing hundreds, injuring thousands, and causing millions of dollars in damage during this time.⁵

An Italian electric engineer, Fernand Jacopozzi, designed the fake city. The lighting was the most important aspect of the site because the German Gotha bombers flew by night—it was the illumination of the fake city that was so vital. Famous monuments, like the Eiffel Tower and the Arc de Triomphe, and locations, like the Champs-Élysées and Gare Du Nord, were recreated and it featured sham streets and lined with electric lights and rail lines that were lit at night, to make the fake city seem real.⁶ These pretend trains actually moved, with cars made out of wood, and had light projections on the sides to give the appearance of windows. The train like device ran from one end of a track to the other spanning from 1,800 to 2,000 meters.⁷ Wooden replicas of buildings complete with details including translucent paint were used to create the impression of the 'dirty glass roofs of factories' while white, yellow and red lamps were also used to create the effect of machines in operation at night.⁸

However, the war ended before the fake city was finished, the last air raid over Paris occurring in September 1918.⁹ At the end of WWI, Jacopozzi was honored for his illumination work, and he went on to find fame illuminating the Eiffel Tower for the first time. He was later awarded the prestigious Legion d'Honneur award (highest decoration in France) for his clandestine engineering project, although it's likely few people knew exactly why he was

⁵ “So Today I Learned that France”.

⁶ Peter Allen. “Second Paris' Built”.

⁷ “So Today I Learned that France”.

⁸ Peter Allen. “Second Paris' Built”.

⁹ Ibid.

receiving a medal for service in a war.¹⁰ The government decided to keep the fake city standing and a secret in case they needed it in the future—and of course, WWII rolled right around the corner.

I had the opportunity to speak with Peter Allen, the journalist who broke the story of the Fake Paris, for the Telegraph (UK) newspaper. He told me,

It is quite common for stories to come out decades later, normally because of legal rulings made by the government of the day. The fake city was clearly a national security issue, and those in charge did not want people to know about it. The French naturally might have wanted to use the fake city again, in a future war. Announcing it to the world would have enabled potential enemies to know about it, not least of all the Germans. Remember, France fought Germany in major wars in 1870-71, 1914-18, and then in 1939-45. Many view the Second World War as a continuation of the First, especially in terms of France's defences.¹¹

But by WWII, radar was developed enough that it would be able to help navigators tell the difference between the fake Paris and the real one, and the fake city was rendered obsolete. Then when France was overtaken by the Germans so soon into WWII, nothing could be done about the fake city. It wasn't until 1961 that the city was finally disassembled and until 2011 that any record of the existence of the fake city was released to the public following a 50-year-long process of declassification.

¹⁰ “So Today I Learned that France”.

¹¹ Peter Allen (Telegraph Journalist), interview by Danielle Wirsansky, May, 15, 2014.

Historical Context of the Fake Paris During WWII

As my experience and interest lay in WWII and the Holocaust, I wanted to explore what might have been occurring in the fake city after it was abandoned in 1918. France itself had a very interesting history during WWII, from its occupation by German forces to the existence of internment camps within its borders.

I also had to bridge the technologies of WWI to WWII as well as figure out the logistics as to how it would have been possible for two German children to find themselves in the Fake Paris.

The Occupation of Paris

Paris was occupied by German forces from June of 1940 until its liberation in August of 1944. Paris was located north of the demarcation line that separated the half of France that was occupied by the Nazis and the half that was “free”. After overtaking the French government, French and German officials signed the Second Compiègne armistice, where the third clause read:

In the occupied region of France, the German Reich exercises all of the rights of an occupying power. The French government undertakes to facilitate in every way possible the implementation of these rights, and to provide the assistance of the French administrative services to that end. The French government will immediately direct all officials and administrators of the occupied territory to comply with the regulations of, and to collaborate fully with, the German military authorities.¹²

¹² “Armistice Agreement”, MJP PDF Library, 2006. <http://mjp.univ-perp.fr/france/1940armistice.htm>.

French officials only had a semblance of ruling the territory themselves while most orders came from the Nazis. The Gestapo forced the military administration to cooperate closely with them in order to contain partisans and resistance fighters. Due to the conditions of the armistice, the Gestapo also had the French authorities/police force at their beck and call. They mostly used these forces to gather together Jews, anti-fascists, and other dissidents and make them disappear. French auxiliaries also helped seize members of the resistance and minorities, including Jews, for shipment to detention centers, such as the Drancy deportation camp (the largest concentration camp of the 49 in use in France during the occupation), en route to Auschwitz, and other German concentration camps.¹³ Jews still residing in the occupied zones of France were required to wear the yellow badge and had other prohibitions placed upon them, such as in which car of the Metro they could ride.¹⁴

Just under 78,000 Jews living in France died during the war, a majority of these deaths following their expulsion to concentration camps.¹⁵ France's Jewish population in 1940 was about 350,000, meaning that almost a quarter of the French Jewish population died.¹⁶ There was a specific incident in July of 1942 known as the Vel' d'Hiv Roundup where more than 13,000 Jews residing in that section of Paris were rounded up in a mass arrest by pro-Nazi French authorities and transported to Auschwitz, where they perished.¹⁷

¹³ Stanley Hoffmann, "La Droite à Vichy," *Essais Sur la France: Déclin ou Renouveau?*. (Paris: Le Seuil. 1974).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Jean-Pierre Azema and Francois Bedarida, *La France Des Années Noires* vol. 2 (Paris, Seuil, 1993).

¹⁶ Francois Delpech, "The Nazi Persecution And Attitude Of Vichy" *Journal Of The Association Of History And Geography Teachers Of Public Education*, no. 273 (1979): 591-635

¹⁷ Michel Laffitte, "The Vélodrome d'hiver Round-up: July 16 and 17, 1942", *Online Encyclopedia of Mass Violence*, Dec. 28, 2008. <http://www.massviolence.org/The-Vel-d-Hiv-round-up>.

The Path Traveled to Gurs, the Concentration Camp

I knew that I wanted the play to take place in the Fake Paris alongside the onset of the Occupation of Paris. I thought it would make a very interesting contrast between the Fake Paris and the Real Paris and help to raise the stakes and tension of the piece. I wanted the two characters that the story follows, the brother and sister, to be Jewish children escaping the Holocaust. I began to search for a reason why these two children would be in France and how.

Jews living in Eastern Europe began to be deported back to Poland during this time or were transferred to ghettos. They were being pushed out of Germany. But in order for my characters to get to France, they would need to move west. During this time, neutral Portugal became a temporary haven for Jews, so I had my characters try to head there through France. The refugees' flight from Europe usually first brought them to France. Initially, Paris was home to the masses fleeing Germany, Czechoslovakia, and the rest of Eastern Europe. After the invasion, Parisians joined the refugees and headed south, initially to Western ports like Hendaye and then, when the coast became occupied, to Marseille in Vichy-controlled France. After Germany's occupation of France in May 1940, the exit routes from Europe evaporated, making Lisbon a central breakout port for anyone fleeing the war. While Spain was also officially neutral, it was cooperating with Germany. The new Spanish regime had only just taken over after Franco's victory in the civil war and the country was crawling with secret police and Gestapo. Refugees with the right papers could transit through Spain, but it was not a safe place to linger.¹⁸

Before the occupation, refugees fleeing to France from Germany would have done so by crossing the Alsace-Lorraine border, which was a highly contested area. Alsace-Lorraine, had

¹⁸ "Safe Haven: Portugal in WWII", *Emma's House in Portugal*, Mar. 23, 2012.
<http://www.emmashouseinportugal.com/living-in-portugal/safe-haven-portugal-in-ww2/>

been annexed after the Franco-Prussian war in 1871 by the German Empire and unenthusiastically restored to France after WWI. It ended up being re-annexed by the Third Reich once they took over France. Once it became clear that conflict would break out between Germany and France, any refugees crossing the Alsace-Lorraine border into France were seized and hauled to already existing internment camps within France.

Following the conclusion of WWI, thousands of Jews viewed France as a land of equality and opportunity and its capital, Paris, became a prosperous center of Jewish cultural life. However, in the 1930s, French government leaders began to reconsider this “open-door” policy as they felt overwhelmed by a sizeable flood of refugees fleeing both Nazi Germany and the Spanish Civil War. By 1939 French authorities had put into action stringent restrictions on immigration and set up a number of internment and detention camps for refugees, such as Gurs , in southern France.¹⁹

Gurs was one of the first and largest camps established in pre-war France. It was located in the Basque region of southwestern France, just to the south of the village of Gurs. The camp, about 50 miles from the Spanish border, was situated in the foothills of the Pyrenees Mountains northwest of Oloron-Sainte-Marie. It was established by the French government in April 1939, before the war with Germany and well before the occupation of France in June 1940.

When the French republic collapsed from German attacks in the early summer of 1940, there were approximately 350,000 Jews in France of which less than half were French citizens. Most of them were refugees who had fled Nazi persecution in the Third Reich.

¹⁹ “Camp de Gurs 1936-1942”, RaederScheidt. http://www.raederscheidt.com/Gurs_english.html.

In early 1940, the French government had interned about 4,000 German Jewish refugees as "enemy aliens".²⁰ Not only Jews were interned at these French internment camps though. Along with the Jewish people, French leftist political leaders who opposed the war with Germany were interned. Originally, Gurs had been built as a detention camp for political refugees and members of the International Brigade fleeing Spain after the Spanish Civil War.

Since Gurs was one of the few camps already in use in France before the onset of the Occupation of Paris, I thought that it would be a good fit with my story. It was built on a parcel of land with no agricultural value. It was relatively small for an internment camp, only about 28 hectares in size. There was one street through the center of the camp, and there were about 382 cabins built in total. Each cabin only had a size of about 25 square meters, but each was often filled with up to 60 people. The types of cabin built in this camp were especially crude, assembled from thin wooden boards and tarred fabric without insulation or windows. The tarred fabric quickly deteriorated, allowing rain water to enter the cabins and without insulation, they provided little warmth for those forced to live in them. Prisoners slept in sacks of straw strewn across the dirt floors. Because of its proximity to the Atlantic Ocean, there was a great deal of rainfall but drainage in the area was poor so it was always muddy and often flooded. The camp was surrounded by barbed wire fences, though they were not electrified.²¹

Within the camp, there was no sanitation, no running water, or plumbing and the quality of food was poor. They employed rudimentary toilets which were very similar to the kind of troughs that would have been used to feed animals. In addition to this, there was also a platform about 2 meters high, which prisoners climbed using steps, and upon which were built additional

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ "Gurs", United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, <https://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005298>

toilets. Under the platform there were large tubs that collected excrement. Once they were full they were transported out of the camp in carts.²² Because of the more relaxed state of the camp, it would be plausible that the children could escape the camp and make it to Paris.

The first contingent of prisoners during the onset of WWII arrived to Gurs on May 21, 1940, only weeks before the Occupation of Paris on June 14, 1940. Many different kinds of prisoners were brought to the camp and held after those original detainees from Spain. The most important group in my research was the Germans who were found in France, and without regard to ethnicity or political orientation, were interned as foreign citizens of an enemy power. This included a significant number of German Jews who had fled the Nazi regime who were seized and held together in the camp without separation from the German nationals who despised them. They were known as "les indésirables", the undesirables.²³

From Gurs to Paris

Now that I had decided that the children, the protagonists of my story, would escape from Gurs and make it to Paris, I needed to make my timelines fit. If the children were part of the first wave of prisoners brought into Gurs on May 21, then they needed to make it to Paris by June 14. The distance between Paris and Gurs is roughly 726 km, and would have to be crossed on foot by two tired, traumatized kids. I found that a person can walk roughly 30 miles, or 48 km, a day. This would take the children around two weeks to walk all the way to Paris. They would get there before the Occupation of Paris and arrive roughly around June 5th, if they escaped Gurs immediately.

²² Ibid.

²³ Claude Laharie, *Le camp de Gurs 1939-1945, un aspect méconnu de l'histoire du Béarn* (Pau: Infocompo, 1985), 397.

The next question I wanted to address is how the children would have fed themselves on their trip. I researched foraging in France and found that it would be very easy to do especially in the early summer when the children were traveling. They had the option of bilberries, red campion, and dandelions, which are referenced in the text to present a plausible explanation of how the children could have traveled on their own across the region.²⁴

Navigation by the stars would have been a completely conceivable method for the children to navigate their way to Paris (or even to over shoot the distance and make it to the Fake Paris), something that their family probably used and taught to them as they initially fled Germany.

Technology

Once the children made it to the Fake Paris, they needed other characters to interact with. The city had long been abandoned by workers and conditions were not right for vagrants to have settled there. What caught my attention was how important the use of shadows was to create the Fake Paris and to make it seem alive, in motion, and real. I wondered if Jacopozzi, the designer of the city, would have gone so far as to create the shadows of people walking in the streets. He had been so detailed in every aspect of his design, I wondered why not in this as well? I began to brainstorm how Jacopozzi would have been able to create the shadows of people walking in the streets.

Thinking about creating the illusion of inhabitation, my mind went to the idea of a tram or trolley. I decided to do research to see if creating a robot based on a trolley was possible. I found that trolleybus' date back to 1882, when Dr. Ernst Werner von Siemens ran his

²⁴ Anita Isalska, "Auvergne on a plate: food foraging in the heart of France", Lonely Planet. <https://www.lonelyplanet.com/france/the-auvergne/travel-tips-and-articles/auvergne-on-a-plate-food-foraging-in-the-heart-of-france>.

"Elektromote" in a Berlin suburb. This experimental demonstration spawned other developments in Europe, and separate experiments were conducted in the USA. In 1899, another vehicle which could run either on or off rails was demonstrated in Berlin.²⁵ There was even a demonstration at the Paris Exhibition of 1900, and the world's first passenger-carrying trolleybus operated at Bielatal (Biela Valley, near Dresden), in Germany starting in 1901.²⁶ The latter system worked via the under-running trolley current collection system, with two horizontally parallel overhead wires and rigid trolley poles spring-loaded to hold them up to the wires.²⁷ This system inspired how the robots comprising the population of the Fake Paris would also run, with their feet in tracks, and poles connecting them to overhead wires. There were also demonstrations of the trolley bus near Milan, Italy.²⁸ Jacopozzi was Italian and it would have been possible for him to have seen a trolleybus and become inspired to create the shadow people in this manner. It would also be completely reasonable to think that the children, while living in Germany had seen a trolleybus and would recognize what it was and how it worked.

²⁵ Charles Dunbar, "Buses, Trolleys and Trams", (Paul Hamlyn Ltd, 1967), 81.

²⁶ Henry Martin, *Lignes Aeriennes et Trolleys pour Automobile sur Route* (Libraire Polytechnique Ch., 1902), 29.

²⁷ Charles Dunbar, "Buses."

²⁸ *Ibid.*

Creative License with Historical References

Though an important aspect of writing this musical was to be educational, and I did my best to remain as historically accurate as possible, I did so within the confines of the fantasy. Would there really have been artificially intelligent robots roaming the Fake Paris during WWII? Absolutely not. But within the reality of the world I created, I made sure that everything was as historically accurate as possible from the mechanisms behind the robots to the dates and timeline of events. I made choices within the musical that I thought made it stronger and reinforced the stories and message of the piece, which ended up being more important than facts or figures.

Use of the Yellow Star

The Yellow Star was a cloth patch that Jews were ordered to wear to mark them as Jews in public. Intended or not, it served as a badge of shame.²⁹ Throughout history, in times of religious and racial persecution, Jewish people have been forced to wear badges to indicate their religious background. It was first introduced by Umayyad Caliph Umar II in the early 8th century.³⁰ This practice has continued across centuries, continents, and empires and it was no different in Europe during WWII and the Holocaust. The star has become a symbol of the Holocaust and is closely associated with it.

However, the law forcing all Jews over the age of six in the Reich to wear the Star of David with the word Jude (German for Jew) inscribed in faux Hebrew letters did not go into effect until September 19, 1941, more than a year after the events of *City of Light*.³¹ Regardless, I wanted to use this well recognized symbol within *City of Light* also. I thought that its association

²⁹ Jacob D'Ancona, *The City of Light*, (New York: Citadel, 2000) 23-24.

³⁰ Dean Bell, *Antisemitism: A Historical Encyclopedia of Prejudice and Persecution*, Volume 1, ed. Richard Levy, (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, Inc.), 779.

³¹ Jacob D'Ancona, *The City of Light*.

and the message behind the use of it would be powerful enough to justify disregarding the timeline and including it within the musical.

The Zazous

The Zazous were a subculture formed in France during World War II. The Vichy regime, during the German occupation of France, worked with the Nazi occupiers and had an ultra-conservative morality. They instated and used a whole array of laws against a youth that was edgy and disillusioned. As in 1870-1871, France responded to her devastating downfall by restructuring previous institutions and producing new ones.³² The Vichy regime had begun 'Youth Worksites' in July 1940 and Zazous considered it an effort to indoctrinate French youth. The regime saw the Zazous as a rival and treacherous influence on youth. Soon they began to round-up Zazous and sent some to the countryside for hard labor, others to camps, while others were beaten on the street. They became Enemy Number One of the fascist youth organizations. "Scalp the Zazous!" became the slogan of the organization Jeunesse Populaire Française in particular. Squads of young JPF fascists armed with hairclippers attacked Zazous.³³

The Zazou subculture represented an important dissident minority in a society of widespread complicity and acquiescence. "The Zazous were very obviously detested by the Nazis, who on the other side of the Rhine, had [for] a long time decimated the German cultural avant garde, forbidden jazz and all visible signs of...degenerations of Germanic culture..." (Pierre Seel, who, as a young Zazou, was deported to a German concentration camp because of his homosexuality).³⁴

³² Larry Portis, *French Frenzies: A Social History of Pop Music in France*, (Virtualbookworm Publishing, 2004), 96-97.

³³ Diana Crane, *Fashion and Its Social Agendas: Class, Gender, and Identity in Clothing*, (University of Chicago Press, 2001), 183.

³⁴ Pierre Seal, *Deported Homosexual*, (Basic Books: 1995), 42-44.

These young people expressed resistance and nonconformity through aggressive dance competitions and sometimes against soldiers from the occupying forces. When the yellow star was forced on Jews, non-Jews who objected began to wear yellow stars with ‘Zazu’, ‘Goy’ (Gentile) or ‘Swing’ written on them instead.³⁵ The Zazous were to be found throughout France, but were most concentrated in Paris. I used this resistance movement that occurred during the Occupation of Paris and referenced it throughout *City of Light*. Though the Zazous had not yet formed during the span of time the musical is set in, I still thought that referencing this movement and their actions made the piece more powerful and was a reflection of what would and did come by in Paris.

Murder of the German Delegate

An interesting event that I wanted to play with in *City of Light* was the unexplained and unsolved murder of a German delegate sent to negotiate the terms of the takeover of Paris with the French. General von Kuchler, commander of the Tenth Army, broadcast over the radio that he was sending a delegate to negotiate in St. Denis.

General Dentz, one of the French officers holding Paris, did not feel that the commander of an open city was empowered to negotiate with the enemy. French general headquarters agreed and added that they did not feel that commanders of an open city should even have the wherewithal to receive a foreign delegate. As such, General Dentz declined to even respond to the Germans request for a meeting.³⁶

However, something went wrong and as the German delegate was driving to the meeting spot, he was attacked by machine gunners and killed. His second in command fled, unscathed, back to the German lines. When General von Kuchler discovered what had occurred, he became

³⁵ Gerard Walter, *Paris Under the Occupation*, (The Orion Press: New York, 1960), 127.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

furious and wanted to immediately strike back at and destroy Paris. He was talked down from this course of action, and he next sent out a broadcast demanding the French meet with his delegates—and announced that if no one showed up, they would destroy Paris.

This story is largely unknown but very interesting. I found that the question of exactly who murdered the German delegate fit in quite nicely with the story of City of Light. I was able to pose my own theory on what might have occurred that night, weaving these true events preceding Paris' occupation with my own story to bolster it. The actions of whoever killed the German delegate were clearly foolhardy—but they would most definitely fit the actions of a frantic man desperate to change the course of history for his own gain.

Individuals Referenced in Text

-Fernand Jacopozzi

The city needed a leader, and from the research that I did on the designer of the city, I felt that he could be just that. Although he was Italian, he was trusted by the French government to enact this daring and secret plan to build a fake Paris. He ended up wielding much power in Paris, and it is thanks to him that the Eiffel Tower, Arc de Triomphe, Opera Garnier, Place de la Concorde, and Madeleine were illuminated. He had a way of speaking that was charismatic. He convinced Andres Citroen to publicize his brand on the Eiffel Tower in lights, saying:

...Your name 20 meters in height, in illuminated letters, on the most illustrious of monuments... A flamboyant pylon bearing your name... a name visible from 50 kilometers away... an advert on a scale never seen before... It will be the torch of Paris, the city of light...³⁷

³⁷ Pierre-Marie Gallois, *The Hourglass of the Century*, (L'Age d'Homme, Lausanne, 1999), 23, quoted Fernand Jacopozzi, unknown source.

Jacopozzi's career flourished and he illuminated the Eiffel Tower again and again in astounding ways. In 1927, a long article in *L'Illustration* waxed poetic about:

...The person who has turned our Eiffel Tower, a simple and useless peak in the Paris night sky, into the most splendid and enchanted electric theatre that the world has ever seen.... There has been nothing so great or grandiose as this until now.³⁸

Jacopozzi, though not well known as a historic figure, became known symbolically as the Father of Nightlife Paris, who Dr. Xavier Boisel calls, "the person who contributed massively to the myth of the city of light" and was nicknamed by the French public "the magician of light."³⁹ I felt that these accolades would have given him a swelled sense of self importance. If he were to leave behind a city of Paris full of automatons to keep this city of his running, he would leave behind a version of himself to oversee it all. In this way, Fernand Jacopozzi became the character of the Radio Announcer, the director of the Fake Paris in *City of Light*.

This character also became a Hitler figure, not as to insult the integrity of Fernand Jacopozzi, but to examine someone whose ideology has become so deep and entrenched, that a certain course of action has become so important that it must be realized no matter the circumstances or consequence. I wanted to explore how far a character would be willing to go to achieve his ends and to what extremes.

Once my Jacopozzi was situated as a character within the play, I wondered where he would have gotten the inspiration for the other robots he was creating within the city. I thought it would be interesting to explore if he based each robot on someone he had met or heard of in

³⁸ "Modern Magic", *L'Illustration* no. 4423, December 1927, XXXI.

³⁹ Xavier Boissel, *Paris Est En Leurre*, (Editions Inculte, 2012), 23.

relation to Paris during WWI while he was building the city, and the following characters emerged.

-Edith Wharton

I wanted a strong central female character so I looked for women in Paris during WWI and stumbled across Edith Wharton. Though she was a prize winning American writer, she was living in Paris at the time. After her marriage collapsed, she moved permanently to Paris and was there for the onset of WWI.⁴⁰ Many fled from Paris, but she remained behind and was an indefatigable and devoted champion of the French war effort. She was even appointed Chevalier of the Legion of Honour, the country's highest award, in recognition of her dedication to the war effort in 1916.⁴¹

She undertook many causes, including running a workroom for unemployed women where she found them sewing jobs and made sure they were fed and paid. After Germany invaded Belgium, she helped to set up relief centers for refugees and formed the Children of Flanders Rescue Committee to provide refugees with shelter. She worked tirelessly, organizing concerts to employ musicians, opened tuberculosis hospitals, and fundraised hundreds of thousands of dollars used to further relief work. She used her writing to support the war effort as well and, as one of the few foreigners allowed to visit the front lines of the war, she wrote a series of articles about her experiences.⁴² Wharton also wrote a novel and two novellas during this time. Because of her enthusiasm and unwavering work, her friend, Henry James, called her

⁴⁰ Eleanor Dwight, *Edith Wharton: An Extraordinary Life, An Illustrated Biography*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994), p.183.

⁴¹ Shari Benstock, *No Gifts From Chance: A Biography of Edith Wharton*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1994), 456.

⁴² *Ibid.*

“The Great Generalissima” and thus a character in *City of Light* was created.⁴³ I especially liked the military nature of her nickname as it corresponded with the other military figures I planned to incorporate into the play as well. The role she created for herself within the city made sense.

She also had wonderful quotes, some of which ended up inspiring songs in the musical or were somehow incorporated into the text of the play. The one I found most inspiring was, “There are two ways of spreading light: to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it.”

-Philippe Petain

I next began to look for a figure that would have been well known in both WWI and WWII. I thought it would be interesting to see how this same character’s path split and how the choices one person would make in two different situations would take place. I stumbled upon Philippe Petain. He was a prolific Commander during WWI and was known as the Lion of Verdun.⁴⁴ Due to his outstanding leadership in WWI, he became a national hero in France.

In WWI, he was quickly promoted through the ranks due to his intelligence and leadership skills. In 1916 he was promoted to Commander during the Battle of Verdun. Petain was passed over for promotion to replace Joseph Joffre as the French Commander-in-Chief, but this successor ultimately failed in this position.⁴⁵ This caused the people and soldiers to mutiny and Petain was then instated. After the war, in 1918, he was made a Marshal. He did end up reluctantly trying his hand at politics, but had a failed run for the presidency.

He kept very active and involved in the military and the government between WWI and WWII, but when the Germans invaded France in 1940, he became instrumental in allowing Paris to be taken. When Winston Churchill of England implored them to fight, Petain reportedly told

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Richard Griffiths, *Marshal Petain*, (Faber & Faber, 2011), 89.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 209

him that making Paris into a ruin would not affect the “final event”.⁴⁶ The day before the occupation, Petain sought to convince the cabinet members of

.... the need to stay in France, to prepare a national revival, and to share the sufferings of our people. It is impossible for the Government to abandon French soil without emigrating, without deserting. The duty of the Government is, come what may, to remain in the country, or it could no longer be regarded as the government.⁴⁷

When the government fell and became the true Vichy regime, Petain was made Prime Minister. Unfortunately, his regime took on authoritarian and fascist elements. He went power hungry, got rid of the role of the president, and gave himself all sorts of executive powers. He ended up with nearly all governing power in France. The government became very conservative and harsh, the full power of the law crashing down on those who did not agree with the changes he enacted. After the war, he was placed on trial for treason, convicted of all charges, and sentenced to death. However, due to his age and his contributions in WWI, his death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment and all his awards, recognitions, and distinctions were stripped away except for the title of Marshal.⁴⁸

Though he, too, might have made an interesting Hitler figure, I thought it would be interesting to see how, if Petain were a robot in the fake city, how he would have diverged from the path that the true Petain would have taken after WWI. Their paths are very different, and in Act II, the Commander (his rank during the majority of WWI) is overjoyed to find out his counterpart had been promoted. He is outraged when Paris is allowed to be taken and shocked

⁴⁶ Ibid. 254

⁴⁷ Ibid. 317

⁴⁸ Ibid. 334

and crestfallen to discover that he himself was the one who gave the city up. I think it added this interesting layer to the story to see how people can change and be different from what they expected. The same situation brings out different responses in us all. It can even be wondered how the Commander would have reacted before meeting the children—did this experience with them change his perspective at all? Would he have been more like the historical Marshal Petain of WWII had he not met them? It was very interesting to explore in my writing how the Commander's depths might have shifted over time.

-Ferdinand Foch

In looking for my next WWI military figure, I discovered Ferdinand Foch who was a French officer. He was acclaimed as "the most original military thinker of his generation."⁴⁹ Due to his bravery in battle and ability to win against the odds, he was quickly promoted through the ranks. After the heavy casualties that were suffered by the Allied armies during the Battle of the Somme in December 1916, Foch was removed from command, only to be recalled and promoted to chief of the general staff once Petain took over as Commander in Chief in 1917, due to their similar fighting styles.⁵⁰

Though he was only involved in WWI, I thought that his personality was sufficiently interesting to imagine his participation in my story. There was a duality to his character that I tried to attribute to the character of the Major-General. On one hand, he was described as an uncompromising and rash leader who led aggressive maneuvers in the First Marne, Flanders, and Artois campaigns of 1914-1916. During a battle in 1914, he is said to have declared: "My centre

⁴⁹ Michael Carver, *The War Lords: Military Commanders of the Twentieth Century*, (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1976), 123.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

is yielding. My right is retreating. Situation excellent. I am attacking."⁵¹ On the other, he was a tactical diplomat who coordinated the French, British, American, and Italian efforts into a unified assemblage.⁵² It is to him that the victory over the German army is attributed. I tried to represent this duality within the character as well and to explore how these attributes truly shaped his abilities as a leader.

Another interesting parallel I discovered that had particular resonance with City of Light was that a statue of Foch was erected at the Compiègne Armistice site once the area was converted into a national memorial. This statue was the one item left untouched by the Germans following their victory of France in June 1940. Once France surrendered on June 21st, the Germans levelled the area surrounding the armistice sites in which both the 1918 and 1940 surrenders had taken place. Only the statue of Foch was left standing, with nothing to view but a wasteland.⁵³

-Joseph Joffre

I stumbled upon Joseph Joffre, another French officer, while doing my research on both Petain and Foch. At first, he did not catch my eye until I discovered that he was affectionately nicknamed Papa Joffre by the French and American public. I researched his personality and how it affected his war time activities and found that he was often reticent and aloof, a man of unshakeable tranquility who would suddenly break out into furious anger. When asked a significant question about his opinion whether Gallieni, another French officer, would be able to handle a promotion to a chief military role, he is rumored to have merely said, "Perhaps," then, after a pause for thought, "Maybe." Historians attribute his major positive contributions in 1914

⁵¹ Raymond Recouly, *Foch: The Victor of the War*, (Paris, France: Hachette, 1919), 121.

⁵² Charles Messenger, *Reader's Guide to Military History*, (2001) 170-71.

⁵³ *Ibid.* 195

as his unrelenting calm under pressure and calculated reasoning. John Eisenhower, an American military man who worked with Joffre, wrote that Joffre's "personality had a profound effect on the course of history" (Eisenhower 2001, p11).⁵⁴

With further research, I saw how his very personality had shaped the course of WWI. He was quickly promoted while the war saw many officers removed from office. Despite many hiccups made in his plans by others, he always found another way to accomplish his end goals. In 1915, however, after some major losses he began to fall from his position of almost limitless power. Through the maneuverings of his political enemies, such as Gallieni, he was discredited. On December 13, 1916 he was reportedly promised a high position of power in the new government, but was only recognized as a "General in Chief" rather than a "Commander in Chief" which distressed him. As soon as he was promoted to Marshal on December 26th, the first man to be promoted Marshal under the Third Republic, he asked to be relieved.⁵⁵ I thought that the way Joffre was perceived diverged from his actions and I wanted to explore how this person would have handled himself in these new and trying situations that would arise within City of Light.

-Linnie Leckrone

I decided that, just as the Radio Announcer had a committee of men to advise him, the Great Generalissima, his female counterpart, should have the same. I wanted to find as many women of similar status possible considering the time period. I thought that women involved with the military would be a strong choice, so I looked at nurses. I didn't think that using nurses who were French was as important as finding nurses of any nationality who were particularly strong women who were in Paris during WWI that Jacopozzi could conceivably have

⁵⁴ John Eisenhower, *Yanks*, (Simon & Schuster, 2001) 11.

⁵⁵ Robert Doughty, *Pyrrhic Victory*, (Harvard University Press, 2005), 320-321.

run across. What I found very interesting was that though the American Army needed thousands of nurses for World War I, they did not know what to call them. Assigning the women military status was beyond the comprehension of the Army brass of that era, so they called them "Miss," and "Miss" could be considered her rank.⁵⁶

The first woman I decided upon was Linnie, who enlisted in the new Army Corps in 1916 and was sent to France. In 1918, she became part of a Gas and Shock Team in the battle of Chateau-Thierry northeast of Paris. Her personality was also strong and warm, something that appealed to me. She reportedly told her daughter once of holding a young soldier: "He was just a boy, no more than 16 years old. He called me 'Mom.' He died the next morning."⁵⁷ I felt that a character with this kind of generosity of spirit would be a lovely, powerful part for a woman to play.

-Alice Ross-King

I was drawn to Alice because she was a nurse in both WWI and WWII. It was interesting to explore how her WWI experiences would have shaped her and how they might have correlated with her WWII actions. She was actually Australian, and is Australia's most decorated woman.⁵⁸ She served in both Egypt and France during WWI after joining the Australian Army Nursing Service in 1914. She enacted extreme instances of bravery, for example, when the hospital she was working at was bombed. She had just finished a shift but returned to the hospital

⁵⁶ Richard Sisk, "Star Shines for Hero 'Miss'", New York Daily News, (NYC, New York), Aug. 5, 2007.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Lorna Finnie, "Ross-King, Alice, (1887-1968)" Australian Dictionary of Biography. (National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, 2006), 561.

and continued to care for the patients in the ward despite the fact that the canvas tents had collapsed on top of her and the patients.⁵⁹

Another interesting but tragic element of Alice's life was that while in France she met and became engaged to Harry Moffitt, an Australian military officer, but he was killed during the Battle of Fromelles in July 1916.⁶⁰ In *City of Light*, I chose to preserve her happiness of spirit to keep her eternally in a state of being that did not know that kind of pain and found it very interesting to explore how Alice might have been different or developed differently as a character had she not suffered that heartbreak.

-Ellen N. La Motte

Though I was hesitant to include another American nurse when I found Ellen, I felt absolutely compelled to make her a character within *City of Light*. She started as a nurse long before WWI, actually attending John Hopkins Hospital Training School for Nurses as it provided her with respectable professional opportunities and a chance to establish herself as independent from her family's wealth. Within a few years, she established herself as an expert in Tuberculosis nursing. Ellen was the first woman to occupy an executive position in the Baltimore Health department in 1909.⁶¹ She was also a huge proponent of women's rights, going so far as to join the editorial board of the suffrage periodical *The New Voter* and served as contributing editor for the *Maryland Suffrage News* in 1913. Later that year, she moved to France before the onset of WWI and retired from nursing. But once the war began in earnest, she began volunteering for the American Ambulance, an aid relief organizations, until she was hired

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Lea Williams, "La Motte, Ellen Newbold", *American National Biography Online*, (April 2014). <http://www.anb.org/articles/13/13-02684.html>.

by a hospital that worked to aid the French military.⁶² She also wrote a series of fictionalized stories based on her experiences on the front lines, which were eventually published as *The Backwash of War*. The book was censored by the U.S. government for its unsettling portrayal of the devastating effects of war. After the war, her work was just as prolific and she went on to become a vocal anti-colonialist and anti-opium advocate. She published several more books on these topics.

Ellen was just such a strong woman and strong character who did so much during the War that I wanted to place this powerful woman into the musical to take charge and get things done. I thought that her unique experiences made her a valuable contrast to the other nurses as well as the other characters. Such a strong woman made waves in her time and I wanted to show that even during WWI and WWII, women were powerful.

⁶² Ibid.

Turning a Play into a Musical

I found my first composing partner, Noah Nethery, and we began to work on transitioning *City of Light* from a play to a musical in early 2015. I had a clear idea of where I wanted songs to be placed and what they would be about, so we were able to come up with a skeleton plan for the musical. I then went back through the play and edited it to streamline it and still maintain the story's integrity so it could more easily move from a three act play to a two act musical.

We figured out that the easiest system to create the songs was to have an in depth discussion on what the song would be about, who would be involved in it, the feel and style of the song, and have Noah create some rhythms. Once we had chosen a rhythm, I could go back and pull information from the play scenes to write the song lyrics. From there, we would adapt them to best fit the rhythm and Noah would flesh the songs out from there. I found that it was difficult to finalize the script because I could not finish the scenes around songs as the lyrics had not been written yet—I could not tell what other information needed to be kept. We met at least once a week, and we premiered three songs in late September 2015 at the Presidential Research Showcase held at FSU. We worked with three singers and it was an amazing experience to actually hear the songs performed.

After this, I felt that we were falling behind schedule so I recruited two composition assistants, Aleyna Brown and Matthew Damante, to come on board. Unfortunately in December, Noah and Aleyna decided to pursue other interests and Matthew Damante became my primary composer. Robert Stewart joined the team in December as well. We spent winter break working on music—at this point I had enough experience with lyric writing that I no longer had to wait

for a rhythm, and had become adept enough to write them without music. Matthew and Robert also tried their hands at lyric writing for some of the songs.

Over winter break, much of the crew I had recruited to work on *City of Light* ended up leaving the project. I spent much time over winter break refilling these roles, finding a new stage manager, choreographer, and more. Robert eventually left the team and one of my assistant directors, E. Leigh Foster, and our music director, Brad Betros, also began to assist in composition, helping to streamline, clarify, and create melodies.

Even through casting, the show evolved. We cast an actor for the role of Rene whose voice part was a bass rather than the tenor we had planned. We decided he was the best candidate for the role and had to shift and change the keys of songs to fit his range. It also changed some of the ideas we had for that character and we wrote songs that were a better fit.

As the rehearsal process started, we also had the opportunity to quickly workshop pieces. It was a wonderful learning experience to see what worked and what did not, and to help make small changes to the composition of a piece that in the end made a big but effective difference in how the song was perceived or came across.

Even though in the end, multiple composers were a part of the project, we managed to create a consistent sound. I learned so much about the process, understanding how the songs in a musical could make a cohesive whole and how they could all be woven together to achieve a more emotional final product. One of the most effective examples of this is in the final song of the show where the characters touch back on past songs, such as Ori reflecting back to the lyrics and melody of “Any where you want to go/ Any place you want to know” and the Radio Announcer reflecting back to his verses in the opening song of “War, Guerre, Krieg/ Let me tell you a secret, it’s always caused by conceit!”

While we will continue to workshop the piece, City of Light is in a solid place both musically and in the writing and I am satisfied and proud of the quality of the material that will be presented in New Horizons Original Works Festival.

The Rehearsal Process

To begin the rehearsal process, there were two important issues to me that I wanted to begin dealing with right off the bat. The first thing I wanted to do was to create bonds between the cast and production members, so that they could emotionally rely on each other through the difficult and dark material. The next thing I wanted to focus on was educating my actors on the time period and making sure they truly understood the significance of the events of WWII and the Holocaust.

I attempted to get the cast comfortable with one another. The most significant exercises we tried included Gazing, Embracing, Flocking, Memory Sharing, and Song Lists as described below.

In order to begin creating intimacy between the actors I strategically partnered actors based on their characters and had them stand to- to-toe with one another and simply stand and gaze into each other's eyes. I called this exercise Gazing. We began with short intervals and with each rehearsal increased the amount of time the actors had to withstand the exercise until they could gaze into the eyes of any other actor and feel comfortable doing so.

In the same way, we did the Embracing exercise, where partnered actors hugged each other. Their goal was to synchronize their breathing without speaking and to feel comfortable residing in the embrace of their partners. I increased the amount of time we did the exercise each time until each actor could become relaxed and focused on their partners.

Flocking is an exercise that I learned at FSU from Dr. McConnell. You have the actors form groups based on the character dynamics you are trying to work on. They create a formation where one actor is the leader and throughout the exercise they can turn and have another actor step up to be the leadership and direct movement. The actors follow the leader's movements, mirroring them at the same pace. Every actor gets an opportunity to lead their group. We started

out with music that had a very slow, hypnotic beat and with very limited movement where the actors could only move their arms. Through each rehearsal, we subsequently increased the tempo of the music and allowed the actors to move more quickly and utilize more of their body. Finally, we allowed the groups to move and then to disperse, allowing the actors to move and continually form new flocks. The music was always chosen carefully with thought and purpose so that the actors could listen to the music and make connections between it and their characters or the script. The point of the exercise was to become focused on their bodies and their partners and to allow the mood or tone of the music to filter through and give them insight to their character. It usually corresponded to the emotional content of whatever scenes we were blocking that day. I could tell if the flocking was being employed successfully by the actors if the different groups, while separate, begin to flock using the same or similar movements. Gratifyingly, the different groups started to flock in time and in the same motions together yet separately, showing that the actors were all on the same page and wavelength as the others.

Another important exercise we did was Memory Sharing. The first thing we do in every rehearsal is have a check in, regardless of what is on the schedule. On days that we did Memory Sharing, I would have the actors and production team sit in a circle and introduce a theme or for stories that related to the story or character development. They were very broad topics, like “fire”, or a specific event that is shared universally like a birthday, and each person in the circle would share this memory or story with the group so that we could grow closer to each other.

The last major exercise I did with the cast was asking each of them to create a song list or sound track that represented their own character in *City of Light*. I allowed them to choose whether the songs showcased the emotional arc of their characters, their character’s journey, or helped others to understand the personality of that character so that we all saw each other in the

same light. The actors, over several rehearsals, shared their playlists with the rest of the cast and they were able to explain what they chose and why.

At the same time, I was also working with the cast to make sure they understood the references and events within the texts. Using the same method of research that I used on the project testing the effectiveness of Florida's Holocaust Education Mandate, I took my actors out one by one at the beginning of the process and asked them the same questions about the Holocaust that I had asked other FSU students. I found that my actors, too, could not always answer the questions. I felt that it would be ineffective to be trying to use *City of Light* as a vessel of education if the actors themselves did not end up educated about the show through the process and that they themselves would not be able to as effectively teach audiences about the topic either.

We had lessons about the in-depth history and research behind *City of Light*. I went further than that, educating the actors through lectures and PowerPoint presentations about the specific events that would have affected their characters, like Kristallnacht and the Occupation of Paris. Many presentations I made myself but others I received from the United States Holocaust History Museum and other similar, reliable sources. I encouraged actors to continually and always ask questions. I tried to host moderated discussions about the horrific events of the time period while making sure that the conversation stayed appropriate and on track.

One of the most important discussions I had with the actors was about the importance of Holocaust education and what made it particularly relevant. After a long talk, we then moved to *City of Light* and discussed what elements of the musical made it pertinent to Holocaust education and how it helped to achieve that end goal.

Justification

As a young Jewish adult, the events of WWII and the Holocaust have always been present in my mind. I first became engaged with this time in history when I created a documentary in 2011 titled, *Through Their Eyes*, in which I interviewed several Jewish WWII veterans. I was inspired to do this for my Girl Scout Gold Award, the highest achievement a girl scout can attain, in honor of my grandfather, a veteran of the Invasion of Okinawa, who had recently passed away. I was glad that I had taken the time to record him speaking about his time in the Navy during the war. I captured his stories of being swept overboard or aiding Jews in the Shanghai ghettos. But what of other families who always expected they would have more time to collect these stories, or the veteran who had no one to share them with? I decided for my Gold Award project that I would make a documentary chronicling the stories of several Jewish WWII veterans. I interviewed seven veterans, male and female, from the Navy, Air Force, and Army. I bonded with these extraordinary heroes and coaxed stories from them that they had never told, and I was moved and honored by the care with which they gave them to me. They had kept these memories inside them for so long because they were afraid to upset others by sharing the burden of their stories of war. After one interview with a veteran, I was told that he finally felt like he could breathe after all these years. I took these stories, these little moments of history, and made a traditional interview-based documentary film with them. I showcased it at a local school where several of the students were the grandchildren and great grandchildren of the veterans I had interviewed and they had never before heard these stories. They were extremely thankful to have had the opportunity.

Listening to the compelling yet tragic stories of these soldiers, men and women alike, made me aware of how truly awful and significant the events of WWII and the Holocaust were. I wanted to help share these heroes stories, especially when I discovered how few veterans there are left today. Out of the 16 million Americans who served in WWII, fewer than 700,000 remain. With most veterans in their 90s, on average, 431 WWII veterans die every day.⁶³ Less specific statistics can be found for surviving victims of the Holocaust at present, but the idea is clear. We lose more Holocaust survivors and liberators as time goes by. When they are gone, the opportunity to collect their stories will be, too. Aside from revealing to us the dark and evil side of humanity, stories of this time also highlight the best qualities of people: faith, resilience, and forgiveness. Most of all, these stories breed empathy in their listeners, a defining characteristic that is what makes us human. Few events in history can rival the scope of the Holocaust, so we must make the most of what cannot be changed and use these stories to educate future generations to make sure that never again does it occur.

I also took for granted how lucky I was to be educated and speak with these survivors. It was not until I became an intern for the Holocaust Education Resource Council (HERC) that I realized just how fortunate I was to have been well informed—and just how many others of my peers were not. Working in Holocaust Education was eye opening because I discovered how poor Holocaust education really is across the United States.

I was shocked to find out that only six states have laws requiring Holocaust education in schools. Florida is one of those six. In 1994, when Florida instated the Holocaust Education Mandate; the events of the Holocaust and WWII were still present in the collective conscience. It

⁶³ “WWII Veteran Statistics”, The National WWII Museum.
<http://www.nationalww2museum.org/honor/wwii-veterans-statistics.html>.

was with fitting remembrance that it was formed and its task sites (centers to take charge of Holocaust education around Florida) created to perpetuate this education.

Yet when I did some research for HERC on the effectiveness of Florida's mandate on its twentieth anniversary, I was stunned at how little students knew despite a majority of FSU students being Florida residents who should have been educated (according to the mandate) their entire academic careers. Many were unable to answer questions like, "What country did Hitler lead?", "Who was Anne Frank?", and "What years did WWII take place during?"

The mandate is unclearly written and poorly implemented. Only one teacher per school is required to be Holocaust trained. Even with appropriate funding, educators will be unable to figure out exactly which concepts they are supposed to teach about the Holocaust because the mandate is vaguely written. Without new and innovative ways to teach the material, teachers' efforts will largely be ignored or bypassed by students because it does not interest them or they cannot relate to it. I want students to understand what it means to be a responsible and respectful person, but the ideas listed within the mandate are not substantial enough to bear enough weight and present a teacher with clearly formed facts to impart to students. The times and the needs of students have changed, but the mandate has not.

This generation has many fewer connections and ties to the Holocaust than those of the past. Fewer survivors, liberators, and people present during this time are left as a resource to new generations.

Fewer people are aware of the circumstances of the Holocaust and students have less empathy for events outside their own. Students of today are stuck in an "every man is an island" mindset and they have trouble relating or caring about things that do not directly affect them. According to a 2010 study by the University of Michigan, today's college students are not as

empathetic as college students of the 1980s and '90s, the original students that the mandate was built and aimed for. They are 40 percent lower in empathy than their corresponding students of 20 or 30 years ago when the Holocaust was more recent and more relevant.⁶⁴

Even before I embarked on my documentary project analyzing the effectiveness of the Holocaust Education Mandate, I was already aware of a need for change. I was raised in an area of Florida that does not have very many Jewish people. Despite this, I spent my first years in school at a private Jewish academy. There, I learned much about the Holocaust. But I never experienced anti-Semitism or realized the ignorance that could exist until three years after I moved to public school as a sixth grader.

One day, my orchestra class had a substitute teacher who put a movie on. The movie was *The Diary of Anne Frank*. There was no talk beforehand about the reality or history of the play. Not a word was said afterward either. But the next day, when the substitute left the room for a few minutes, one of the older students declared that he was a Nazi. This student was aware that I was the only Jewish student in the class, and as a result, I was attacked by him in front of my other classmates. He had to be removed from the school by security.

I know firsthand that hate still exists. But I also know that some of this ignorance is due to the poor education our state offers on the topic of the Holocaust and WWII, despite the mandate. I recovered from this experience through my love of theatre, because plays are one of the most effective ways to engender change. Theatre helps our society because it allows individuals to recognize and confront what is happening and take action. It helps those who study, participate, and watch it explore realities, relationships, and ideas that cannot be conveyed simply in words or numbers.

⁶⁴ Diane Swanbrow, "Empathy: College Students Don't Have As Much As They Used To", *Michigan News* (Ann Arbor, Michigan), May 27, 2010.

Because the Holocaust is a sensitive but heavy topic, it can sometimes be overwhelming for people, something they do not look forward to learning about because it is such a dark time in history. To help improve Holocaust education, it would be my goal to help correct and improve education on the topic by introducing it in new and creative mediums, like plays and musicals. People can learn to accept the events of the Holocaust in interactive and different ways that bring it to life in a safe way that fosters learning and empathy.

In light of the times that we live in where our youth are bombarded daily with sensational news coverage, authority abuses its power through violence, and the ultimate expression of hate is through acts of terrorism, Holocaust education is important. Unfortunately, media attention of these acts of violence has desensitized so many and even encouraged some to become active participants with little concern for the ramifications of these actions. We must continue to learn and understand just how words can lead to genocide and ethnic cleansing. The Holocaust teaches us that history matters. Writer Chris Bohjalian said, “There is a line connecting the Armenians and the Jews and the Cambodians and the Bosnians and the Rwandans. There are obviously more, but, really, how much genocide can one sentence handle?” It must be remembered that the Holocaust did not start with gas chambers. It started with people allowing themselves to be divided with “us versus them”. It started with intolerance and hate speech, when people stopped caring, became desensitized, or turned a blind eye. Theatre brings the stories and lessons that we must be taught to life over and over again through so many different contexts. It stops us from forgetting. It reminds us that people make choices; choices make history.

Collaborators

City of Light

Production Team

Director: Danielle Wirsansky

Assistant Directors: E. Leigh Foster & Hannah Katz

Composers: Matthew Damante, E. Leigh Foster, Brad Betros, Robert Allen Stewart, & Noah Nethery

Lyricists: Danielle Wirsansky, E. Leigh Foster, Matthew Damante, & Robert Allen Stewart

Dramaturg: Danielle Wirsansky

Stage Manager: Meredith Key

Assistant Stage Manager: Sarah Demetree

Music Director: Brad Betros

Choreographer: Kassie Meiler

Fight Choreographer: Chanterelle Davis

Costume Designers: Chloe Wilson & Briann Hemp

Performers

Chavivah- Madeleine Childers

Ori- Jaclyn Neidenthal

Rene- Christian Douglass

Radio Announcer- Ryan Friedman

Commander- Brad Betros

General- Jonah Watson

Major-General- Chris Giles

The Great Generalissima- Yancey Reeder

Ellen- Gabrielle Lawlor

Alice- Chanterelle Davis

Linnie- Kate Henderson

Parisians- Brian Piedra, Brooke Schellpfeffer, & Jaquie Campos

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