

OPERA PHILADELPHIA
presents

ROUMAIN/JOSEPH

WE SHALL NOT BE MOVED

Opera
Phila
delphia

APOLLO



WELCOME

You will see the world premiere production of *We Shall Not Be Moved*, an opera by composer **Daniel Bernard Roumain**, librettist **Marc Bamuthi Joseph**, and director-choreographer **Bill T. Jones**. The opera explores the lives of five orphaned Philadelphia teens who, unrelated by blood, identify as a family. Within their interconnectedness lies an important story that may sound familiar to you.

These five family members are finding ways to navigate a society that has seemingly abandoned them. Their education, living situation, and relationship with authority figures like police, teachers, and parents, have been a struggle. With no mentors to support them, they take control of their own future to heartbreaking and inspiring results.

The opera asks its audience to consider contemporary issues of social justice, institutional racism, educational opportunities, the foster care system, family, urban life, gender identity, and many more themes. In order to prepare for the opera, this study guide will allow you to author your own journey through local and national history and contemporary issues. This journey will ask you to discover answers to questions you didn't know you had.

This study guide provides information on two pivotal Philadelphia events with contemporary relevance that inform the opera's context: the 1985 police bombing of MOVE headquarters and the 2013 School District of Philadelphia budget crisis. Additionally, you'll find information on the creative team and cast, and themes addressed in the opera.

Developed in conjunction with the **Apollo Theater** and curriculum consultants from the **School District of Philadelphia**, the study guide should be used over the next weeks and months in your classroom or on your own as a resource to learn, think, reflect, and express your thoughts about these present-day concerns. Share your thoughts, poems, raps, and other original creations with us via **#WSNBM**.

To go further with this opera, download a free scanner app such as **QR Reader** onto your smartphone. Use this app to hover over QR codes throughout the book that will take you to websites where you can learn more about the issues and topics of the opera.

We hope that this experience will enlighten, inspire, and encourage you to think about the opera's events, the choices made by the characters, and how they were affected by situations beyond their control. We also hope this book encourages a journey of self discovery as you learn about historic events and your place in history's context.



Michael Bolton
Vice President of Community Initiatives
Opera Philadelphia

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DEFINING OPERA

Throughout History

written by Steven Humes

From day one, opera has tried to move its audiences. Composers and librettists have worked tirelessly to elevate stories which when told using all of the arts — music, dance, theatre, costumes, visual art, and more — can lead to an experience that is nothing less than life-changing.

The oldest opera for which music survives is **Claudio Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo***, written in 1607. During the **Baroque** period from 1600-1750, Italian aristocracy wanted to recreate the great classical dramas from ancient Greece and Rome. Such stories provided the ruling elite with a strong connection to the supernatural. When asked to write an opera for **Grand Duke Vincenzo Gonzaga** of Mantua, Monteverdi thought that Orpheus, the Greek god of music, would be of great interest to his audience. Monteverdi's opera brought to life Orpheus' dramatic journey to the underworld in an effort to save his love, Euridice. The premiere of *L'Orfeo* was a great success and Monteverdi emerged as someone who could use music to not only propel a narrative but also deeply affect an audience.

While Monteverdi got his start composing opera for the ruling elite, he helped bring opera to the public. Opera's emotional stories created a frenzy in Venice, Italy towards the middle of the 17th century. No fewer than nine public opera houses opened during this period as the public wanted more opera that reflected their interests. Monteverdi's *The Coronation of Poppea* (1642) is a great example of this change. *Poppea* tells the story of one of Rome's most evil rulers, Emperor Nero, and his love affair with Poppea. Monteverdi's opera premiered in Venice, and *Poppea*'s sensational and bawdy story perfectly matched Venetian interests while creating a gripping and emotional drama.



Figaro (Brandon Cedel) and Susanna (Ying Fang) embrace during the final scene of The Marriage of Figaro.
Photo: Kelly & Massa Photography

The eighteenth century, known as the **Age of Enlightenment**, was the next great period of change in Europe. People were talking about new forms of government and organization in society, especially the developing middle class. As society changed, so did opera. Composers felt the need to move away from the complexity of the Baroque style and wanted to instead write music that was simpler and more focused on pure, raw emotion. **Christoph Willibald Gluck** was one of the first to achieve this with his opera *Orfeo and Euridice* (1762). Gluck's music was free and evoked the unaffected expression of human feelings. While Gluck's opera told the same story as Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*, his music brought new life to the narrative and was of greater appeal to the audience of his time.

The later part of the eighteenth century marked a period of great revolt. In 1776, the **American Revolution** changed the world. A few years later, the French had their own revolution (1789) and the first modern democracies were born. Reflecting this new way of thinking, audiences



wanted to see characters like themselves on stage. **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's** *The Marriage of Figaro* (1786) did just that. It told a story about aristocratic class struggle that had both servants and nobility in leading roles. With the characters of Figaro and Susanna, Mozart gave opera relatable human beings. Mozart's operas embody the tenets of the Enlightenment such as equality, freedom, and the importance of the lower classes.



Morris Robinson as the Grand Inquisitor and Eric Owens as King Phillip in Verdi's *Don Carlo*.

Photo: Sofia Negron

In the 1800s, Italian opera developed further with the *bel canto* movement, which means “beautiful singing.” Opera continued to be about real stories and achieving honesty in expression. The most famous *bel canto* composers were **Gioachino Rossini** (1792–1868), **Gaetano Donizetti** (1797–1848), and **Vincenzo Bellini** (1801–1835). The success of these composers can be measured in their ability to withstand the test of time. Rossini's popular comedies, *The Barber of Seville* (1816) and *Cinderella* (1817), are still some of the most popular operas performed today.

By the middle of the 19th century, the **Romantic Movement** led many composers to champion their own national identities. Composers and librettists created operas for the audiences they knew best. German operas like **Carl Maria von Weber's** *Der Freischütz* (1821), Russian operas like **Mikhail Glinka's** *A Life for Tsar* (1836), and French

operas like **Giacomo Meyerbeer's** *Les Huguenots* (1836) were performed frequently in their native countries.

In Germany, **Richard Wagner** brought the Romantic period to its peak by exploiting the grand potential of opera. How could all of the elements — orchestra, set, chorus, soloists, and more — be elevated to transform a story and deeply effect an audience? In *The Ring of Nibelung* (1876), a series of four operas taking over 15 hours to perform, Wagner created one of opera's greatest masterpieces.

Opera in the 20th century emerged as a period of great experimentation. Composers like **Giacomo Puccini** (*La bohème*, 1896), **Richard Strauss** (*Salome*, 1905) and **Benjamin Britten** (*Peter Grimes*, 1945) continued to evolve their national styles. Others, horrified by the destruction of **World War I** (1914–1918) and other aspects of modern life, created music that was new and drastically inharmonious. Meanwhile, American opera had a huge hit with **George and Ira Gershwin's** *Porgy and Bess* (1935) which included the musical style of jazz and blues.

Today, opera continues to grow and expand. Opera Philadelphia helps to shape the future of opera by producing important new works like **Daniel Schnyder** and **Bridgette A. Wimberly's** 2015 opera, *Charlie Parker's YARDBIRD*, about the tortured jazz saxophonist. In April 2016, the opera was the first to ever be performed at the famous **Apollo Theater** in Harlem.

With *We Shall Not Be Moved*, we approach the beginning of a new chapter in the history of opera. However, you will realize that while opera has taken many forms over the past 400 years, composer **Daniel Bernard Roumain** and librettist **Marc Bamuthi Joseph** have followed in the footsteps of Monteverdi, Gluck, Mozart, and Wagner by creating an opera that reflects the interests, emotions, and stories of the time.



Porgy and Bess
George and Ira Gershwin
1935

bit.ly/hiporgy



Charlie Parker's YARDBIRD
Daniel Schnyder
2015

bit.ly/phiyardbird

THEATER

Anatomy

Opera singers must act on stage as well as sing! This means that they have to understand the stage layout. When directors rehearse with singers, they must communicate where the singers should be on stage. Otherwise there could be a big traffic jam! To make everything clear, a special vocabulary is used. **UPSTAGE** is the name given to the very back of the stage, away from the audience, and **DOWNSTAGE** is at the front, near the audience. **STAGE LEFT** and **STAGE RIGHT** are used to identify the sides of the stage. It is important to know that left and right are *always* from the performer's perspective from where they stand on the stage.

You might be wondering why it is called "up" stage and "down" stage. This is because opera sets are frequently built on an angled platform or "deck" that is lower in the front near the **apron** and higher in the back. Thus, the lower end is "downstage" and the higher end is "upstage".



Photo: C. Bay Milin

TAKE YOUR PLACES

Pretend you are on the world famous **Apollo Theater** stage in Harlem. The director needs you to take your place on stage. Follow the directions to indicate where you go.

Draw an X on DOWNSTAGE RIGHT

Draw an A on UPSTAGE RIGHT

Draw a Y on UPSTAGE LEFT

Draw a B on DOWNSTAGE LEFT

Draw a Z on DOWNSTAGE CENTER

Draw a C on UPSTAGE CENTER

OPERA

Etiquette

There is nothing quite as exciting as seeing a live performance of an opera. If this is your first time attending an opera, there are a few things you should know.

First and foremost, it is important that you give yourself the opportunity to experience something new. Free yourself from all of the distractions of everyday life and invest in an art form that can really be transformative. Leave the temptations of social media and technology behind and be present by opening your eyes, your ears, and your mind.

As is the case with all live performance, it is important to show respect for those on stage as well as those in the audience. The best way to do this is by remaining as quiet as possible. Do your very best not to disturb those around you. If you become disengaged, try concentrating on the music to see how the accompaniment helps tell the story.

Opera singers are unique because they are trained not to use microphones when singing. As a result, it is important to remain quiet, listen carefully, and not interfere with the music and the story being told. With this in mind, remember that at the heart of opera is a story rooted in deep emotion. So, when the time is right, don't be afraid to laugh or extend your appreciation through applause! Performers need to know how their work is being appreciated.

In addition to showing respect to the people around you, it is important to appreciate the physical theater. Many opera houses or theaters are designated today as historic landmarks. So that we can continue to use these cherished spaces, we must remember to leave them the way they were found. This means keeping our feet on the floor as opposed to on the back of the seat in front of you. In addition, any food or beverage must remain outside of the theater.

Finally, you may be asking yourself what to wear to an opera. This answer can vary from person to person. Decide amongst your teachers and classmates how you plan to dress for this experience.

REMEMBER...

Please Do...

- Applaud after the arias; you can shout "Bravo!" for men and "Brava!" for the women.
- Use the bathrooms before the performance begins or at intermission.
- Be careful in the auditorium! Theaters can sometime be old and difficult to navigate.
- **Turn off your cell phones and all electronic devices.**
- Obey all directions given by theater ushers and staff.
- Enjoy the show!

Please Don't...

- No food, gum, nor beverages are permitted inside the theater.
- No photographs or video footage may be taken during the performance.
- No talking or whispering during the performance.



For a fun video of what's expected at the opera, please visit:

tinyurl.com/OperaEtiquette

OPERATIC

Voice Types

Have you ever wondered why every person's voice sounds slightly different from each other? The human voice is a fascinating and complex instrument with many factors that make each one of us sound unique. The length and strength of the vocal chords, how thick the vocal chords are, the shape of the nasal passages, mouth, and throat all help to determine whether a voice will be high or low, bright or warm.

In opera, voices are classified into seven main categories (from highest to lowest): **soprano**, **mezzo-soprano**, **contralto**, **countertenor**, **tenor**, **baritone**, and **bass**. Today, we still use these voice classifications. It is important to know that a person can only know their true voice type when they become an adult. The following people have distinguished themselves as past and present leaders of their voice type. Choose one opera singer to research and share your discoveries with your friends. Use the QR Codes to hear each voice type.



bit.ly/yingfang

SOPRANO is the highest female voice type with a traditional range of A below middle C to the C two octaves above that. The soprano usually plays the heroine of the story and is often the center of the romantic storyline.



Angela Brown
soprano



Ying Fang
soprano



Stephanie Blythe
mezzo-soprano



Denyce Graves
mezzo-soprano

MEZZO-SOPRANO is slightly lower than soprano, with a range usually G below middle C to the B^b two octaves above. They are often supporting roles of motherly types or villains. They also will often sing trouser roles in which they portray boys or young men.



bit.ly/phiblythe



bit.ly/phimarian

CONTRALTO is the lowest female voice, with a range of the F below middle C to the second G above middle C. It is a rare voice type, so the roles can often be sung by mezzo-sopranos. It is the darkest in timbre and is reserved for specialty roles, such as grandmothers, noble witches, and goddesses.



Marian Anderson
contralto



Meredith Arwady
contralto



David Daniels
countertenor



John Holiday
countertenor

COUNTERTENOR is the highest male voice, with a range that is similar to the contralto: a below middle C to the F an octave and a half above middle C. Frequently these men achieve their high range through bridging their chest voice with their head voice (falsetto). While this voice type was less popular from 1800-1940, composers today utilize countertenors more often.



bit.ly/phidaniels



bit.ly/lbrownlee

TENOR is considered the highest “natural” male voice, with a range of D below middle C to the C above middle C. Beginning in the Classical era (1775-1825), the tenor has been assigned the role of the hero or the love interest of the story.



Lawrence Brownlee
tenor



Ramón Vargas
tenor



Jarrett Ott
baritone



Juan Pons
baritone

BARITONE is the most common male voice type, with a range midway between tenor and bass, from A an octave below middle C to the G above middle C. The baritone is often the comical leader, but can also be the villain who stands in the way of the soprano and tenor’s love.



bit.ly/jarrettott



bit.ly/morrisrobinson

BASS is the lowest and darkest of the male voices, with a range of E almost two octaves below middle C to the F above middle C. Bases can portray characters who convey wisdom or nobility, but also comedic characters.



Samuel Ramey
bass



Morris Robinson
bass

Photo Credit:

Angela Brown – Roni Ely; Ying Fang, Denyce Graves, Jarrett Ott – Dario Acosta;

Meredith Arwady, David Daniels – Simon Pauly; John Holiday – Fay Fox;

Lawrence Brownlee – Ken Howard; Samuel Ramey – Christian Steiner; Morris Robinson – Ron Cadiz

SO YOU WANT TO SING

Like an Opera Singer?



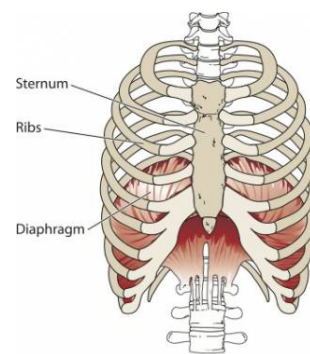
Soprano Christine Goerke leads Opera Philadelphia Emerging Artist Thomas Shivone in a master class at the Perelman Theater. Photo: Kelly & Massa Photography

Singing on the opera stage is very hard work! Singers are like athletes, constantly training to perfect their voices. They ask their voices and bodies to do what most of us without training can't do: sing incredibly intricate and difficult music and project their voices to be heard over a 60-piece orchestra without microphones or amplification.

Singing begins with the human voice, a very versatile instrument. It can produce sounds that present a wide range of frequencies that we call pitches.

Our voices are able to change in volume as a result of the air we exhale from our lungs and control with our **diaphragm**, a muscle right behind our stomach that separates the chest cavity from the abdomen. When we inhale deeply, the diaphragm lowers and the ribs and stomach expand as the lungs fill with air. Then the diaphragm guides the air out when it contracts, causing our vocal folds to vibrate. **Vocal folds** are fibrous bands that are stretched along the two sides of our **larynx**, or our sound instrument, just below the 'Adam's apple.' When we hum, talk,

or sing, air passes through the larynx causing the vocal folds to vibrate, creating a sound that is then shaped by the other parts of our bodies including the mouth, tongue, teeth, and lips. To sing different pitches and volumes, singers must control the flow of air, through the vocal folds in our larynx. They practice vocal exercises daily so that they can quickly adjust to the demands of the music without thinking about it.



To see the vocal folds in action, visit
tinyurl.com/cords-in-action



To see how the diaphragm works, visit
tinyurl.com/diaphragmatic-demo



THE LANGUAGE OF *Opera*

ACT	main sections of a play or opera
ARIA	a solo song sung in an opera
BALLET	dance set to music
BLOCKING	action on stage
CHORUS	music composed for a group of singers; the name of a group of singers in an opera
CONDUCTOR	person who rehearses and leads the orchestra
DUET	a song performed by two singers
DRAMATURG	a specialist in dramaturgy, especially one who acts as a consultant to a theater company, advising them on possible repertory
LIBRETTO	the text or words in an opera, an opera's script
ORCHESTRA	a group of musicians who play together on various musical instruments
OVERTURE	a piece of instrumental music played at the beginning of an opera
RECITATIVE	words that are sung in the rhythm of natural speech
SCENE	acts of an opera

Lawrence Brownlee, tenor, performs the title role in *Charlie Parker's YARDBIRD*. After its World Premiere with Opera Philadelphia, the opera traveled to Harlem and graced the stage of the historic Apollo Theater. It has since been performed at Madison Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago and Hackney Empire in London.

Photo: Sofia Negron



A PROUD LEGACY: *Philadelphia's African-American Opera Singers*



Marian Anderson (February 27, 1897- April 8, 1993) was born in Philadelphia on Webster Street. She grew up on Colorado and Fitzwater Streets and attended **South Philadelphia High School for Girls**. Her father was a salesman at the **Reading Terminal Market** and her mother worked as a laundress. Marian's unique abilities were noted at an early age and she began her formal music studies at 15. In the winter of 1925, Marian entered the talent auditions for the Lewisohn Stadium Concerts of the City College of New York. These concerts were an integral part of New York City's cultural life. She won first place over 360 other contestants with her rendition of "O mio Fernando" from **Gaetano Donizetti's *La Favorita***. On August 26, 1925, she sang with the New York Philharmonic and brought the house down with her breath-taking trill at the end of the same aria.

Racism prevented Marian from advancing her career in America. As a result, she went to Europe where the walls of segregation were not as difficult to overcome. She made her London debut in 1930 and won accolades from the preeminent conductor **Arturo Toscanini** who said that a voice like hers "is heard once in a hundred years." In 1935, Marian was back in the United States and made her **Carnegie Hall** debut at Town Hall.

In 1939, Marian was scheduled to sing at **Constitution Hall** in Washington, D.C. The Hall was owned by the **Daughters of the American Revolution** and they did not permit African Americans to perform there. First Lady **Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt** resigned her membership with the organization as a result of this injustice. Another concert was organized for Marian on Easter Sunday, April 9, 1939 on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial before a throng of 75,000. A mural of the event is on the walls of the Department of the Interior in Washington. At its dedication, Secretary Harold L. Ickes said, "Her voice and personality have come to be a symbol – a symbol of the willing acceptance of the immortal truth that 'all men are created free and equal'."

Later that spring, President and Mrs. Roosevelt invited Marian to come to the White House and sing for **King George VI** and his wife, the parents of the current Queen of England, **Elizabeth II** of England. Afterward, Marian and Mrs. Roosevelt became good friends.

Sixteen years later, in 1955, a major wall of segregation fell in the operatic world. At the age of 57, Marian became the first African American soloist to sing at the **Metropolitan Opera** in New York. She sang the role of Ulrica in **Giuseppe Verdi's *A Masked Ball***.

In 1958 she was officially designated a delegate to the United Nations as a goodwill ambassador of the United States. In 1972 she was awarded the United Nations' Peace Prize.

In her musical way, Marian embodied this phrase, "We Shall Overcome!" As a gift to all of us, she did.

Marian Anderson,
contralto

bit.ly/phimanderson



Paul Robeson,
baritone

bit.ly/phirobeson





Paul Robeson was born in Princeton, New Jersey on April 9, 1898. His father, who had been enslaved, was a minister and taught Paul perfect diction. Paul won a scholarship to **Rutgers University**

and was a brilliant student. He was also chosen for the All-American football team twice. After college, Paul went to **Columbia University** where he earned a law degree. Upon graduation from school, he found that the major law firms would not hire a black man. Paul turned to his second passion, acting, and was selected by **Eugene O'Neill** for his plays *All God's Chillun Got Wings* and *The Emperor Jones*.

In 1925, Paul began a second career as a singer. He gave many concerts in his rich bass-baritone voice. He sang many popular styles for his day: spirituals, work songs, and folk tunes. As his love of singing grew, Paul learned twenty languages.

Still, Robeson was never given the respect he deserved. Even though he was recognized as a great singer and actor, Paul could not find work because of the racial discrimination that existed in the United States. As a result, he traveled to Europe where he worked from 1928 to 1939. In 1934, he visited the Soviet Union and was impressed by the anti-racist beliefs of the Communist Party. In 1936, Paul went to Hollywood to play the role of Joe in the film version of the Jerome Kern Broadway musical *Show Boat*. Paul performed for anti-fascist fighters in Spain between 1936 and 1937. In 1943, during **World War II**, Paul portrayed Shakespeare's *Othello* in New York City and was very successful in Earl Robinson's and John Latouche's cantata *Ballad for Americans*. However, after the war, Paul's visit to Russia came back to haunt him. His career was destroyed by the **Cold War** and his concerts were broken up by anti-Communists. In 1950, he lost his passport until the United

States Supreme Court ordered it returned in 1958. He gave a farewell concert at **Carnegie Hall** and left for Europe. However, Paul's health began to fail, and in 1963 he returned to live out his last days in Philadelphia. He died in on January 23, 1976 as a great artist who fought the good fight against racism and discrimination.

African-American Voices

These African American opera singers have helped pave the way for the classical singers of today.

Donnie Ray Albert , baritone	Roland Hayes , tenor
Roberta Alexander , soprano	Barbara Hendricks , soprano
Betty Allen , mezzo-soprano	Bruce Hubbard , baritone
Marian Anderson , contralto	Sissieretta Jones , soprano
Martina Arroyo , soprano	Isola Jones , mezzo-soprano
Gregg Baker , baritone	Kirstin Lewis , soprano
Carmen Balthrop , soprano	Lester Lynch , baritone
Kathleen Battle , soprano	Marvis Martin , soprano
Jules Bledsoe , baritone	Dorothy Maynor , soprano
Edward Boatner , baritone	Robert McFerrin , baritone
J'nei Bridges , mezzo-soprano	Leona Mitchell , soprano
Angela M. Brown , soprano	Latonia Moore , soprano
Ann Brown , soprano	Jessye Norman , soprano
Uzee Brown, Jr. , baritone	Eric Owens , bass
Lawrence Brownlee , tenor	Eugene Perry , baritone
Janai Brugger , soprano	Herbert Perry , baritone
Grace Bumbry , soprano	Leontyne Price , soprano
Harry T. Burleigh , baritone	Florence Quivar , mezzo-soprano
Nicole Cabell , soprano	Derek Lee Ragin , countertenor
Vinson Cole , tenor	Paul Robeson , baritone
Steven Cole , tenor	Faye Robinson , soprano
Barbara Conrad , mezzo-soprano	Morris Robinson , bass
Terry Cook , bass	Mark Rucker , baritone
Michelle Crider , soprano	George Shirley , tenor
Clamma Dale , soprano	Kevin Short , bass-baritone
Lisa Daltirus , soprano	Marietta Simpson , mezzo-soprano
Kishna Davis , soprano	Donovan Singletary , baritone
Gloria Davy , soprano	Karen Slack , soprano
Mattiwilda Dobbs , soprano	Kenneth Tarver , tenor
Todd Duncan , baritone	Tichina Vaughan , mezzo-soprano
Simon Estes , baritone	Shirley Verrett , soprano
Maria Ewing , mezzo-soprano	William Warfield , baritone
Ryan Speedo Green , bass-baritone	Felicia Weathers , soprano
Denyce Graves , mezzo-soprano	Mary Elizabeth Williams , soprano
Eric Greene , baritone	Lawrence Winters , baritone
Gordon Hawkins , baritone	Arthur Woodley , bass



Angela Brown, soprano
Greg Baker, baritone

bit.ly/phiaida



Eric Owens,
bass-baritone

bit.ly/phiowens

WE SHALL NOT BE MOVED

Players and Synopsis



From left to right: John Blue (John Holiday), John Little (Daniel Shirley), Un/Sung (Lauren Whitehead), John Mack (Adam Richardson), John Henry (Aubrey Allicock)
Photo: Dominic M. Mercier

OG's who are spirits and thus can both move fiercely and sing like angels. The ones in the stained glass of the black church. They undoubtedly have memories of what happened here, but they *remember* much more than one historical time or place and express themselves as such. Their job is to teach those histories through movement and conjuring. They are the faculty of 62nd and Osage University.

UN/SUNG: 15 yrs. The Tubman of this railroad. The one who misses mom and dad the most. Expresses primarily through spoken speech.

GLENDA: An officer from North Philadelphia, working in West Philadelphia. A “not a patriot, not a saint” but still genuinely good person. Who may or may not be playing on the right side.

JOHN LITTLE: 17 yrs. Named for the label that Malcolm refused. The thrown away fruit that became the seed that fed the next.

JOHN MACK: 18 yrs. A jazzman armed with a secret stash of quotes from old bluegrass records. The preacher.

JOHN HENRY: 17 yrs. Would rather lift you physically than lift his voice. A BBoy.

JOHN BLUE: 16 yrs. A trans boy who expresses in falsetto and upper register. The brother most likely to steal your things and cut you for good measure.

ACT 1

On the run after a series of tragic incidents, five North Philly teens (John Henry, John Blue, John Little, John Mack, and Un/Sung) find refuge in an abandoned, condemned house in West Philadelphia. The home sits at the exact location of the headquarters of the MOVE organization before it was infamously burned to the ground in a 1985 police confrontation that left 11 people dead and no government officials indicted or meaningfully reprimanded. The teens are assuaged and even inspired by the ghosts who inhabit this home (who we refer to as the OG's), and begin to see their squatting in the home as a matter of destiny and resistance rather than urgent fear or precarious circumstance. Into this mix enters Glenda, a North Philly native turned West Philly cop who patrols this quiet stretch of Osage Avenue on her regular beat. Glenda observes that the young people have taken over the home and are "hanging out" there when they are supposed to be in school. She moves determinedly to sweep the kids out of the home, threatening them with arrest and ridiculing their intentions. But in a chaotic accident, she moves too far and mistakenly discharges her firearm, injuring one of the teens. In her temporary shock, Glenda is overrun by the other young people, who turn the tables on the situation by pointing Glenda's own gun at her and subsequently handcuffing her to a chair in the center of the house.

ACT 2

John Henry lays bleeding in a pool of sorrow, confronted at a desperately young age with his own mortality. All parties are now frightened, disoriented, and vulnerable, and the only sense of empowerment in this bleak moment comes from the OG's who infuse the home with a spirituality that is palpably felt by the young people in particular. Glenda challenges the validity of this 'movement of holy ghosts,' but cannot deny that whatever the origins, the young people, led by the sole female-identified teen, Un/Sung, are clearly operating from a place of conviction.

Still suspicious and driven by her vulnerable position, Glenda probes this conviction, intimating that the teens are not motivated by principle alone. Finally the teens succumb to the reality of the moment: their brother has been wounded and is in need of help, and the most expedient way to help him is to leave the house. They decide to reveal to Glenda the circumstances that drove them to squat in the house on Osage. They think Glenda has something to hide (firing at an unarmed teen) and so do they, and if they come clean with their story, the combination of transparency and quid pro quo may grant them safe, unreported passage out of the house. However, in revealing the origins of their plight, they also realize that a young man who was recently killed by John Blue was Glenda's own brother, Manny.

ACT 3

The family confers feverishly about the increasingly limited options for their next move, concluding that the best "survival" tactic is to "disappear" from Glenda altogether. Un/Sung commits to completing the task, instructing her brothers to leave quickly for a predetermined location to avoid any further witnesses while she does "something awful."

A confrontation between the young girl and Glenda ensues, concluding with silence, complete darkness in the theater, and the assumption of injury.

When the lights come all the way up, the family has vanished, and the house on Osage Avenue has burned to the ground. Glenda tells an interviewer the story of her waning moments with the family from a plane above the action, but we watch a different story unfolding at eye level. All the players are setting the house on "fire," not with kerosene or grand flames, but with small, glass-framed candles. The image is not of arson, but of ritual. The Family is turning the home into an altar, perhaps an instrument of forgiving, of letting go, of release, and of renewal. As the lights come down for the final time, the last remaining image on stage is of the skeleton of a house, lit up like a shrine, while the OG's move around it in holy rites.

WE SHALL NOT BE MOVED

Cast and Creative Team

Performed in English with English supertitles.



UN/SUNG
Lauren Whitehead*
spoken word



GLEND
Kirstin Chávez
mezzo-soprano



JOHN BLUE
John Holiday*
countertenor



JOHN MACK
Adam Richardson*
baritone



JOHN HENRY
Aubrey Allicock*
bass-baritone



JOHN LITTLE
Daniel Shirley*
tenor



OG
Michael Bishop
dancer



OG
Duane Lee Holland*
dancer



OG
Tendayi Kuumba*
dancer



OG
Caci Cole Pritchett*
dancer



Viswa Subbaraman*
conductor



From left to right: Daniel Bernard Roumain (composer), Bill T. Jones (director-choreographer), and Marc Bamuthi Joseph, (librettist).

Photo: Dominic M. Mercier

COMPOSER

LIBRETTIST

DIRECTOR-CHOREOGRAPHER

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

ASSISTANT CHOREOGRAPHER

SOUND DESIGN

COSTUME DESIGN

SET DESIGN

LIGHTING DESIGN

PROJECTION DESIGN

STAGE MANAGER

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER

Daniel Bernard Roumain*

Marc Bamuthi Joseph*

Bill T. Jones*

Seth Hoff

Raphael Xavier*

Robert Kaplowitz*

Liz Prince

Matt Saunders*

Robert Wierzel*

Jorge Cousineau

Mike Janney*

Megan Coutts*

Anna Reetz*

**Opera Philadelphia debut*

DANIEL BERNARD ROUMAIN

Composer, Violinist, Artist Entrepreneur

bit.ly/droumain



Photo: Dave DiRentis

Daniel Bernard Roumain's acclaimed work as a composer and performer spans more than two decades, and has been commissioned by venerable artists and institutions worldwide. "About as omnivorous as a contemporary artist gets" (The New York Times), DBR is perhaps the only composer whose collaborations traverse the worlds of Philip Glass, Bill T. Jones, Savion Glover and Lady Gaga.

Known for his signature violin sounds infused with a myriad of electronic and urban music influences, DBR takes his genre-bending music beyond the proscenium. He has been nominated for an Emmy for Outstanding Musical Composition for his work with ESPN; featured as keynote performer at technology conferences; and written large scale, site-specific music for public parks.

DBR made his Carnegie Hall debut in 2000 with the American Composers Orchestra performing his *Harlem Essay for Orchestra*, a Whitaker commission. He went on to compose works for the Boston Pops Orchestra, Carnegie Hall, the Library of Congress, the Stuttgart Symphony, and a myriad of others.

DBR's commitment to arts education has garnered long-term relationships with countless universities, orchestras, and performing arts centers. DBR earned his doctorate in Music Composition from the University of Michigan, where he served as Guest Entrepreneur in 2015. In 2016 he joined Arizona State University as Institute Professor.

An avid arts industry leader, DBR serves on the board of directors of the League of American Orchestras, Association of Performing Arts Presenters and Creative Capital, the advisory committee of the Sphinx Organization, and was co-chair of 2015 and 2016 APAP Conferences.

MARC BAMUTHI JOSEPH

Librettist, Spoken Word Artist, Educator

bit.ly/phijoseph



Photo: Dave DiRentis

Marc Bamuthi Joseph is a curator of words, ideas and protagonists. His bold poetically-driven work investigates social issues and cultural identity. He is a steadfast believer in empathy as the most valuable currency in building community, and seeks to spark curiosity and dialogue about freedom, compassion, and fearlessness through pioneering arts stewardship and education. A 2017 TEDGlobal Fellow, Bamuthi graced the cover of Smithsonian Magazine as one of America's Top Young Innovators in the Arts and Sciences; artistically directed HBO's "Russell Simmons presents Brave New Voices" and is an inaugural recipient of the United States Artists Rockefeller Fellowship, which annually recognizes 50 of the country's greatest living artists. Dance Magazine named him a Top Influencer in 2017.

Bamuthi's evening length work *red black and GREEN: a blues* was nominated for a 2013 Bessie Award for "Outstanding Production (of a work stretching the boundaries of a traditional form)" and he has won numerous grants including from the National Endowment for the Arts and Creative Capital Foundation. His latest touring work */peh-LO-tab/* is inspired by soccer and Bamuthi's first generation American experience, intersecting global economics, cross border fan culture, and the politics of joy. Recent commissions include the libretto for *Home in 7* for the Atlanta Ballet and theater work for South Coast Repertory Theater. He is currently collaborating with composer DBR on a duo show, *Blackbird, Fly*.

Bamuthi is the founding Program Director of the exemplary non-profit Youth Speaks, and is a co-founder of Life is Living, a national series of one-day festivals which activate under-resourced parks and affirm peaceful urban life. His essays have been published in Harvard Education Press; he has lectured at more than 200 colleges, has carried adjunct professorships at Stanford and Lehigh, among others, and currently serves as Chief of Program and Pedagogy at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco.

BILL T. JONES

Director-Choreographer, Dramaturg

A stage director is responsible for creating the vision around a theatrical work. This vision aims to serve to the best of its ability the work already set forth by the composer and the librettist. A stage director is able to realize their vision by facilitating strong collaboration and optimizing talents from all of the players involved.

Director-choreographer **Bill T. Jones** comes from a generation of makers. These are artists who hunger for the opportunity to create, invent, build, and produce. Bill T. Jones began his career in the early 1970's as a maker in the world of movement and dance.

Prior to the 60s and 70s, the traditional aesthetics of dance had been built up by choreographers like **Martha Graham**, **José Arcadio Limón**, and **Doris Humphrey**. Each welcomed comparisons to the Ancient Greeks, relishing in dance's ability to be a ritual of storytelling and moral values.

Bill T. Jones was at the forefront of a strand of makers who wanted to defeat such traditions. They sought to overcome the need for meaning in movements. They desired to cloud one's ability to identify character, theme, and climax. Why couldn't dance be celebrated if it remained devoid of these structures? Couldn't dance just be a man moving around on a stage with a cup? Isn't there still beauty in dance where an ensemble can explore the realm of movements one is able to achieve without even standing on two feet?

This body of thought led Bill T. Jones to create his own company, **New York Live Arts**. Co-founded by **Arnie Zane**, the late American photographer, choreographer, and dancer, the company is now approaching its 40th anniversary and is celebrated as *the* destination for innovative movement-based artistry.



As a company with the largest new works practice in the world, Opera Philadelphia has emerged as a contemporary in its own right. Beyond quantity though, the company has breathed quality into the art form [see page 20]. Bill T. Jones is one of many who has come to realize this. Now, he not only applauds the company but has joined it.

Adding Bill T. Jones's voice and leadership to *We Shall Not Be Moved* as director-choreographer is about realizing the vision of an opera that carries great potential. Jones came into this project well into its development stages which were being led by Marc Bamuthi Joseph and Daniel Bernard Roumain. The opportunity to be a part of this opera and to collaborate with its creators attracted Bill T. Jones for several reasons. First, Jones recognized how the piece itself could truly and effortlessly communicate to a wide audience, especially communities that had yet to be exposed to opera. Second, he felt that it is an opportunity to educate himself. As a eurocentrist whose body of work causes him to identify more with the 60s, 70s, and 80s, Jones welcomed the opportunity to deepen his understanding of current hip-hop and pop culture by working with two highly sophisticated makers in their own right.



*Bill T. Jones directs the cast of *We Shall Not Be Moved* in a workshop of the opera in March 2017. Over the period of five days the opera began to take its shape. The workshop culminated with a presentation of Act 1.*
Photo: Dave DiRentis

Since joining the development of this opera, Bill T. Jones's primary interest has been clarifying its narrative. Paramount to this has been defining characters with clear psychological motivations. Jones himself recognizes a bit of irony in this as, for a contemporary-minded artist, he first asked the creative team to uphold the conventions of effective storytelling. Remember that story and narrative had previously been of little concern in Jones's career. Being able to translate the intentions of the libretto and the musical score meant casting the right people. First was a need to hire first-rate singers and spoken word artists. However, these individuals also needed to be able to fulfill the goals of Joseph and Roumain as well as to intellectually embody the urban youth of Philadelphia.

Bill T. Jones has particularly been able to implement his background from the movement world in the characters of the OG's. With the help of assistant choreographer, Raphael Xavier, Jones has given this "Greek Chorus" the ability to

communicate with both their voices and their bodies. While originally intended to reflect the spirits of the children who died in the MOVE fire on Osage Avenue, the OG's now stand for the spirit of all African Americans since the 16th century. Jones hopes that young audiences might recognize themselves in the way the OG's traverse the stage.

Ultimately, a maker is someone who is never done when it comes to creating. The way Bill T. Jones has dedicated himself to *We Shall Not Be Moved* is no different than any other work of which he has been a part. His relentless nature in developing art that can uniquely move and influence audiences continues to solidify his legacy to this day.



bit.ly/phibilltjones

CONNECTING WITH THE CAST

Insight to the Opera

DANIEL SHIRLEY JOHN LITTLE



Describe what it has been like to be a part of this world premiere. Is this your first world premiere?

This is my second world premiere; the first was a small role in the premiere of Ned Rorem's *Our Town* while I was a student at Indiana University. But this experience has been decidedly different. It's unlike anything I've ever done. We, the singer-actors, are taking an active role in the creation of the work. Throughout the workshop phase, the composer, librettist, and director-choreographer built and further refined their concept of the piece based on what we as singer-actors contributed, and who we are. Our personalities and voices are woven into the piece itself.

Describe the John you play. Do you find that you are similar to or different from this character?

I have to draw from all the musical experiences of my life (opera, musical theater, art song, choral music, pop, and R&B) to express the musical essence of John Little. He and I see the world in many of the same ways, and we actually share much of the same anger and cynicism. He is a bolder person than I am, so I have to dig deep and be as bold as he is to do him justice. It is a challenge.

Why do you think this story should be told as an opera?

Opera is the meeting place of all the humanities: music, dance, theater,

architecture, design, fashion, visual arts, poetry, and history. As they all united in the past to present stories of gods and goddesses, kings and queens, and great historical figures, now they unite to present the story of young people of color and poverty in 2017. That says a lot about both the vitality of this story and the vitality of opera itself.

What do you hope audiences will take away from the opera?

We Shall Not Be Moved teaches a crucial lesson which is so desperately missing from the political and social discourse today: that "more than one kind of thing can be true." (That's a line from the show, actually.) For example, it is possible to know and state unconditionally that Black Lives Matter while condemning acts of violence taken out on members of law enforcement. Our audience will experience the pain of young people of color profiled and victimized by police, yet will experience sympathy for law enforcement who face tremendous daily risks and pressures (humanized by the complicated, flawed character of Officer Glenda). The piece shows us that it is in fact possible to connect on a human level with people whose experiences are different from our own.

Who do you feel has been your greatest "OG"? Who has taught you the greatest lesson(s) in life? What was it?

My mind immediately went to my middle school choir director, Hugh Davis. In many ways he is the reason that I am doing this today. He believed in me, put me onstage as a soloist, and allowed me to find my voice. I realized under his guidance that I have something to offer the world which is unique. That changed my life. I try to honor Mr.

Davis' influence when I work with my voice students at the East Carolina University School of Music.

What is your favorite musical moment in the opera?

My favorite moment in the opera is when Officer Glenda narrates that, throughout the hostage situation of the second act, she was searching desperately for "a tiny hope that [she] might manage to stay alive." She is met, surprisingly, by an emphatic reply from John Little: "So am I." The other Johns gradually join Little in an intense chorus on those three words, a powerful expression of their inner struggles.

ADAM RICHARDSON JOHN MACK

Describe your experience visiting Osage Avenue. How do you feel it will continue to inspire your work with this opera?



Having the opportunity to go and see Osage Avenue was quite the experience for a few reasons. The first being, so often opera tells stories of fictional people and places that

we have to imagine what things would look like, how our characters would dress, but having the opportunity to visit the site of where our opera takes places makes our characters, albeit fictional, more real. The Opera Philadelphia artistic team sent me research materials so that I could have as much information as possible, but walking on that street and seeing those homes made this project more real. The Renfrow family, who still live on Osage Avenue, welcomed our cast in with the warmest welcome. They shared their stories which meant so much to us. I found out during the second workshop, thanks to my cousin who lives in

Philadelphia, that I have a small connection to the West Philadelphia area. While in the Renfrow's home I had a strong sense of nostalgia. I found out that when I was 6/7 years old, we had a family reunion at my grandmother's aunt's home who just happened to live a block away from Osage Avenue.

Describe the John you play. Do you find that you are similar to or different from this character?

John Mack. He's a complicated young man that's for sure. I think he's the moral compass of the family. He tends to be the voice of reason when things go wrong. His siblings are action first, and I think he's the "think first/act second" sort of young man. He sees a bigger picture that I believe his brothers can't see. Also, his spirituality is a paramount driving force for this character. While workshoping the opera I thought he was very religious, but I now believe he's more of a spiritual person which I think makes him a rather grounded young man. John Mack and I share the quality that we both are analytical about situations. However, Mack's loyalty is where we differ; his unwavering support of his family's decisions could potentially be his downfall in the opera.

Who do you feel has been your greatest "OG"? Who has taught you the greatest lesson(s) in life? What was it?

Excluding any relatives, I would say some of my greatest "OG's" in life are a few of my musical teachers through the years. Robert Brown was my choral teacher at my performing arts high school in Norfolk, Virginia and he was one of the first teachers I feared yet respected the most. He challenged us not just to be "good" singers. Brown wanted us, at 14-18 years of age, to be musicians. He cared about his students and loved us like we were the kids he never had. He sadly passed at an early age, but I think of him quite often. Second would be

Robert Page. He was the head of Opera/Choral Studies programs at Carnegie Mellon University. Page had the weirdest quips and quotes you've ever heard in your life, but he was a musical genius. I can't say that he and I were very close during my time at school, but I developed a strong work ethic during my four years working with him and a professionalism that I take with me into all of my work. I think the biggest life lesson both these men taught me is to work hard and be prepared. I remember Robert Brown often saying, "there are people with pretty voices working at McDonald's." Don't be just a pretty voice because they're a dime a dozen is what I took from that quote. He and Robert Page were strict teachers, but they've forever stayed in mind.

What do you hope audiences will take away from the opera?

Four months away from *We Shall Not Be Moved* being seen by audiences, I'm having the most trouble answering this question. I still think I'm figuring out a lot about these characters and their journeys, which are welcomed challenges when creating a new piece. There is no one saying "this is how it should be done, or this is how it's always been." For my character, I hope the audience sees that I tried to be the voice of reason that I think they would want for these young adults. I hope they leave seeing what I do/did for my family was out of love even if not ultimately the right decision. I hope, especially for Philadelphia audiences, that they know their story hasn't been forgotten and it will forever be immortalized through this opera. I hope the viewers can see themselves through any of the characters because this is a story that could easily happen in any urban American city and I think we see small glimpses of that in our current social climate.

JOHN HOLIDAY JOHN BLUE



Describe what it has been like to be a part of this world premiere. Is this your first world premiere?

Being a part of the world premiere of *We Shall Not Be Moved* at Opera Philadelphia has been a process that I will not soon forget. Even though I have been a part of other premieres, this one is different. It's different on many levels but mostly because it's something that is close to home. It's close to home because these are issues with which the United States is still having problems. Because of the Johns's and Un/Sung's socioeconomic status, they often feel that there is nowhere to go and that their education is subpar. So, as they say in the opera. "The school ain't safe.... the block ain't safe. Let's disappear from view in the west!" The other most important part about this being and feeling real is the fact that I had the opportunity to meet with the Renfrow family who live on Osage Avenue. Their love, energy, and spirit was so palpable, and I felt a duty to tell this story in the best way that I can - especially for them. As long as I live, I'll never forget them.

Describe the John you play. Do you find that you are similar to or different from this character?

In *We Shall Not Be Moved*, I am honored to be portraying the role of John Blue. John Blue was born a female and is transitioning to become a man. Upon viewing the opera, you'll get to see the journey that Blue is on, and you'll see that it's a tough one. As a cisgender homosexual man, I have certainly had my own journey of discovery, and I'm happy with who I am today. Being a part of the LGBTQ community, I am very close friends with many trans people. One of the reasons that I took this role is because my

very best friend, since we were in the 4th grade, is a trans woman. While I am not trans, I'm sure that there are similarities in some of the issues that I, as a gay man, have had to deal with during my life. I think that John Blue and I are a bit different. In his desire to be portrayed as a man, he takes on a persona that is sometimes easily angered. He likes to fight so that people can know that he is strong. Growing up in a very heteronormative society I too have had to fight, so I can relate to John Blue in that.

If you were able to go back in time and tell your high school self one thing, what would it be? Why?

I would tell myself something that I tell every young artist and student that I meet. "There is only one of you in all of time. Get about the business of being the best you that you can be." Oftentimes, I feel that young people get so bent out of shape about being popular; however, popularity is not what propels you forward. What I know for sure is that the belief in God's purpose for one's life and how that can shape and change the world is something that is important. If you have got a gift, and everyone has one, get about the business of using your gift for good. As Maya Angelou says: "When you get, give! When you learn, teach." I've been given and learned so much, and I feel that it is my duty to make sure that I give it back to the world.

Why do you think this story should be told as an opera?

Of course, I'm paraphrasing this, but Leontyne Price used to say that she felt that she could sing her thoughts and feelings much better than she could speak them in an interview. What I think this music will do is force people, on both sides of the aisle, to confront the issues that are ever-present in our society. It will allow folks to look inward about ways in which they can make a difference or BE the change they seek. When I was in graduate school, I used to hang out

with my friend, and I observed a beautiful magnet that he had on his refrigerator. It said the following: "Everything you seek to be you already are." To that end, I think that everything we seek to see in the world is within us. This opera will help people to see that and hear that. It will force them to sit and listen. Then, they will think of ways to make it better...and ways to do better...and BE better. I think this opera will change the world. I really do.

Who do you feel has been your greatest "OG"? Who has taught you the greatest lesson(s) in life? What was it?

There hasn't been one person. I would say that there have been three or four. It's hard for me. I listen and watch people all of the time, so I'm always learning. I try to be open to that. My grandmother's (I lovingly call her Bigmama) greatest lesson for me was always telling me to try. She would always say that her grandmother used to tell her that, "Nothing beats a failure but a try." That's something that I live by in my life. My mother is very shy, but I have always watched her work to provide for us, her family. Sick or well, I observed her getting up and mustering up the strength and determination to provide for us and that is something that has been instilled in me. My Aunt Brenda (my grandmother's sister) would always tell me "Do your best, and let God do the rest." And, my boys choir director, Mr. Adams lives by the three A's of life: Adjust, Adapt and Accept whatever is thrown your way. Let me tell you, those three A's of life have worked wonders in my life, especially in my career.



HIP H'OPERA

The Inspiration Behind the Opera



Marc Bamuthi Joseph meets with Hip H'opera students at Esperanza Academy Charter School in North Philadelphia
Photo: Phillip Todd

We Shall Not Be Moved, the new opera by composer Daniel Bernard Roumain and librettist Marc Bamuthi Joseph, tells the story of five Philadelphia teens, who, although unrelated, call themselves family.

You might wonder where Daniel and Marc got the idea to write an opera about Philadelphia teens. They were moved to create a piece after meeting students in **Hip H'opera**, a project between **Opera Philadelphia** and another Philadelphia arts and culture organization, **Art Sanctuary**.

Hip H'opera has evolved over the years, starting with the exploration of the similarities and differences between opera and hip-hop. The core similarity to both art forms is the importance of storytelling. Hip H'opera supports students by encouraging them to tell their stories.

The program began in 2007 when classically trained composers set poems by students in Art Sanctuary's North Stars after-school program to music. The resulting song cycle was performed by Opera Philadelphia's artists to sold-out audiences at Art Sanctuary's artistic home in North Philadelphia, the **Church of the Advocate**, and in Philadelphia at the **Kimmel Center for the**

Performing Arts. At each performance, the North Stars students read their poems alongside the professional musicians who performed the songs inspired by the poems. One student event visited Harrisburg, the Pennsylvania capital, to perform her poem for then-governor **Edward G. Rendell** at the Governor's Residence.

In 2012, Hip H'opera was reimagined after receiving funding from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation and the Wyncote Foundation. A new, multi-year program began at four Philadelphia high schools; its goal was to have students take a journey of self-discovery, self-reflection, and self-expression through writing. They wrote poems in response to prompts asking them to share their stories of family, struggle, neighborhood, and dreams.

Hip H'opera continued at the four Philadelphia schools, with many of the same students participating year after year. As Daniel and Marc created their very first opera, students continued to explore self-expression and the themes from the first year through dance, music, memoir and journal writing, photography, and other art forms.

As students began to learn more about themselves, they also learned about each other. They began to create a supportive and nurturing community within a safe environment where they were free to express themselves in any way they wanted. Some shared poems of hope while others shared original songs of love, and others explored their cultural heritage through dance.

The 2012 poems were shared with Daniel and Marc in the hopes that they might be used as content for a new opera. What they saw was an opportunity to create a very different work which would celebrate today's youth, while casting a spotlight on some of the challenges youth face today.

Having just completed its final year in May 2017,

Hip H'opera students explored themes and historic events related to *We Shall Not Be Moved* by creating a series of oral histories with community members who were affected by those events. Students also took part in workshops and events surrounding the opera.

Hip H'opera exposed students to a variety of artistic disciplines and created unique opportunities for interactive learning. It bridged artistic genres, using the power of musical storytelling to empower students and augmenting the standard curriculum. Plans are underway to reimagine Hip H'opera again, but this time to offer the program in residency at select Philadelphia high schools.

The following is just one poem written by a student in the Hip H'opera program.

"NO FEAR LIVES HERE"

by Taylor

No fear lives here see I'm destined to rise through the hatred eyes of
big white lies that seems to not terrorize my big brained mind.

No fear lives here I do not care for the ashes of my haters, instigators
and down cold hearted suffer thriving legislators.

No fear lives here there is no shame there is no pain I'm just playing
your game.

No fear lives here don't hate cuz you're too short for me and too fall for
fame.

No fear lives here can you here my crowd givin a round of applause to
the one all show call big balling queen of the world.

No fear lives here I see the pain and fire that lives within and the
rashing of fear that shows through your skin so before you come again
to "knock me down" the 3 steps claim to have on me there. I'll find a
way to make it cuz no fear lives here.

WRITING PROMPT

Join the Hip H'opera experience!

Write a poem or spoken word piece about what you would do if you had no fear. What would you say? Where would you go? Why would it be so? Explore your thoughts and realize what could be done if you were just stripped of all inhibitions. Share your writing with your peers.



FROM HIP H'OPERA TO OPERA

Commissioning We Shall Not Be Moved

by Sarah Williams
New Works Administrator,
Opera Philadelphia



People still commission operas? Yep! Are they commissioned by Kings, Queens, Dukes, Duchesses, or other nobles? Not so much anymore but never say never. Kendrick Lamar? Someone put me in touch!!!!

Commissioning an opera means that someone officially contracts (and pays) a composer and librettist to write it.

So, who commissions them? Arts organizations (such as Opera Philadelphia), philanthropists (people who donate money), and sometimes artists themselves.

Commissioning an opera is no small task, nor is writing one! Opera Philadelphia has an artist-driven and -supported commitment, meaning that we create the room and space for artists to do their thing, elevating their creativity. This goes for composers, librettists, singers, lighting designers, or directors (the list goes on). We currently have the largest new works practice in the world. Right now, we create, produce, and develop more new opera than anyone else. It also means that we are learning and exploring a lot!

Opera is one of the oldest musical art forms. Take a beat because sometimes in our fast-paced life of immediacy and Snapchat, we gloss over how cool and important history really is. However... does it need to FEEL old? Ummmm, NO! Yet, to expand and be propulsive in anything, knowing history is a big deal as it is important to know where something came from.

I like art. I imagine you do too since you're reading this. Do you know why I like art? It's always been a direct reflection of what's happening in society. To be concise, this is what Opera Philadelphia

is doing and looking for in new works. We're working with visionary artists to tell stories driven by music that can be reflective of the world we're living in today, or possibly tomorrow. *We Shall Not Be Moved* is a prime example of this. We are big fans of multi-disciplinary artists; add "visionary" to that and it's a recipe for creative genius. Oh, hey Bill T. Jones! Add Marc Bamuthi Joseph and Daniel Bernard Roumain and that's one incredible artistic trio.

I've been working closely with Daniel, Marc, and Bill for the better part of 3 years now and have watched them pour their hearts and souls into this piece, fighting for something that is difficult, honest, and artistically inventive.

You heard that right! 3 years! An opera takes about 3-4 years to create. It starts with a story, sometimes from original source material (e.g. books, movies, etc.) or wholly original, such as this. Although the creative team is always in touch and working together, they each have their charge. When Marc, our librettist, finished writing the story, it was Daniel's turn to create a sound world that is reminiscent of the characters and story Marc created. As the director-choreographer and dramaturg, Bill then connected the two, looking for reason, intention, clarity, narrative, arc, pacing, repetition, etc...

Workshops are very important throughout the development process of any piece of theatre; it's the time to hear what's been written thus far and to decipher "if it's working." This process began with workshops of the libretto. We hired actors to read the libretto to *We Shall Not Be Moved*. This allowed the creative team to listen to their work aloud and take in the story and its characters. Throughout that process, we saw characters change gender, race, intention, and direction. The story even expanded to define a narrative. Other areas were trimmed or even removed completely. The next step was the musical workshops. Initially this was just a workshop of the first act, or half



*In March of 2017 the cast and creative team of *We Shall Not Be Moved* came together in Philadelphia for a week long workshop to explore the new work.*

Photo: Dave DiRentis

of the opera. With the addition of one or two musical workshops, the entire opera gained its shape. The final workshop was a run through of the opera from beginning to end. For *We Shall Not Be Moved*, most cast members for the production were involved in the musical workshops. They were defining their roles further through sound and rhythm. The creative team challenged themselves and others to determine if each word, note, and detail made sense for the narrative and character. Did everything create or continue the arc of the story they wanted and needed to tell?

Creating something wholly original isn't always easy. This is especially true if you are tackling sensitive issues, inspiring original ideas, accessing everything the imagination has to offer, giving fully of oneself, and more. Who wants easy? I definitely do NOT and thankfully the creators and cast of *We Shall Not Be Moved* don't either.

I look forward to seeing you in September and to coming together to be reminded of why we like art and just how powerful that can be!

Opera Philadelphia

Recent Commissions

Elizabeth Cree

Kevin Puts, composer
Mark Campbell, librettist
2017

Breaking the Waves

Missy Mazzoli, composer
Royce Vavrek, librettist
2016

Cold Mountain

Jennifer Higdon, composer
Gene Scheer, librettist
2016

Charlie Parker's YARDBIRD

Daniel Schnyder, composer
Bridgette A. Wimberly, librettist
2015

MOVE

A Philadelphia Collective

bit.ly/move1985



It was the evening of May 13, 1985. Flames and smoke were billowing nearly 10 stories above the rowhome at **6221 Osage Avenue** in West Philadelphia where city officials believed seven adults and six children were harbored inside. Fire equipment was in place but despite that, Philadelphia Police **Commissioner Gregore Sambor** told Fire **Commissioner William Richmond**, “Let the fire burn.”

With human lives at stake, particularly those of helpless children, combined with the risk that the fire might spread to adjoining homes, it is hard to believe that city officials would knowingly withhold protection. Yet they did, for almost an hour. In the end, approximately 65 homes were destroyed and 11 people were killed in the fire. To make some sense of this tragedy, we look at both sides of this story.

In 1972, **John Africa** founded a collective that would later be called MOVE. The group supported radical green politics, a back-to-nature society, and an opposition to science, medicine, and technology. Over the years, they became more radical in their beliefs, holding frequent public demonstrations and using bullhorns attached to the outside of their house to amplify their occasional profanity-laced lectures against racism, brutality, and institutions they opposed.

Their first house was in another part of West Philly called Powelton Village. In 1978, after a year of fruitless negotiations, **Mayor Frank Rizzo** ordered the police to storm the house in order to evict the MOVE members. A shootout ensued and one policeman was killed while 18 others were injured. Nine MOVE members were found guilty of third degree murder and each was sentenced to up to 100 years in prison. **Ramona Africa**, sentenced to nine years in prison and the only adult to survive the 1985 police bombing, later questioned how nine people could kill one man using, as reports said, only one bullet. This incident served to galvanize MOVE's energies to focus on the release of the MOVE 9, as they were called, from prison.

MOVE soon relocated to 6221 Osage Avenue in 1981. Initially peaceful on this new street, MOVE changed, seemingly overnight. Over a period of almost 18 months, MOVE broadcast messages via bullhorns on the house. The often profanity-filled announcements could be heard day and night across blocks in the neighborhood. Next door neighbor Lloyd Wilson said, “I watched my wife many nights lay there in that bed and cry. Wasn’t nothing else she could do.” Other issues that concerned the neighborhood were MOVE's unsanitary living conditions, their house reportedly infested with roaches and rats. Further, MOVE had blocked the alley behind the house in order to erect an animal shelter. Finally, there were repeated reports of child endangerment based on the perceived lax lifestyle the group had adopted.

Mayor Wilson Goode, a year earlier, stated that he preferred “dirt and some smell than to have blood.” But Director Jason Osder, whose film *Let the Fire Burn* chronicles this entire incident said, “[the neighbors] were at a point where they were holding their own press conferences and were openly pressuring the city to act. If the city didn’t [intervene], they might have taken matters into their own hands.” He continued, “MOVE wanted to draw attention to their imprisoned comrades still in jail. They were willing to use the neighbors as pawns in that battle. It was their strategy to aggravate the neighbors and they felt, rightly, that normal activism was not going to get them listened to. Their strategy was to make a nuisance of themselves so that the neighbors' voices would go to the city and the city would have to deal with them.”

This all came to a head in 1985. The police obtained arrest warrants charging four MOVE members with parole violations, contempt of court, illegal possession of firearms, and making terrorist threats. On Mother's Day, May 12, 1985, police evacuated over 250 residents from the surrounding neighborhood and shut off all utilities. The next morning, May 13, police SWAT Teams and firefighters rolled into position surrounding the

MOVE house. High-powered deluge water guns that could squirt 1000 gallons a second were put into place.

Commissioner Sambor read an ultimatum that informed the residents they were to clear out of the house and that the police were going to serve their warrants. MOVE members responded over their loudspeaker with “vitriolic talk” stating they would not come out and that they were going to kill all of them. According to then-City Manager Leo Brooks, “MOVE started firing and we took a significant number of rounds in our position.”

In the next 90 minutes, police unleashed 10,000 rounds on the house and stopped only because they ran out of ammunition. Intermittent shooting proceeded throughout the day but still no MOVE members came out. The police lobbed tear gas canisters at the building followed by more water which made the poison lethal.

Frustrated, Commissioner Sambor ordered a bomb to be dropped on the roof of the house. A State Police helicopter circled the location and Philadelphia Police dropped the explosive targeting the bunker atop the house. The explosion ignited a gasoline tank used for MOVE’s generator. Within 15 minutes, the entire roof was in flames. Soon, the fire spread to the adjoining houses yet the fire department, under Sambor’s command, continued to wait and not fight the fire, hoping it would destroy the bunker. After almost an hour, firefighters were finally given the order to turn on the water but it was too late. By the middle of the night, three blocks and 65 houses were destroyed leaving over 250 residents homeless. Six adults, including John Africa, and five children died in the MOVE house. Five police officers were injured as well as three bystanders.

Mayor Goode appointed a committee to investigate the incident and their report denounced the city’s actions declaring, “Dropping a bomb on an occupied row house was unconscionable.” Still, no charges were ever brought against anyone from the city.



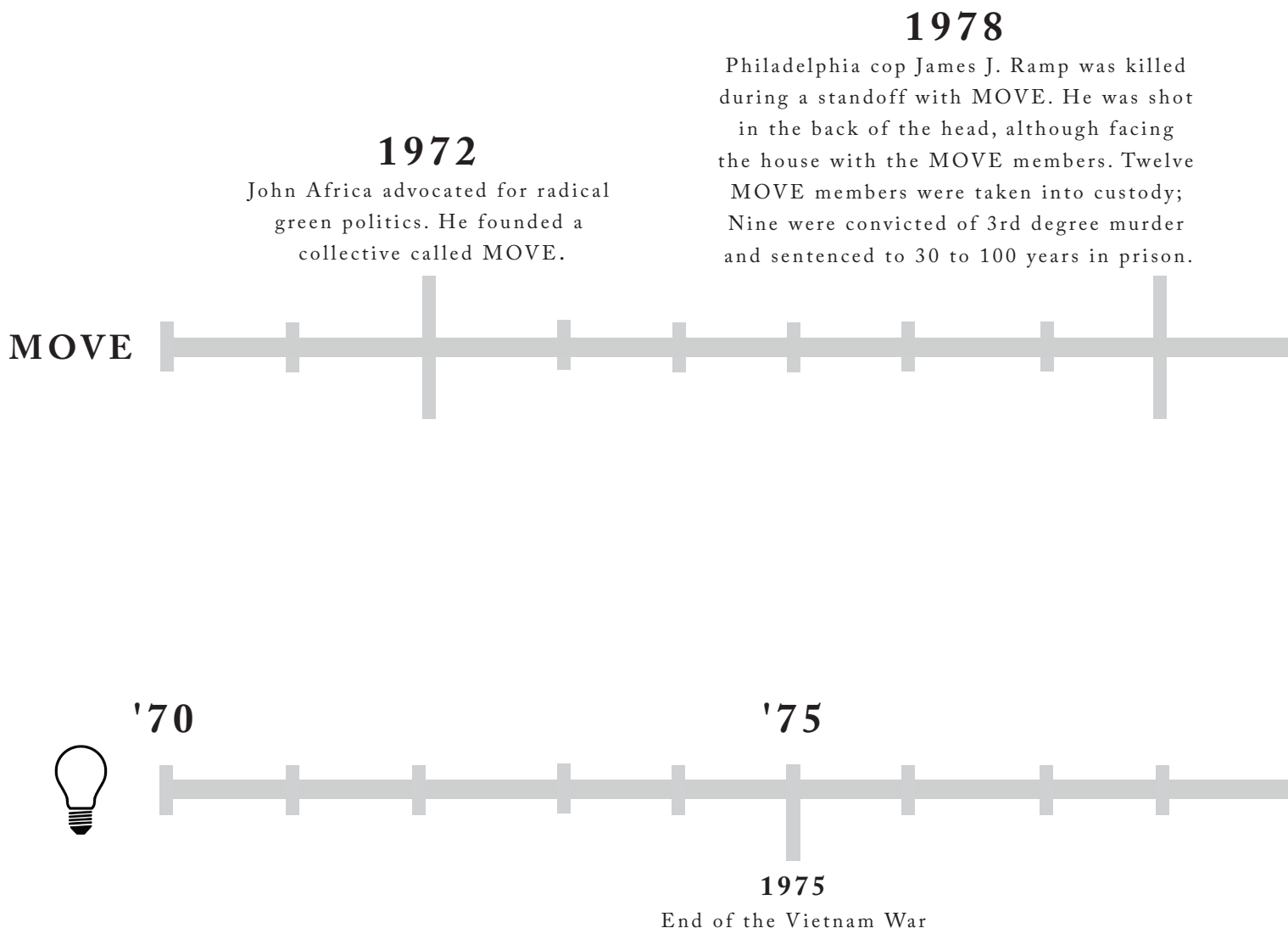
Years later, the city rebuilt the houses but substandard construction was used and most were condemned as unsafe. Today, Philadelphia continues to grapple with this tragic history. Shown here is the residence that replaced the MOVE house and it is where the opera *We Shall Not Be Moved* takes place.

TIMELINE TO THE OVERTURE

Events Surrounding 1985

An **overture** is a piece of music, often instrumental, that serves to introduce a theatrical work. This tradition dates back to the early 17th century when overtures were written at the beginning of opera, ballets, and religious oratorios. Overtures prepared audiences by musically establishing the mood of a piece. They also allowed composers to highlight their unique musical styles.

The overture to ***We Shall Not Be Moved*** is inspired by popular music of the 1960s, 70s, and 80s. Composer Daniel Bernard Roumain's overture is meant to serve as a soundtrack to social movements in the United States during this period of time. In addition to the music, a visual timeline is projected behind the cast that recalls some of the critical events leading up to the 1985 police bombing of the MOVE house on Osage Avenue in West Philadelphia. This timeline is documented below. It is the rebuilt house on Osage Avenue that serves as the setting for *We Shall Not Be Moved*.





Expanding the Timeline

Use the blank timeline at the bottom of the page to pinpoint more events in history that occurred between 1970 and 1990. Can you identify at least one other social movement that occurred in the United States during this period of time? What else was happening around the world?

Visit bit.ly/WSNB_timeline to view an interactive timeline that highlights other events that occurred in history during this time period.

1985

The Philadelphia Police Department attempted to clear the house at 6221 Osage Avenue and arrest the members of MOVE. An armed standoff with police happened. Police Chief Gregore Sambor ordered that the MOVE house be bombed. From a State Police helicopter, PPD Lt. Frank Powell proceeded to drop a bomb. The resulting explosions ignited a massive blaze that eventually destroys approximately 65 nearby houses.

1987

Philadelphia rebuilt the destroyed homes, but did so in a substandard fashion. Less than 10 years later, 90% of the rebuilt homes were condemned by the Department of Housing.

1981

MOVE relocated to their Osage Avenue home.

'80

'85

'90

1982

Michael Jackson releases "Thriller"

THE COST OF EDUCATION: *Looking Back at the Philadelphia School Closures of 2013*

written by Alexis Johnson

Students no longer roam the hallways of the historic Edward W. Bok Technical High School. Although the original infrastructure remains, there has been a change of residency. Classrooms are now being utilized as shared workspaces, while the school's gym and auditorium are suitable to host events. Located in the East Passyunk Crossing neighborhood of South Philadelphia, for 75 years the former public school provided vocational programs from engineering to culinary arts. Today Bok's hands-on, ready-to-work entrepreneurial spirit and facilities are preserved through a collective of small businesses, artists, craftsmen, chefs, and community organizers. The building was converted into a mixed-use development after being acquired through public auction in the aftermath of Bok's closing in 2013, alongside 22 other K-12 schools as part of The School District of Philadelphia's "Facilities Master Plan."

"They could've waited. They should've just stopped letting kids cycle in and allowed current students to graduate," said Kynan Chambers, a former student at Bok who transferred to South Philadelphia High School after the closing, and is one of the many teens involved in Hip-H'opera. Hip-H'opera is the collaborative program between Opera Philadelphia and Art Sanctuary that provides workshops for students to channel self-expression through various art forms, which ultimately served as the inspirational platform for *We Shall Not Be Moved*.

We meet the teens of *We Shall Not Be Moved* at the crossroads of real-life events that shape their journey. Like the characters who find themselves shut out of school and taking refuge at 6221 Osage avenue, many Philadelphia teens have been affected by the homeless youth crisis and the 2013 school closures. These closures led to the displacement of thousands of students and educational staff, including a number of Hip-H'opera students who attended schools



Edward Bok Vocational School

Photo Credit: Alexis Johnson

that would shut down after a closed vote by Philadelphia's School Reform Commission.

Mass school closings have become a recurring trend in large cities, including Washington, DC, New York City and Pittsburgh, in an effort to offset budget deficits and the increasing number of available seats. In an article for the *Washington Post*, independent education research organization Research for Action (RFA) detailed the overall short- to long-term impact of school closures based on statistics from cities that have taken similar actions as well as the proposed actions of the School Reform Commission. Their findings showed that, while there is a rather immediate amount of money saved by closings, from building maintenance to staff cuts, there is still a large amount of implementation expenses, including costs associated with student relocation and moving, demolition and often the devaluation of closed buildings.

There was very little conversation surrounding the well-being of the students as an impact of the 2013 school closures. Originally set at 37 proposed schools to be closed by the School District of Philadelphia, parents, teachers, students, and community supporters voiced their concerns in the 21 community meetings leading up to the March 7, 2013 decision. On the day of the final hearing Randi Weingarten, President of the American Federation of Teachers, as well as 18 other activists were arrested in protest. Many doubted the amount of savings the closings would

return, but there was also the larger concern of whether the closings would improve the education of those transferred as claimed by the School Reform Commission.

Research from RFA showed that the schools selected by the School Reform Commission for closure due to low performance had very similar performance standards of the receiving schools, meaning the transferred students wouldn't necessarily be provided with a better education. Other concerns included longer walks to school and increased transportation time in unfamiliar neighborhoods.

"I feel like if I stayed at Bok I would've come out of high school with better opportunities and a higher education," said Chambers. His transition from Bok to South Philadelphia High School proved to create early challenges in the classroom.

"When they closed the schools, they moved the CTE (Career & Technical Education) Programs. It was difficult because the staff at South Philadelphia didn't understand students in vocational programs, how we operate and the time and resources we need within the program. The resources didn't transfer over. The rooms and workshop spaces weren't equivalent. It went in a crazy direction because the program conflicted with South Philadelphia's curriculum, making it difficult to learn."

Teachers and staff were affected by the closings as well. Barbara Keating was a teacher at South Philadelphia during the transition, witnessing employees from both transferring and receiving schools experiencing layoffs.

"This stirred peoples' lives into turmoil. South Philadelphia High School lost a lot of really great teachers because of seniority and right to follow," said Keating. "Teachers at Bok had a right to follow their students over to South Philadelphia and we didn't get as many Bok students as they thought, so that meant teachers who had less seniority from South Philadelphia lost their jobs. Teachers who had been at Bok for a really long time were really beholden to the building and the school and the programs and it's jarring to have all of that ripped away from you."

On the receiving end, South Philadelphia would have to prepare for more than 750 transfer students from Bok, doubling their enrollment at the time. This was all in an effort to increase utilization of schools within the School District of Philadelphia as traditional public schools experienced a decline in enrollment due to factors such as the increase of students attending charter schools.

Nationwide, school closures have disproportionately affected Black and Latino students, many of them residing in underserved communities. As a teacher for 14 years, Barbara Keating has come to terms that "a lot of these students come from places where childhood has been rushed for them," noting that probably "1 of 3 of students have a challenge at home." Closures recurrently affect students of color and the effects of shuttered schools can disrupt a student's education and relationships with peers and teachers.

"All around everyone was upset and bothered because we had to go to a school that was completely different, not only the education but culturally," said Chambers. "It's like buying a brand-new car, investing in it and getting it recalled after you made an investment. It's like 'wow, we have to start all over again' especially as a freshman, recently adjusting from middle school"

The School District of Philadelphia has continued to seek solutions, developing multi-year plans to tackle budget cuts and the shift of student enrollment, possibly leading to more closures in the future.

"It's tough, it's really, really tough to be moved without your consent from one building to another," said Keating.

While there are many factors involved in school closures, the cost at which these decisions are made undoubtedly will have a major impact on students, teachers, staff and parents for years to come.

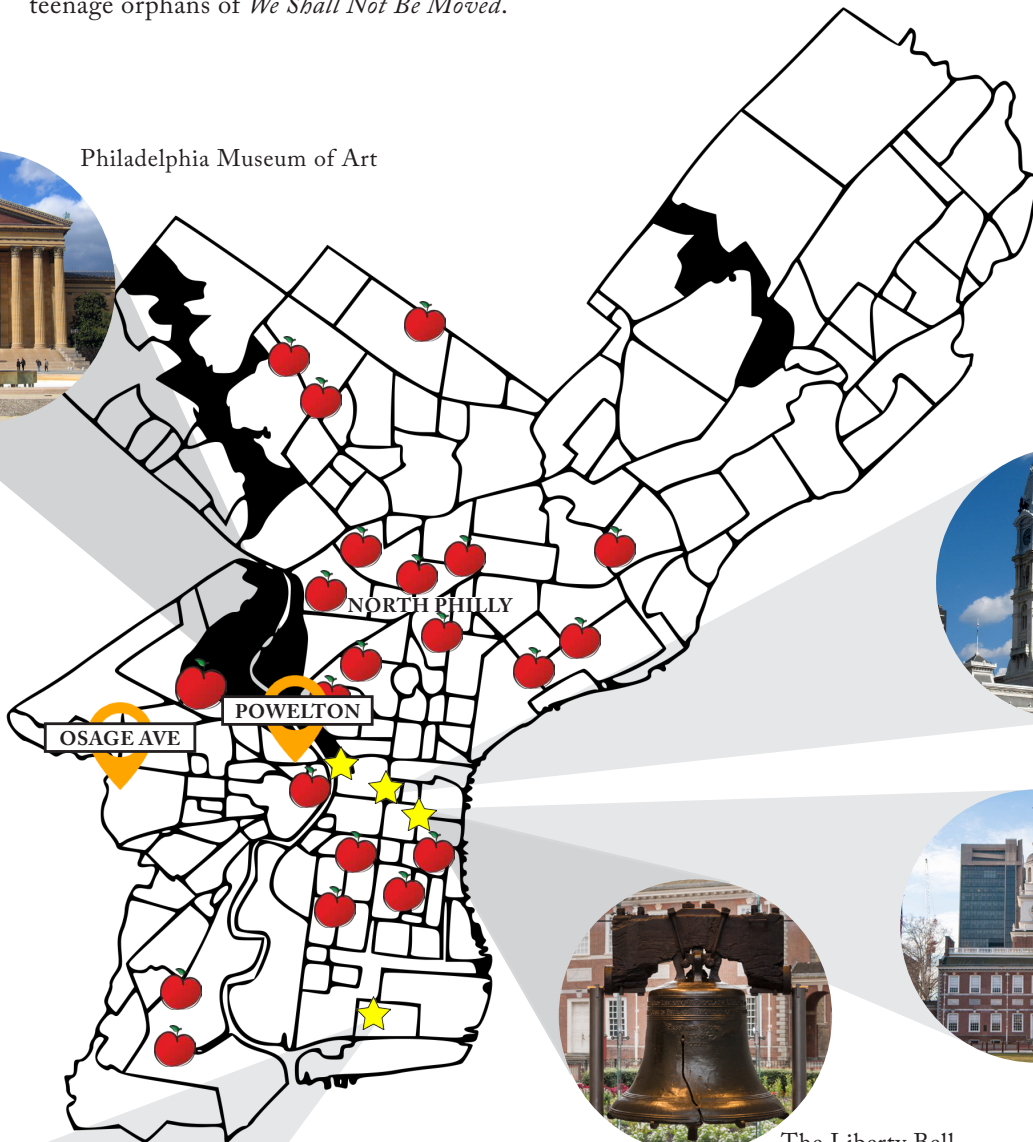
PHILADELPHIA

The Setting for We Shall Not Be Moved

The following map outlines the City of Philadelphia. Each apple (🍏) marks the location of a school closed by the School District of Philadelphia in 2013. Two signposts mark the homes of the MOVE collective in West Philadelphia. The MOVE house rebuilt on Osage Avenue becomes home to the five teenage orphans of *We Shall Not Be Moved*.



Philadelphia Museum of Art



City Hall



Independence Hall



The Liberty Bell



Philadelphia Phillies;
Citizens Bank Park



2013 School District of Philadelphia Closings

Alexander Wilson Elementary
Bok Technical High School
Charles Carroll High School
Communications Tech High School
Douglas High School
Fairhill Elementary
Ferguson Elementary
Fulton Elementary

George Washington Elementary
Germantown High School
Kinsey Elementary
L.P. Hill Elementary
Lamberton High School
Leidy Elementary
M.H. Stanton Elementary
Pepper Middle School

Pratt Elementary
Reynolds Elementary
Sheridan West Middle School
Shaw Middle School
Smith Elementary
University City High School
Vaux High School
Whittier Elementary

OVERCOMING ALL OBSTACLES

Teaching in Philadelphia Today

written by Celina Velez
*Pan American Academy
Charter School*

It feels like Philadelphia has always had problems in the area of education. In spite of being the home of some of the most reputable and prestigious colleges and universities, the School District of Philadelphia seems to constantly be embroiled in scandal and budget crises. The charter and private schools in our area also cover a wide spectrum, ranging from excellent to awful. However, at the core of all these schools are throngs of dedicated and caring teachers who work hard everyday not just to teach, but to provide a loving community for their students.

Good teachers are more than just teachers. When you take into consideration before- and after-school care and regular in-school hours, students can spend 7-10 hours a day in the care of someone who is not their own parent. That's more awake hours than what some students spend with their parents in a week. As a music teacher in an elementary school, I see my students from their first day in Kindergarten until they graduate 8th grade, or for a total of nine years! In those nine years, I see a lot of what happens in my students' lives. I see students suffer from divorce, abuse, the incarceration of a parent, hunger, bullying, self-doubt, and neglect. And yet, I see students overcome these obstacles every day. In my students I see resilience and a determination not to just overcome these obstacles, but to flourish against them.

This determination to succeed despite all odds is what motivates me to teach in the neighborhood that I do. I teach in an area just two blocks away from where I went

to elementary school, a place that *Google* and *Wikipedia* call 'The Philadelphia Badlands.' In this way, I feel a bit like Glenda, the truancy office in *We Shall Not Be Moved*. We're both Latina women who are determined to make a positive influence in Philadelphia and children's lives. Teaching here is my way of resisting the entrenched disadvantages facing urban minority communities that have already been mentioned in this workbook. My grandparents broke redlining housing policies, slowly inching their way out of barriers that city planners had drawn. My parents fought hard for their own education because they saw it as a key to breaking the cycle of poverty that engulfed other families. They taught me that education can never be taken away from you. So I became a teacher to pass that message along to the next generation. But does teaching music really help anyone break the cycle of poverty? I firmly believe that learning any of the arts expands the mind and gives meaning to our lives, whether you live that life in a suburban "McMansion" in the suburbs of Philadelphia or in a rowhome at 3rd and Indiana.

This year our winning school t-shirt design said "Keep calm and join our Pan Am Family" My Pan American family isn't just the other teachers I work with. It's the students who ask to have lunch in the music room. It's the children who want to hold my hand in the hallway on their way to recess. It's the parents of students who chaperone trips and attend concerts. It's the students who I watch march down the aisle at graduation, those that I know will rise above the obstacles that will soon come their way. This is why I teach. This is why the arts matter. This is how we rise. This is why **WE SHALL NOT BE MOVED**.

A WORD IN DUE SEASON

Word Spoken for the People



Spoken Word Artist Lauren Whitehead plays the role of Un/Sung, the heroine of We Shall Not Be Moved.

Photo: Dave DiRentis

written by Felecia Burton

We Shall Not Be Moved is born out of **Hip H'opera** [see p.24], a collaborative project between **Opera Philadelphia** and **Art Sanctuary** that explores the aesthetics of classical music, hip-hop, and other art forms to inspire and empower Philadelphia's youth. It draws heavily on the art form of spoken word. While the term "spoken word" was not popularized until revival of poetry slams in the 1980s, the focus on developing poems specifically for performances dates back to ancient times, when epic poems like Homer's *Odyssey* were recited for entertainment. Later, poetry was incorporated into theatrical events, when forms such as the ode accompanied music throughout the performances. Over the centuries, oral poetry gave rise to a variety of forms and styles. Chants and ghazals played major roles in religious and spiritual worship. Ballads and villanelles captured the adventure and romance of their day.

But what exactly is spoken word? Spoken word is poetry intended for onstage performance, rather than exclusively designed for the page. While often associated with hip-hop culture, it also has strong ties to storytelling, modern poetry, post-modern performance, and monologue theatre, as well as jazz, blues, and folk music. (urbandictionary.com) Where does it come from? And why, can it be considered a word in due season?

A word in due season is an inspiring or empowering word that comes just at the right time to bring understanding to a situation. Spoken word occupies a central and indispensable position in African American history and culture. As a vessel for remembrance, oral traditions, including spoken word, have carried African narratives to a new continent and sustained African American peoples through bondage; as a political catalyst, spoken word defines the struggle for freedom and moves ordinary people to extraordinary acts of courage; and

as an art form, spoken word has conveyed itself forcefully and dramatically by drawing on rich African American musical heritage. Spoken word expresses the richness, the complexity, and the diversity of African American oral traditions.

Institutions of slavery and racism have attempted to silence generations of African Americans; thus spoken word became a means of maintaining identity, surviving, and resisting oppression and exploitation, as well as a tool for achieving freedom. Spoken word showcases personal stories and reflections, and offers African Americans a platform from which to define experiences and viewpoints apart from racist constructs.

African American history encompasses an abundance of speakers with inspiring things to say, and exciting ways to say them. The greatest of these speakers imbue their words with meaning by exploiting the musical potency of speech. As with African American preachers, who tend to involve their congregations in sermons through the use of call and response, great speakers make their individual performances into communal ones. Words become vehicles for feeling and inspire a sense of shared experience in listeners. Political speech also provides a forum for powerful ideas. Though mere words, statements like **Dr. Martin Luther King's** "I have a dream," **Sojourner Truth's** "Ain't I a woman?" and **Booker T. Washington's** "Cast down your buckets" have changed the course of history.

The artistic use of the spoken word in African American culture today draws on and reflects a rich literary and musical heritage, and the interaction among these genres, as in the past, has produced some of America's best-known art forms. Just as Langston Hughes and writers of the Harlem Renaissance were inspired by the feelings of the blues and the African American spiritual, contemporary hip-hop and slam poetry artists are inspired by poets like Hughes in their use of metaphor, alliteration, rhythm,

and wordplay. Similarly, the experimental and often radical statements of the Black Arts Movement developed a relationship with cutting-edge jazz and funk music that would expand the boundaries of African American cultural expression, and thereby provide space for more alternative political ideas to be raised, discussed, and acknowledged.

In *We Shall Not Be Moved*, the character Un/Sung uses the vehicle of spoken word to engage and challenge the listener. Are you listening to the cadence of her speech? Are you pummeled by the images her words invoke? The words are powerful, but that power is latent until her voice gives them synergy. Here is the true beauty of spoken word. The words on the paper need the catalyst the speaker's intonations give. Then and only then, will those words rise up on the wings of expression and fly into the consciousness of the audience.

This is the truly special gift of spoken word; it cannot remain words on a paper. The words require participation of the listener. Spoken word is not meant to stay sterile words on a page; it is meant to invite the listener in, to draw a response, and evoke a plethora of emotion. Un/Sung begs the listener to not only hear the words she speaks, but hear her cry for validation and acknowledgment of her inherent value. Her words speak of the frustration of being caught in a system where who she is not valued—where by the virtue of the color of her skin, she is judged and left wanting. While not a war cry, her spoken words do show that she and her brothers are caught in a war for their very lives.

Maybe this is the true gift of spoken word. It is the ability of the speaker to speak their truth. To verbally reclaim what has been taken, stolen, or appropriated by others — this is the essence of spoken word. So, speak your truth, tell your story, and speak the words that give voice to your struggle. The world is waiting to hear your words in due season!

PROJECTING YOUR VOICE

through Poetry and Spoken Word

A 2017 graduate at Mastery Charter School (Lenfest Campus) in Philadelphia, Yaw has been a part of Art Sanctuary and Opera Philadelphia's Hip H'opera program [see p.24] since its beginning. The following is an original poem that expresses Yaw's perspective as a youth in Philadelphia today.

"PHILADELPHIA"

(2017)

by Yaw A.

I am...
the woman from Kensington,
barely 25 with 5 children in an apartment building
Working three jobs and regardless my sobs,
I have a feeling in a while we'll be living without a ceiling,

I'm the...
Bastard son of a dead father,
At least I think he's dead.
If he isn't, he never bothered to show his face,
Maybe he caught a case for selling laced drugs,
but all his money couldn't buy my love,

I've always been the...
Girl who they shamed as a slut,
The one they shamed as a whore but none of them ever met me before,
They don't judge me for my soul,
instead the length of my skirt,
They tell me that my cleavage a measurement of my worth

I'm the kid who bit the bullet on woodland,
He wanted a life and he took it,
I felt body lay still in the concrete,
They investigated the murder but it took over a week,
Even then, my parents heard all the details on repeat,

I am none of these people
I'm only a witness to their stories.
Every bullet shot, every bill unpaid,
Every person hindered with every step that they take is me.

This city of brotherly love has done very little ones that roam.
The streets are becoming warzones
Both our physical and mental are put into battle,
Yet we're expected to follow all authority like we're cattle.

I live in ghettos where devils pray to God,
The city where the rich have the poorest people robbed,
They ask us in schools what we're passionate about
But the only answer we have is that we want to get out

I pray for my brothers and sisters for their safety
And hope they never encounter the streets that made me.
A land of landmines that will strip your worth
This is Philadelphia, A hell on Earth

WRITING PROMPT

Create a spoken word piece on a topic that is important to you. What do you want to say? Use the workspace below to organize your thoughts. Then fully express your opinions in your original spoken word piece and share in class.



MAIN IDEA: Here's what I think... _____

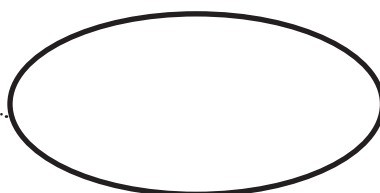
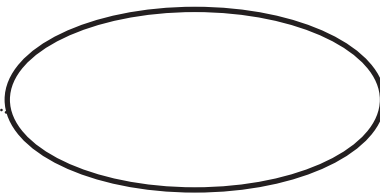
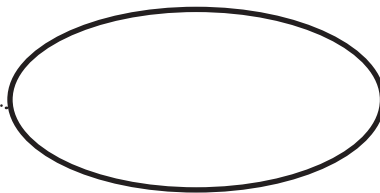
Here are my reasons

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Evidence to back
up my reasons...



COUNTER ARGUMENT

You could argue that...

BUT here's the
WEAKNESS...

STRONG FINISH

WHAT MAKES A FAMILY?



Leave It to Beaver was one of the first families to entertain American television audiences.

written by M. McDonald

All societies have a social unit recognizable as being a family. Each provides for a way to raise children so that they can function effectively in their given society. The unit must tend to the basic physical need for food, clothing, and shelter as well as to satisfy the human need for love, support, and psychological guidance. These core intentions, when coupled with modern advances in medicine, technology, travel, war, economics, and politics, have impacted our definition of family. Today, the majority of households across the globe have conformed to the structures of a **nuclear family**, consisting of a parental figure and their biological or adopted children. How did we arrive at this structure and how has it continued to evolve?

Early American Families

The United States' early immigrant population came from Western Europe and brought with them Christian beliefs and practices. Perhaps because the aforementioned functions that families provided were essential for survival in the new world, being a member of a family was emphasized. In colonial America, single men in some parts of New England were even taxed and other penalties were incurred by anyone who was unmarried.

African American families during slavery faced countless challenges. Many states denied the legal rights of marriage to slave unions. Often, husbands lived apart from their wives and children. They were assigned to different plantations and had to receive permission to visit their loved ones. Some families were permanently broken when one spouse was sold away. In addition, children could be sold away from their parents. When combined, all of these factors forced slaves into embracing their assigned communities and creating a wider extended family. Ultimately this became critical to the survival of the individual nuclear families of slaves.

Before, during, and after slavery, the nuclear family structure continued its rise to prominence. For many African American families, government policies after slavery created new challenges that made the possibility of creating a stable nuclear family even more difficult. Some would argue that these policies have contributed to the general destruction of the nuclear families in poor and working class African American communities.

Families of Popular Culture

One way to continue charting the evolution of family in the United States is by surveying television sitcoms over the past 70 years. In the 1950s, the sitcom *Leave It to Beaver* reflected the prevailing values and ideals of the time: clear gender roles; desirability and sanctity of marriage; and, social conformity. Beaver lived in the suburbs with his brother, Wally, and his parents, Ward and June. Ward was head of the Cleaver family and had a white-collar job, while June was a stay-at-home wife whose role was to care for the domestic needs of her husband and two children.

A popular 1960s show, *My Three Sons*, was one of the first to feature single parenthood as a viable family configuration. The show focused on aircraft engineer Steven Douglas and his responsibility of raising three sons in the suburbs of Los Angeles, California. This family did not lack a strong male presence as Steven's father-in-law, Bub O'Casey, also played a prominent role in the boys' upbringing. One of the first sitcoms to feature a woman as head of a single parent household was *Julia*. An African American mother of one, Julia Baker worked as a nurse to provide for her son. It was no coincidence that in both these shows single parenthood was a result of widowhood as divorce was publically rejected. Interestingly enough, *The Lucy Show* of the mid-1960s is one instance where divorce was mentioned to television audiences. Widow Lucy Carmichael and recently divorced Vivian Bagley unite under one roof in order to raise their respective children.

Soon after, the idea of a blended family was popularized with *The Brady Bunch*. The show was about the widowed Mike Brady and Carol Martin, who married to create one large family of six children. Bridging the 1960s and 1970s, *The Brady Bunch* defended the viability of yet another family structure. African American families began to reach

television audiences around the early to mid 1960s, the height of the Civil Rights movement. Still, the representation of these families was not without persistent stereotypes — female headed households, heads of households with non-professional jobs, and the like. It took until the 1980s and the advent of *The Cosby Show* for television to portray an African American family with economic successes similar to white television families. The Huxtables were a family of five children with a father, Cliff, who was an obstetrician and a mother, Clair, who was a lawyer. While Cliff was the perceived head of the household, his wife Clair had just as much say in the family decisions that were made. *The Cosby Show* was a ratings juggernaut and helped set the stage for what the country viewed as a modern nuclear family. Most shows about family have since featured both parents as working professionals.



The *Jeffersons* premiered on January 18, 1975 and lasted an unprecedented 11 seasons, totaling 253 episodes.

Television families became even more varied after the social turbulence of the 1960s. One of the earliest interracial couples to appear on television was the Willis family from the popular African American family show, *The Jeffersons*. Tom and Helen Willis were

a happily married couple and neighbors to the Jefferson family. Both families were connected in a way that formed an even larger extended family.

In the late 1970s, homosexuality took its place in families on the small screen. *Soap*, a satire of daytime television soap operas, was about the complicated households of two sisters, Jessica Tate and Mary Campbell. In the show, Mary's grown-up son, Jodie Dallas, played by the famous Billy Crystal, was an openly gay father to his daughter Wendy, a child from a previous relationship.

Following *Soap*, homosexuality continued to be featured on a small scale until the heralded arrival of *Will and Grace*, in 1998. This highly successful sitcom was about two best friends — a gay man, Will, and a straight woman, Grace — who embraced one another as family. *Will and Grace* was unique in that the family structure was built neither on consanguinity or affinity, but on friendship. However, it should be noted that this isn't the first television family to be forged by friendship. Such shows as *Cheers* and *Friends* helped to pave the way for this model.

In 2009, *Modern Family* emerged as a show unafraid to represent a myriad of family structures. With a step-family, a same-sex family, and a nuclear family, the show elevated the realities of family in America.

Today, our exposure to the many challenges families face continues to be represented in television sitcoms such as *Black-ish* and *Jane the Virgin*, and *The Fosters*.

Families of *We Shall Not Be Moved*

In *We Shall Not Be Moved*, our understanding of family structures continues to grow. First, the opera refers to John Africa and his Philadelphia family known as MOVE. It was not consanguinity, affinity, or friendship that united this family but shared beliefs in radical green politics, a back-to-nature society, and an opposition to science, medicine, and



The orphaned teenagers of We Shall Not Be Moved help to further expand our understanding of family.

Photo: Dominic M. Mercier

technology. To practice their way of life, the MOVE family shared a residence in West Philadelphia. MOVE brought together a combination of adults, adolescents, parents, and their children.

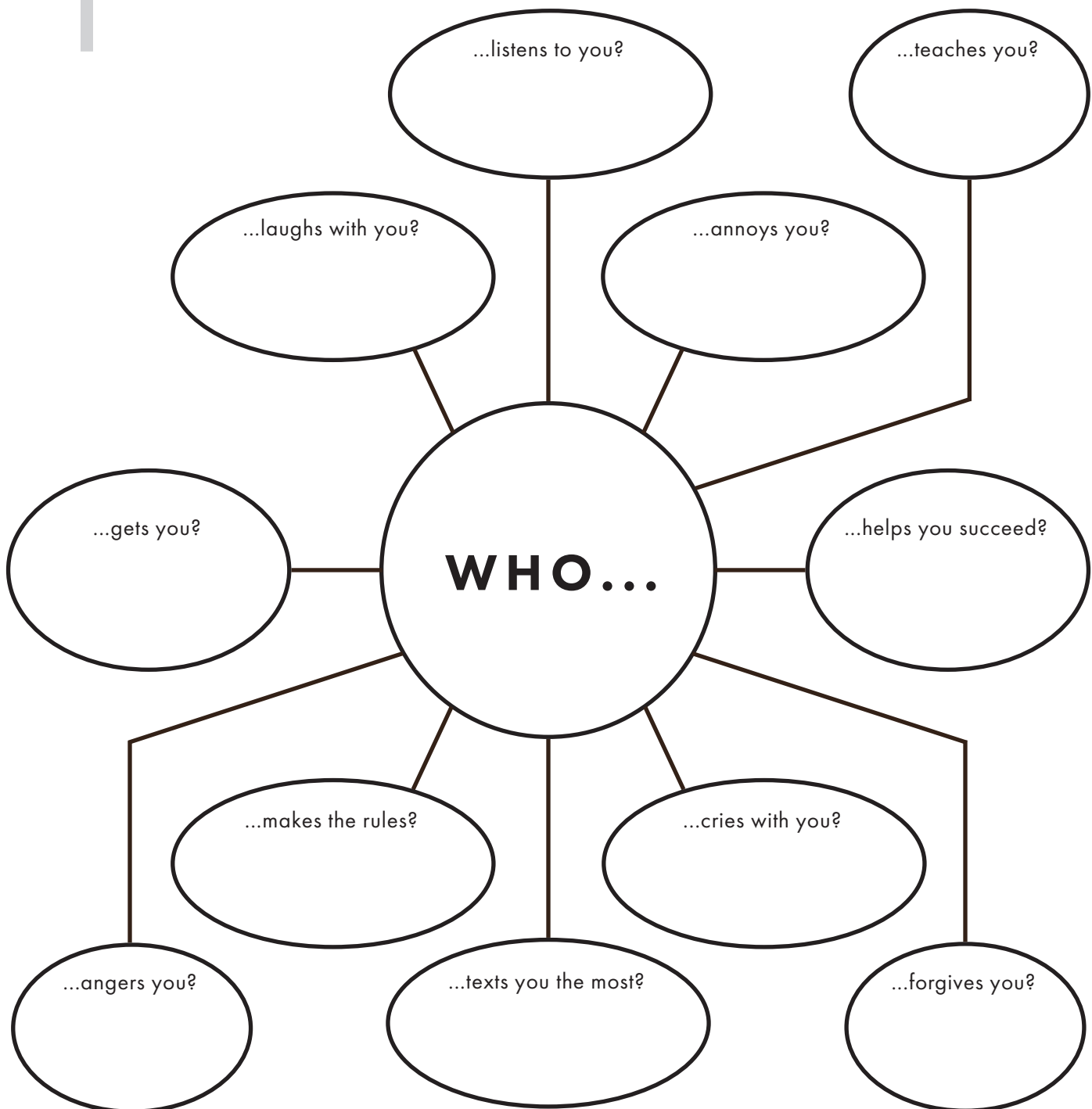
The five orphaned teenagers of the opera, John Mack, John Blue, John Henry, John Little, and Un/Sung are united as a family through a series of shared circumstances. All have experienced the loss of parents and, in turn, the status of second class citizens. In addition, they have all been confronted with the recent news that their school in Philadelphia would be closing. Quite similarly to the members of MOVE, these orphans are aware of their marginalization, but share a desire to give their life meaning and dignity. The one who arises as head of this household is Un/Sung, not only the youngest but the only female of the group.

In surveying family throughout history and popular culture, it is clear that while identities and structures have changed, the inherent function remains the same - to tend to the basic physical need for food, clothing, and shelter and to satisfy the human need for love, support, and other psychological needs. Family is no longer simply a combination of a mom, a dad, and one or more children. Societal forces continue to give rise to families of different configurations.

DEFINING FAMILY

In Your Life

Who is a part of your family? Who stands by you today to tend to your basic physical need for food, clothing, and shelter and satisfies your human need for love, support, and other psychological needs? Think beyond just those who may be related to you through blood. Who stands within your chosen family?



THIS is your family.

A LETTER TO THOSE *Young, Black, and Trans...*



Provided by Chrisitan Loveball

As many of us face rejection and alienation from our biological families, the “chosen family” is vital to many trans individuals. Through our chosen families we gain support, encouragement, guidance, love, and affirmation. Although we're able to choose individuals to be our parents, siblings, children, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and cousins, ironically, the very act of weaving such deliberate connections together is out of necessity as opposed to choice. Oftentimes, chosen families are a key element to our resilience, strength and overall survival in a world where many wish to see our communal demise and extinction.

My chosen family began at the Attic Youth Center in the mid 90s in downtown Philly. There I found others my age, who were Black like me, who shared my experiences and who not only understood where I was coming from, but also where I was headed. The Attic provided me with refuge from the poverty, violence and drugs that thrived in the streets of my South Philly neighborhood. There were staff and counselors who taught me life skills and helped me gain confidence and self-esteem, folks who actually cared about those of us who had been tossed aside, abused, ridiculed, and outcast.

Frequently, trans individuals conscientiously merge into these familial units of deep emotional connection, in order to facilitate the safest space for growth, development and real unconditional love. My chosen family has had a considerable influence on my maturity and evolution as an activist, an artist and overall as a man, who happens to be trans, by accepting, mentoring, loving, and simply seeing and embracing me. When our biological families can't or won't love us in the ways that we not only need but deserve, our chosen families fill those shoes. Chosen family means numerous things and is expressed in various ways. For the trans community, it could mean sharing resources, education, and information, such as money, clothing, food, and popular hang-outs. I could mean affirming health-care providers and employers or safe housing, support groups and make-up and grooming advice or a non-judgmental ear to simply listen. Trusting others to speak truth, even during times where it may seem like it's the hardest thing in the world. Eating, traveling and gathering together in solidarity. Helping each other with challenges, hard times and setbacks. Collective appreciation, reliance, trust, respect, and devotion. Although an only child who has no connection to my biological

family, I am thankful today to have a host of chosen brothers, sisters and siblings who love me unconditionally, for the man I am today.

Being Young, Black and Trans is not an easy thing. There is much oppression faced daily by trans communities of color, such as the epidemic murders of Black trans women or the police harassment and racial profiling faced by many Black trans men that comes along with “passing” and blending into society as men of color or the silencing, erasure and invalidation of Black gender non-conforming and Queer voices and experiences.

But being Young, Black and Trans is not a death sentence. Just as the five North Philly teens in *We Shall Not Be Moved* found refuge and family amongst each other...know that in Philly, this city of “Brotherly Love and Sisterly Affection”...there is also a thriving and resilient Community that exists carefully fabricated together with strong and loving Chosen Families, rooted with legacy. Folks who are undeniably here for you with open doors, open arms and open hearts, for no blood is thicker than the resilience and greatness that runs through you. You are not alone.

Love Your Brother Always,
Christian Lovehall

5 Ways to Make Schools Safer for LGBTQ Students

1



Speak Out

Be an activist! Speak out when someone says something discriminatory towards the LGBTQ community.

2



Start a GSA/QSA:

Having a safe space for queer students at school can save LIVES.

3



Educate Your Teachers:

A teacher who simply knows about being LGBTQ can make a world of difference for students who are gender and sexual minorities. Schedule a conference with your teacher or speak at faculty meeting days about LGBTQ issues.

4



Host an LGBTQ Panel

Panels allow students and staff to directly ask important questions to people who can educate them.

5



Introduce a Trans-Inclusive Policy:

Trans-friendly policies set fair guidelines for school staff members who may not know what to do otherwise. Learn more at transstudent.org/policy

For more information, go to transstudent.org/graphics

TSER
Trans Student Educational Resources

IT GETS BETTER PROJECT
2011 GLSEN National School Climate Survey

Infographic by Landyn Pan

OG'S

Beyond the Faculty of 62nd and Osage Avenue

written by Vanessa Habershaw

OG: “original gangster,” a term used in early rap music to describe someone viewed as a “gangster,” or tough in behavior and demeanor. In modern times, it has come to mean an older person who has had to “tough out” a difficult past and has now earned this title as a sign of respect.

At the beginning of *We Shall Not Be Moved*, the opera’s heroine, Un/Sung cries out,

“How we got here...It’s supposed to be the first day of school/But the city ran out of money. And black schools don’t return much on the dollar so I guess closing them makes the most sense. At least to the city. So the doors are locked. We outside told to temporarily move to another school.”

Un/Sung is grappling with the reality of their present situation. Determined not to be defeated by the closing of her school, Un/Sung goes out in search of a place where she and her four orphan “brothers” can learn and create a future of their own. Un/Sung quickly discovers the rebuilt yet abandoned residence at 6221 Osage. Upon learning of the location’s tragic history, she believes that it is there where they have the most to learn.

At Osage Avenue, we are introduced to a very important group of players, the OG’s. This is a group that exists in spirit. It is from a series of notes scattered around 6221 Osage that the five run-away teenagers begin to connect with this group, and learn. On each note is a short phrase or statement which, when read carefully, holds an even greater significance. Librettist Marc Bamuthi Joseph described the OG’s as those who “remember much more than one historical time or place, and express themselves as such.” Ultimately,

what the five teenagers have in the OG’s is a resource that far transcends anything found in a traditional textbook.

So what were the lessons discovered at Osage Avenue? What was written on the notes left behind? As we take a closer look at a few of the notes, we attempt to unpack their meaning. In doing so, we are reminded of just a few people in West Philadelphia history who embody each lesson and now stand as an OG in their own right.

NOTE

**“if you got four brothers
odds are two won’t see high school’s
end and then
young men tend to go spiraling”.**

The goal of all high schools is to graduate students at the highest rate. Receiving a diploma is still considered one of the first steps in securing a life of financial and personal stability. Many high schools in Philadelphia continue to produce young men and women who consistently see it’s end. Here are “four brothers” who have not only seen the end but have gone on to let their life spiral upwards.

1) Ed Bradley

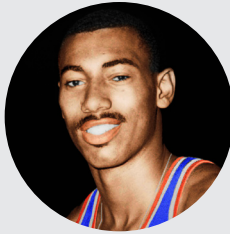
was a graduate of St. Thomas More Catholic High School for Boys, and Cheyney University. Bradley, taught at Mann

Elementary School in West Philadelphia and would later become a radio personality for WDAS-FM. He eventually became a lead reporter on the revered CBS television news program *60 Minutes*.



2) Wilt Chamberlain

started out as a track and field star but soon realized that basketball was “king” in Philadelphia. He was a star player at Overbrook High School and is now regarded as one of the best professional basketball players of all time. His jersey number 13 was retired by the Golden State Warriors, Philadelphia 76ers, and Los Angeles Lakers.



3) **Guion Bluford** attended both Overbrook High School and the University of Pennsylvania. He later became a decorated Air Force pilot, which led him to the opportunity to become an

astronaut. Bluford was the first African American to travel in the U.S. space program. Today, an elementary school in West Philadelphia is named after him.



4) **Wynn Thomas** began his career as a window dresser for Wanamaker’s, the first department store in Philadelphia and one of the first in the United States. When Thomas moved to New York he was recognized and asked to become a set designer for a film directed by Spike Lee. This launched his career. Thomas has twice been the recipient of the Art Directors Guild’s Excellence in Production Design Award. He was recently the set designer for the Academy Award-nominated film *Hidden Figures*.

NOTE

“are you supposed to just stay here and let the future HAPPEN to you.”

There may be no greater reward than to be considered a hero in your hometown. Still many OG’s are able to excel and share their gifts not only at home, but also all over the world.

A graduate of Philadelphia’s University of the Arts, pianist **André Watts** was a teenager when he began his professional career with the Philadelphia Orchestra and the Robin Hood Dell Orchestra. He was later asked to substitute for the famous pianist Glenn Gould. His amazing talent helped to solidified his standing as an international concert pianist. At the age of 70, Watts continues to perform worldwide.

Philadelphia jazz musician **McCoy Tyner** is a graduate of Parkway West High School, formerly known as Sulzberger Jr. High School. His inspiring ability at the piano led him to play for the likes of Benny Golson, John Coltrane, Joe Hubbard, Wayne Shorter, and more. His career has allowed him to perform across the globe. Just a few years ago, Tyner returned to Philadelphia to perform at the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts.

Once too shy to perform at a John Bartram High School talent show, **Florence Quivar** went on to perform for The Metropolitan Opera. Quivar is renowned for her vibrantly rich mezzo-soprano voice. Beyond the United States, Quivar brought her talents to the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, in London, the Salzburg Festival, and more. Today, Ms. Quivar resides in Philadelphia and passes her experiences to students at the Academy of Vocal Arts.



NOTE

“do a little better than what you think is true/possibly be more honestly you”

OG's never give up and always feel they can do more. In giving their best, new inspirations may come about and change the course of their life. Life is a never-ending adventure that is always worth taking.

Once a school teacher, **Jannie Blackwell** is known today for her role in politics. After marrying Congressman Lucien Blackwell, the Councilwoman took a larger role in local government. Following the death of her husband, she was elected to Philadelphia City Council. Her motto “politics is an open-ended opportunity to make life better for others” has helped to energize her career. One of Blackwell's greatest achievements was being a leader behind “West Philadelphia on the Move,” a non-profit organization that embodied her mission to increase affordable housing as well as job and business development across West Philadelphia.

Blondell Reynolds

Brown graduated from Philadelphia High School for Girls, and went on to have a dance career with the dance troupe **Philadanco!** However, her passion for making her Philadelphia a better place resulted in her eventual election to City Council. Her greatest interest has been and continues to be supporting Philadelphia's children and youth. In 2010, Reynolds Brown was a leader behind the film *It Gets Better*, which was part of a national campaign to combat bullying-related suicide by LGBT youth. Today she is serving her fifth term as a member of Philadelphia City Council.



Daughter of a Jewish father and Puerto Rican mother, **Quiara Alegria Hudes**



was raised in West Philadelphia. While studying at Central High School and the Settlement Music School, Hudes's love for music grew. This love led her to pursue a career as a playwright and composer. Achieving success never came easy for Hudes. It was her perseverance in addition to her talent that helped her to rise above. Today, Hudes is most known for her work as playwright of the Tony Award-winning musical *In the Heights*. In October 2011, Hudes became the first woman to be inducted into Central High School's Alumni Hall of Fame.

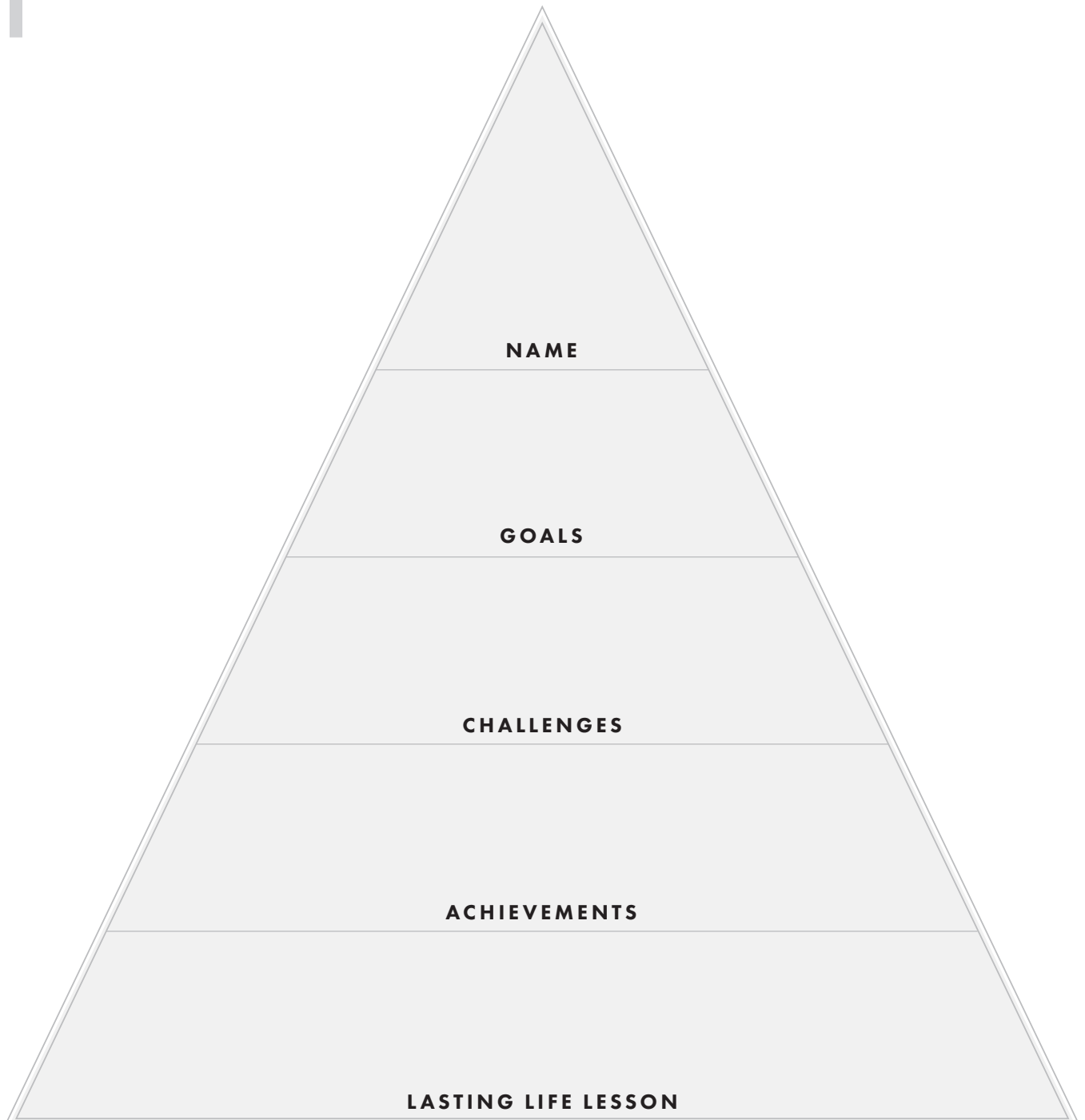
While not all of these OG's have their names printed in textbooks, their lives are certainly worth celebrating. Their work now serves to not only inspire the future generations of Philadelphia but those across the globe. Today, OG's continue to be born in our communities. It is important to remember that an OG is not just someone who is famous or in a position of power. OG's are first born out of attributes such as compassion, wisdom, strength, perseverance, and more. Consider your own path. Are you on the road to becoming an OG?

*Photo Credit: Ed Bradley - CBS News;
Quiara Alegria Hudes - Joseph Moran*

DISCOVERING AN OG

In Your Life

Identify a person in your life who inspires you. This could be a person you see every day or have never met before. Use the following pyramid to reflect on this person and his or her life. If necessary, research the person and discover things you never knew before. Finally, identify at least one life lesson that this person passes on to you today.



A MOMENT IN TIME

The Power of a Turning Point

“The turning point in the life of those who succeed usually comes at the moment of some crisis.” ~ Napoleon Hill

Everyone’s life is the product of a series of key decisions that direct and redirect the course of their journey. This is especially true for the players in *We Shall Not Be Moved*. Led by the heroine Un/Sung, all five orphaned teenagers are born into a disadvantage. Society has failed their communities. Each recognizes this and refuses to let it chart the course of their life. While presently in an authoritative role, Glenda’s road is not that much different. At the beginning of the opera, Glenda introspectively states, “I’ve been there... A young woman feeling like a victim of the system — That’s why I joined the force.” If Glenda knew what it is like to be a victim of the system, why didn’t she instinctively understand the teenagers? Why does she automatically assume wrongdoing at Osage Avenue? While once born into a disadvantage, much has changed for Glenda since wearing blue. Her involvement in the world of law enforcement now colors her perception. Glenda’s attempt to remove the five from Osage leads to a heated confrontation. Losing control, Glenda fires her gun and the



UN/SUNG

North Philadelphia bred
Exposed to touch; or trash
Of the wrong class & caste

First day of school
City ran out of money
The doors are locked

John Blue shoots Manny -
an act of defense
The five must flee

Takes charge
Leads group in
search of new home

Resides at Osage
Life gains promise
OG's become faculty



GLEND A

North Philadelphia bred
Immigrant shaped by loss
Trained stoic

Grows up an
orphan of the
streets

Becomes a
Philly officer
Begins to bleed blue

Assigned to
West Philly

Discovers the
5 teenagers at
Osage Avenue

blow is absorbed by John Henry. **THIS** is the moment of crisis that becomes the key turning point of the opera. While *We Shall Not Be Moved* leaves its audience with many questions about the long-term future of each character, it seems clear that the events that immediately follow this moment of crisis will forever change the course of their lives. Use the following chart to recall the path of both Un/Sung and Glenda. See how their paths collide and lead to a shared turning point. Imagine how this moment in time will continue to impact their lives.



EXERCISE: Think about one critical decision that you've had to make in your life. What options did you have? What choice did you make? What was the outcome of the choice you made? Reflect on this moment and consider how it now stands as a turning point in your life.

DECISION

OPTIONS

CHOICE

Confronted by
Glenda

Holds to her
beliefs

Asserts
authority

Loses
control

Glenda fires her gun

OUTCOME

THE OVERWHELMING PRESENCE *of Gun Violence Today*

ACT 2.1 - JOHN HENRY (Clinically delivered)

“A bullet moves at 2,500 feet per second. Faster than the speed of sound. Before you can hear the danger, it’s on its way. The bullet enters the body at a speed that can disintegrate three inches of bone. Shatter bone into hundreds of microscopic pieces. If it strikes the liver, it makes it look like a jello mold that’s fallen to the floor. Human tissue ripples like water when you throw an object in it. The flesh rips, the lungs collapse, the organs are demolished, a grenade exploding inside the shell of the human cavity. If you get shot in the head you lose consciousness. If you’re shot in the heart you’ll die within minutes. Everywhere else there is both alertness and agony.”

According to **Everytown for Gun Safety**, since 2013 there have been over 200 school shootings in America, an average of nearly one a week. In 2016 alone, **Gun Violence Archive** recorded a total of 15,067 nationwide deaths as a result of gun violence. For 2017, the impact of gun violence is already beginning to accumulate.

We Shall Not Be Moved reminds us of the presence gun violence continues to have in our communities today. At the very beginning of the opera, we see our five orphaned teenagers on the run. John Blue has shot a North Philadelphian by the name of Manny who continued to harass him for being a transgender male. This seemed to be the only solution for John Blue. The “Family Stand” stands in strong defense of their brother. Coupled with the unfortunate school closings in Philadelphia, this event further motivates these teenagers to flee and take up their Osage Avenue home.

At Osage Avenue, the five are soon discovered by Glenda, a Philadelphia Truancy Officer who instinctively assumes wrongdoing. To her, it is school where they belong and Osage is clearly no such place. An altercation ensues in which Glenda attempts to force the orphans from the home. Struggling to gain the upper hand, Glenda aims and discharges her weapon. The blow

is absorbed by John Henry who immediately slumps to his knees. John Little runs in to seize the pistol from Glenda. He then turns the gun around and aims it at Glenda. It is this moment in time when the teenagers are faced with their greatest ultimatum.

To many, instances such as these have become far too commonplace. The presence of guns in our communities continues to raise questions. What can be done to keep our streets free from all harm? Who should be able to buy or carry a gun? How do we keep our schools safe? What role do guns play in answering these questions?

After seeing *We Shall Not Be Moved*, consider the role guns play over the course of the opera. More importantly, consider what happened after the five teenagers seized control of Glenda’s gun. How do you feel their choices after this moment may impact the rest of their life?



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