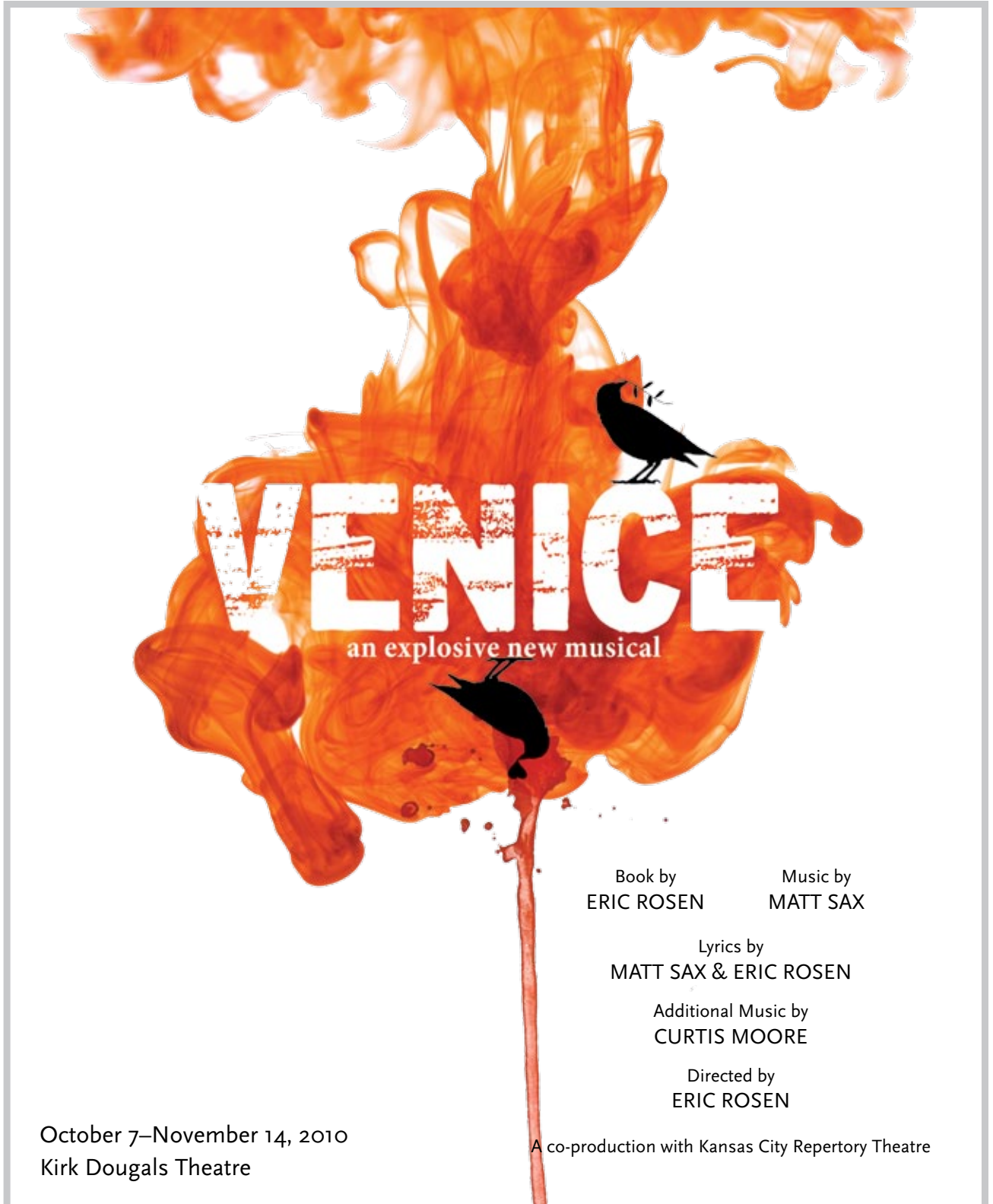


# Educator Resources



# VENICE

an explosive new musical

Book by  
ERIC ROSEN

Music by  
MATT SAX

Lyrics by  
MATT SAX & ERIC ROSEN

Additional Music by  
CURTIS MOORE

Directed by  
ERIC ROSEN

October 7–November 14, 2010  
Kirk Dougals Theatre

A co-production with Kansas City Repertory Theatre

# Welcome

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Center Theatre Group is excited to have you and your students join us for *Venice* by Eric Rosen and Matt Sax.

A great play raises questions about the human condition and a great educational experience allows students an opportunity to reflect upon those questions and begin to discover their own answers. To that end, the material in Center Theatre Group's Student Discovery Guide and Educator Resources raises questions: questions about war and peace, questions about what happens to children in a world without adults, questions about the risks we need to take to allow ourselves to be great. Our goal is to provide you with a variety of entry points into *Venice* so that you can choose what best suits you and your students.

The Educator Resources and Student Discovery Guide are companion pieces designed to help you prepare your students to see the play and to follow-up the performance with options for discussion, reflection and creativity.

We have organized the Educator Resources into the following sections:

## Student Discovery Guide

The Student Discovery Guide provides students with background information about the play and the subject matter, as well as questions for individual reflection. Written to be student-driven, the Discovery Guide helps prepare your students for the performance.

## About This Play

This section includes a scene-by-scene synopsis of the play that provides you with detailed information about the content and structure of the play.

## Comprehension

This section includes background information about the setting and subject matter of the play. We have selected the information that most directly connects to or informs what happens in the play. This section furthers and deepens the background information provided in the Student Discovery Guide. This section can be shared before the play and/or discussed after the performance. It can also be used to provide research topics for your classroom.



L.A.'s Theatre Company

Ahmanson Theatre  
Mark Taper Forum  
Kirk Douglas Theatre

601 West Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

## Connection

This section provides ways to explore connections between the ideas presented in the play, the students' lives and the world we live in. Structured thematically, each section contains questions and exercises that may be used for reflection, discussion, and/or writing prompts both before and after the performance.

## Creativity

This section provides opportunities for your students to use theatre to explore and express. Theatre activities are included to examine both specific artistic aspects of the production as well as delve deeper into the ideas and questions raised by *Venice*. The activities and information in this section can be used both before and after the performance.

We know the hard work and dedication that it takes to bring students to see theatre. These materials are designed to support you in making the most of that experience. We applaud your passion for sharing theatre with your students and thank you for sharing your students with all of us at Center Theatre Group. We look forward to seeing you at *Venice*!

# About *Venice*

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## *Venice* Scene by Scene Synopsis

### Act I

#### Prologue

In the darkness, we see a mixture of ruins and scaffolding. It is a barren city that has been under attack, but is now trying to re-build. We see the newly rebuilt Central Square Church. Clown MC comes out of the darkness with a laptop in hands. He places the laptop on a lectern and types. As he types, his words are projected behind him. Clown MC will use the computer to narrate the story. He describes himself as “not dead, but not quite alive either.” Clown MC addresses the audience directly, stating:

*“If you dream of peace, follow us.  
If you dream of an end to the war, follow us.  
If you know these are not the same thing, well—Are you ready?”*

Music starts.

#### Chapter 1: “People Forgotten”

The scene title is projected above. This happens for every scene transition. We hear Anna’s “La La La” theme. An unknown woman appears and stands in the Central Square Church. Soldiers march on, while chanting. Clown MC raps. He gives us the background of the city of Venice. According to Clown MC, the city was once a free place but it is now a military-state. We are told that for 20 years the city has been plagued by violence after a massive terrorist attack killed nearly all of the adults. Now, after 20 years of war, the bombs have suddenly stopped. General Venice Monroe appears. He promises to bring about change for the people of Venice. The people are cautiously hopeful that war has finally ended. A soldier appears to tell Captain Markos Monroe that one of The Disappeared (the people who fled the city for the Safe Zone when the war began two decades ago) has been spotted in the Central Square. The crowd at the church is mesmerized when they spot Willow Turner, the daughter of the late president who was swept out of town to the Safe Zone when the war began. Her beauty emphasizes the bleakness and anguish of the city. Markos is just as surprised as the people to see Willow. The chorus and Clown MC sing, questioning whether this really is a new beginning for the city.



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## Chapter 2: The Church Restored

Clown MC types and watches from the periphery. We see General Venice in the church. He is reading a letter from Willow that says she is excited to marry him. Michael Victor, the newly appointed Lieutenant General, enters. He was also one of The Disappeared. Michael has been working with General Venice to plan for the return of The Disappeared to mark the 20th anniversary of the start of the war. They are preparing for a press conference. Venice tells Michael to occupy the press while Willow is in transport. When Michael exits, Venice sings, expressing his hopes to live up to his late mother's legacy of peace. His mother, Anna Monroe, appears as a silent ghost that can only be seen by the audience and Clown MC. In his song, Venice also expresses his hopes that his plans to marry Willow will help unite the city, and that this will finally be his moment to be "great."

## Chapter 3:

### In Which The Disappeared Children Come Home

A soldier delivers a letter to Markos from Theodore Westbrook. Theodore is another of The Disappeared. He runs Westbrook Enterprises, a war profiteering corporation that has been working with Markos and others to keep the war going. In Theodore's letter he tells Markos to meet him at the church. When Theodore arrives, he tells Markos that he is upset that Venice and Willow plan to marry. Theodore has been in love with Willow since childhood, and he feels betrayed by Markos because he thought that Markos was his ally against General Venice. Theodore sees Venice and Willow's engagement as a part of General Venice's larger Peace Initiative, which would be bad for business at Westbrook Enterprises. Markos reassures Theodore that he has a plan. When Theodore leaves, we hear Markos' inner thoughts, where he hints that he is plotting something devious. The scene shifts, and we see Michael greeting the recently-arrived Willow. Willow is scared. She questions whether she is making the right choice to return and marry General Venice. Michael reassures her. General Venice enters. He and Willow prepare for the press conference.

## Chapter 4: The Press Conference

Clown MC appears. A video montage plays images of war as live news broadcast. The chorus is gathered to watch the press conference. A reporter explains how the, "right wing faction of the military that controlled for 20 years

the city for nearly two decades was toppled when war profiteering scandals rocked the government.” Markos was in line to be the next General of the Army until he became implicated in allegations of corruption. Venice Monroe became the leader of the army with a campaign to end the war and to bring positive change to the city of Venice. Many citizens expected a military coup when Venice chose to promote the less-experienced and lesser-known Michael Victor over his own brother Markos. When Venice comes to the podium, he reaffirms his commitment to restore the city to its former glory, and reminds the people of their collective responsibility to help create the change that they want. Venice also announces his plans to marry Willow. The press is frenzied. Willow appears at the podium. Willow reminds the crowd about her late father, who was the president that was killed in the attack that started the war. The reporters give Willow a difficult time. They question the sincerity of the couple’s engagement, and whether the wedding would provoke the enemy. Willow steps aside, and Markos takes charge of the podium. He seems to defend his brother and Willow. To the surprise of everyone, especially General Venice, Markos declares that that the wedding will be public event to show the “enemies” that the city is not afraid. This would be the first legal public gathering in many years.

## Chapter 5: Reunion

Michael tries to comfort Willow. She is visibly shaken after the press conference. Venice and Markos enter. Venice apologizes for not letting his brother know earlier about his plans to marry Willow. Michael asks for Venice’s approval to hold a public celebration. Venice asks if it really is safe. Markos responds by saying that under Michael’s leadership, an attack would be, in his words, “unthinkable.” Venice introduces Markos to Willow. We learn that Markos is married to Willow’s former maid, Emilia. Willow and Venice exit. Markos raps “Bomb Drops.” In this song, he describes his anger that his brother was always the celebrated one. He voices his opposition to his brother’s ideals, and plots to disrupt Venice’s plans for ending the war and uniting the city. Theodore enters and says the he will kill himself because the woman that was promised to him as a child was stolen by Venice Monroe. Markos again tells Theodore to calm down. He asks for more money from Theodore so that he can put his plot against Venice into action. Theodore does not want to give him any more money, but Markos threatens him, forcing him into compliance. Markos tells Theodore that he has a big surprise planned, which will be revealed at the party. Markos says if Theodore follows his lead, this secret plot will stop the wedding.

## Chapter 6: The City at Sleep

Venice and Willow are alone for the first time in Venice's private quarters. Their conversation is sweet, but slightly awkward. Venice gives Willow a necklace that belonged to his mother Anna. It is the only thing that he has left of his mother. Willow does not want to accept it, but Venice tells her that instead of a ring, this is what he wants her to have as a token of their marital bond. In another area on the stage, we see Markos' wife, Emilia Monroe, waiting for him to return home. She sings about the strain and tension in their marriage. She has her doubts about Markos and the end of the war. Markos enters and they argue. They sing their inner thoughts, expressing their unhappiness in their relationship. Markos decides to use Emilia in his plot against Venice. Because Emilia was once Willow's maid, and is presumably still close to her, he wants her to visit Willow and take one of her personal possessions. Emilia does not want to steal from Willow, but Markos tells her that he will use the item in a special wedding present for Willow and Venice. Emilia agrees to help Markos in return for a kiss. They kiss. There is a knock at the door. Emilia wants to know who is at the door, but Markos demands that she leave. Heartbroken, Emilia exits.

## Chapter 7: Lady Hailey Daisy

Markos opens the door. Hailey Daisy enters. She is a provocatively-dressed pop diva who has been colluding with Markos. Clown MC leads a chorus of men who view Hailey Daisy as an object of sexual desire. Hailey Daisy steps out of the scene with Markos and dances sexily about the stage. She raps about being a fierce celebrity who has been forced to resort to drastic means to survive. Clown MC and Hailey rap about how dangerous it is to cross Hailey. The men sing about how attractive and alluring Hailey Daisy is. Hailey steps back into the scene with Markos. Markos shows her a picture of Michael Victor. He tells her to pay him a visit, and implies that she should use her powers of sexual persuasion on him. Clown MC tells the audience to watch as Markos puts his plans into action. Hailey visits Michael Victor and seduces him. As Hailey and Michael kiss, the chorus of men surrounds them and sings about Hailey. Markos appears, and he pulls aside one of the men, who becomes a soldier. Markos gives the soldier revised security details. He tells the soldier to keep the plans top secret. A reporter appears, broadcasting live from the church and recounting how the wedding will commemorate the anniversary of the terrorist attacks.

## Chapter 8: Venice or How it Got This Way

Clown MC tells the audience that the city of Venice was envisioned as a Utopia by peace activist, Anna Monroe. Anna is seen addressing the people. Anna inspires the people by speaking of generosity, coming together, and remaining peaceful in the face of violence. Clown MC tells us of Anna's rape by enemies from outside of the city who opposed her peace effort. We see a stylistic simulation of the rape. Clown MC raps that Anna refused to give up. He places a baby in her arms and tells us that after being impregnated from the rape; she chose to have the child. The child, Venice Monroe, was named in honor of the city as a symbol of hope and peace. We see Anna tell young Markos to stand behind his younger brother as he will be "the one"—their hope for a better future. Clown MC tells us that Anna continued to rally the people behind her cause. When the crowd gathers, a cloud of dust appears. There is a large explosion, and we see the people fall down dead. Clown MC raps about the terror in the streets. Anna's ghost appears and sings, "La La La." This is a theme that Willow adopts. We see Willow singing Anna's song.

## Chapter 9: Sunrise

It is morning. Willow sings alone in her room about sensing a figurative "sunrise" for Venice. Emilia enters. This is the first time the two have seen each other since they were little girls. They embrace. Emilia tells Willow that as her new sister-in-law, she has come to help Willow prepare for the wedding. The chorus sings "Sunrise." In another area of the stage, we see Michael telling Venice that the security is in place and that Markos reports that the perimeter to the city is secure. Venice asks Michael to double-check on the perimeter, but he wants the military presence to be discrete. Michael tells him that hundreds of people are returning to the city for the wedding. Venice sings about his dreams finally coming true. The focus returns to Emilia helping Willow get ready. Willow is holding the wedding dress that once belonged to her mother. While Emilia tends to the dress, we hear Willow's inner-song. She questions whether she can live up to everyone's expectations of her. We then hear Emilia's inner-song where she expresses hope for Willow, for the city, and for herself. Emilia finds the necklace that Venice has given to Willow. Willow and Emilia exit to try on the dress. In another area, Theodore Westbrook appears alone. He sings, expressing his disappointment that Willow does not love him in return. Emilia returns with Willow in the dress. She is amazed how much Willow looks like her mother. Willow is sad because she wishes her mother was alive for her wedding. Emilia contemplates taking the necklace. She pockets the necklace as the chorus continues to sing.



## Chapter 10: The Wedding

Outside of the Central Square Church, partiers, a drum corps and other performers are gathered. Now a part of the action, Clown MC raps with the performers. There is much singing and dancing as part of the celebration. A hip hop trio performs. When the trio finishes, Emilia enters with the Willow's necklace to give to Markos. Markos is surprised to recognize this as his mother's necklace. He commends Emilia for following through with the deed. Clown MC welcomes Hailey Daisy to the stage. Hailey performs and the crowd goes wild. Clown MC tells everyone to dance because, "Tonight it's legal!" Markos tells Michael that he should dance too. Michael declines and goes to check on security. Per Markos' bidding, Hailey entices Michael to dance with her. Every time he tries to step away, she pulls him closer. Military figures are doing something in the shadows. We are not sure what. Michael does not see them. Hailey embraces Michael, embarrassing him and throwing him off guard. The music reaches a climax as Clown MC announces the arrival Willow and Venice. Markos goes to Michael, pointing out that there is some type of unknown danger at the church doors. Michael runs to the doors. Just as Willow and Venice reach the spot where they are to be married, there is huge explosion. The curtain closes and "intermission" is projected. End of Act One.

## Act Two

### Chapter 11: You Never Wish War on a People

The church is now in complete ruins. A voiceover repeats, "You never wish war on a people." A siren blares. Michael stands in a special light while the ensemble runs quietly in the shadows. Michael sings about what happened during and after the explosion. Anna's ghost appears and approaches Michael. Clown MC follows her. Willow appears dressed for funeral. She walks pass Michael, but does not see him. Michael describes the scene as the funeral procession walks by him. Michael wonders who has died. Clown MC raps/narrates as Anna taps Michael's shoulder. Michael then realizes that he has died. Anna and Clown MC lead him to a chair that represents a coffin. The funeral begins.

### Chapter 12: The Funeral

The chorus sings a funeral hymn. We hear Willow singing her inner thoughts. She questions whether the city of Venice really is her home, particularly now

that Michael is gone. Venice tries to comfort Willow at the coffin, but she breaks away from him. Markos and Emilia approach Venice and Willow. While Emilia comforts Willow, Venice asks Markos if there is any news concerning who was behind the attack. Markos says that no one has claimed responsibility. He keeps up his guise by complimenting the recently departed Michael, and expressing concern for Willow. Theodore approaches Willow and offers his condolences on Michael's death. We hear his internal thoughts, commenting on how lovely she is. Inwardly, Willow, Emilia, and Theodore sing about how lonely they all are. In another area, our focus returns to Venice and Markos. Venice apologizes for promoting Michael and now offers Michael's former position to Markos. Markos evades this, stepping away to watch Willow at the coffin. She asks for a sign that she is making the right decisions. There is a special light on Markos as he raps his inner thoughts. Markos seems to be taking pleasure in watching his plot unfurl. Willow spots the necklace in Michael's coffin. She points it out to Venice. She assumes that Venice has put the necklace in Michael's coffin as a gesture to honor Michael on her behalf. Venice denies having placed the necklace in Michael's coffin. Markos then says that it must have been in Michael's pocket during the explosion, adding that it is the custom to bury the soldier with something from the woman that he loved. When Emilia tries to interject, Markos orders her to be silent. Venice then accusingly asks Willow how Michael got his mother's necklace. Insulted by the implied accusation, Willow gets more upset and angrily admonishes Venice about his promise to keep them all safe. The funeral is ending. Emilia is growing more suspicious of Markos. While Markos continues his scheming, Emilia tries to get Willow to leave. Willow says that she wants to go home. Venice thinks that she wants to return to the Safe Zone. Emilia, Willow, and Venice exit. Theodore enters. While not explicitly admitting to Theodore that he was behind the explosion, Markos tells Theodore that now is his chance to comfort Willow. A reporter appears and informs us that in light of the recent attack, the city is under its highest security alert while the military searches for those responsible for the bombing.

## Chapter 13: Poison

Clown MC appears and tells us to pay careful attention to how Markos manipulates Venice's emotions. A projection reads "Night One", and we see Venice talking to Markos. Venice is concerned that Willow has not come to see him since she said that she wanted to go home. In response, Markos casts doubts on Michael's and Willow's loyalty. The music changes and we

see Markos holding the ensemble under his control like a puppet-master. The citizens of Venice are growing more restless. The scene shifts to show Willow looking for Venice. Markos stops her, telling her that Venice is too busy to be bothered. A projection reads “Night Two,” and Clown MC tells us about the growing fear in the streets. We see Venice confronting Markos. Venice tells him that detaining people in the streets goes in direct opposition to their mother’s message. Markos tries to convince Venice that their mother would not just sit back and tell people to rally if she knew what they knew. Markos lies to Venice by telling him that Willow came to him for special permission to leave the city. Clown MC comments on Markos’ manipulation as the people grow increasingly desperate. Willow appears again to see Venice. Markos refuses to let her through to Venice, and sharply orders her to go home. A projection reads “Night Three.” Clown MC tells us to watch as Markos’ scheme reaches a climax. The focus shifts to Markos telling Venice that the city is not home for The Disappeared because they abandoned it and let the terrorists take over. Markos reminds Venice about the enemies, including the rapist who fathered Venice, further insinuating that Willow, Michael, and the rest of The Disappeared are enemies themselves. He also says that Willow is not to be trusted because she has been unfaithful Venice. Markos declares that the only way to make the city safe is to “cleanse the city of foreigners.” Venice’s rage starts to overwhelm him, and he considers that Markos might be correct. Willow bursts in without warning, and immediately rushes to Venice. She apologizes to Venice for what she said to him at the funeral. Venice takes Markos’ side, fiercely ordering Willow to go home. Venice tells her that he will provide an escort for to leave the city safely. She refuses to leave, adding, and “This is not why Michael died.” This makes Venice angrier. Willow rushes to him, and he strikes her. All is silent. Willow falls to the ground. Markos and Venice look at her before exiting, leaving Willow alone.

## Chapter 14: The Wind Cried Willow

After a long pause, Emilia enters. We are back in Willow’s room. Willow has called Emilia because she did not know who else to turn to. Emilia reassures Willow that she is, and always will be her sister. Willow asks if Emilia remembers the song called “Willow” that she used to sing to her. Willow says that she never understood the song but now cannot get it out of her head. Willow sings the song. As she sings, she begins to understand that the sadness and loss in the song is the story of her life. Willow and Emilia sing together. When Willow sings the lyrics, “Little girls have fantasies,” Emilia tells her that

those words are foolish because, as women, they are “all the play things” of men. Emilia believes that the men of Venice do not care about their fantasies. Emilia goes on to tell Willow that men are not to be trusted. Willow says that she thought she loved Venice Monroe, but is now very confused. We hear Emilia’s inner thoughts as she sings about not being able to trust her own husband. Emilia ponders how she will tell Willow that she has deceived her by foolishly trusting Markos. Willow makes Emilia promise that if something should happen to her, she should be buried in her mother’s wedding dress. They embrace and continue singing together.

## Chapter 15: Venice is for Venice

The city is bursting in chaos and violence as helicopters and searchlights hover above. Soldiers march through the streets. We see news footage of General Venice addressing the citizens of Venice. He tries to assure the people that their leaders are doing what is necessary to bring peace to the streets and to the borders. Repeating what Markos said earlier, Venice proclaims, “Venice is for Venice.” A reporter stands in the street amidst the escalating violence. The reporter tells us about the detention of people who have tried to escape the renewed bloodshed in the city. Hailey Daisy enters, but she is no longer glamorous. Soldiers bring her to Markos. She reminds him that he promised to keep her safe. Markos double-crosses her by declaring that she is a foreigner and a “fugitive whore.” He then orders the soldiers to take her into custody for collaborating with the enemy. Hailey resists and threatens to report Markos’ devious activities. Markos shoots her. She dies. He orders the soldier to dump the body, warning them that if they say anything he will kill them too.

## Chapter 16: Let Me Be Great

Violence continues in the streets. The people clear away as we see a man being strangled. It is revealed that the man is Theodore. Markos has killed him. The ghost of Anna appears. Singing, she implores Theodore to take her hand. Clown MC tells us that even though Theodore is dead, it is still important to hear his story. According to Clown MC, people feared Theodore when he was alive because he was a war profiteer, but before he died, Theodore changed his ways. Theodore appears and tells his own story. He tells us that because of his privileged background, it was assumed that he would marry Willow, who was the president’s daughter. Growing up, Theodore was too nervous to tell Willow that he loved her. Clown MC says that Theodore was afraid to fail, so he

did not risk. Theodore and the chorus sing about wanting to have a moment of greatness. Theodore recounts how he felt when Willow decided to marry Venice Monroe. We see Theodore visiting Willow's room the night after Venice hit her. Theodore tells Willow that he loves her. In response, Willow tells him that she still loves Venice. Even though Willow did not reciprocate, because he took a risk and revealed his feelings, Theodore finally feels alive. Markos enters and says that he saw Theodore with Willow. Markos refers to Willow as a "treasonous whore" and "traitor" who deserves to die. Theodore tells Markos that he is not afraid of him. Theodore stands up to Markos, prepared to tell the truth about their dishonest actions. As he turns to walk away, Markos strangles Theodore. Markos stands over Theodore's dead body, takes out a knife, and cuts himself in the arm. Markos calls out for Venice. Emilia enters and sees the body. She rushes out to get Venice. Venice runs in. Markos makes up a story about Theodore and Willow being lovers for years, and that they were plotting to have Venice killed. Markos continues the lie, claiming that Theodore came at him with a knife, and he had to kill him in self-defense. Emilia returns. Markos tells Emilia to call for an ambulance, and to call the police to arrest Willow. Venice interjects, telling Emilia to bring Willow to the church instead so that he can deal with her on his own. Emilia starts to object, but Venice insists. He goes inside the church, leaving Emilia alone with Markos. Emilia refuses to comply. Markos says that if she does not do it, he will. Emilia asks Markos, "What have you done?" Markos tells her that she knows not to ask and orders her away. Alone, Markos shares his inner thoughts about completing his scheme to bring down Venice.

## Chapter 17: Put Out the Light

Venice enters the church. It is filled with candles and prayers for the dead. In the background, Anna's ghost stands with the ghosts of all the dead. Anna approaches Venice, who is filled with rage. Venice sees his mother's ghost for the first time. He tells her that he thinks he is cursed because he was born of rape. He is ready to give up. As Anna reaches out to Venice, he pushes her to the background, rejecting her (and her memory). As the chorus of the dead chants, "Put on the light," Willow enters the church. He asks her to come close so that he can kiss her. Venice tells Willow that Markos wants to have her arrested and executed for being a traitor. Willow says that she is not afraid because she trusts Venice and "believes in [him]." Willow tells Venice that Markos has been lying to him. Venice turns against Willow, accusing her (and the others) of being against him. Venice moves behind Willow. He puts his

hands on her shoulders and comes close to strangling her, as Markos watches. Venice is unable to follow through with killing her. When he pulls away, Markos enters shouting. He warns Venice to kill Willow before she kills them. Willow tries to assure Venice that he can trust her. Venice is unsure what to do. The chorus continues to chant as the tension builds. Emilia rushes in. She denounces Markos, and confesses that she stole the necklace that was then planted in Michael's coffin. Markos orders Emilia to shut up, but she continues on with her confession without fear. Venice asks Markos if this is true. Markos does not answer. Suddenly, Markos lunges toward Emilia with a knife. Willow jumps up to protect Emilia, and gets stabbed. Blood is everywhere. Venice pulls Markos down, and holds him in a choke hold on the ground. Emilia tries to help Willow, while Venice threatens to kill Markos. Willow tells Venice not to kill Markos. Venice asks, "Why, Markos? You were my brother." Markos tells him not ask, and that he will never speak again. After a long beat, Venice tells the guards to take him away. Willow instructs Venice to put an end to all of the war, the violence, and the fear and distrust. Venice leaves Willow and Emilia alone while he goes to get an ambulance. Willow tells Emilia that she has done something great by standing up for her herself and stopping Markos. Emilia apologizes for hurting Willow and that they will always be sisters. Willow dies in Emilia's arms. Venice re-enters. Seeing that Willow has died, he runs to her body, full of remorse. Venice picks up the knife that killed Willow, and turns it on himself. Emilia takes the knife away from him. Venice divulges to Emilia that he loved Willow, to which Emilia responds in song:

*WE NEED TO GROW UP NOW  
STOP PRAYING FOR—  
WANTING MORE—  
PLAYING WAR  
WE NEED TO GROW UP WE'RE NOT CHILDREN ANYMORE.*

Together, they sing about all that they have lost because of the long, senseless war, declaring now is the time grow up and embrace peace. The entire ensemble appears. They reprise "Sunrise" song. Clown MC steps forward with an epilogue. He tells us that now that while this "make believe" tale has ended, we, the audience, have the choice and opportunity to make the real world a better place. The show ends with the ensemble singing:

*WE NEED TO BE GREAT  
FOR ONE INSTANT  
LET THEM SAY WE DIDN'T MISS IT  
AND WE PRAY EVERY MINUTE  
GIVE US JUST ONE MOMENT TO SHINE*

End of play.

# Comprehension

Comprehension | Connections | Creativity

This section includes background information about the setting and subject matter of the play.

We have selected the information that most directly connects to or informs what happens in the play. This section furthers and deepens the background information provided in the Student Discovery Guide. This section can be shared before the play and/or discussed after the performance. It can also be used to provide research topics for your classroom.



## Sampling Shakespeare

Like the hip hop music that provides the beat for this new musical, *Venice* samples from older, classical works. In hip hop music, when one song samples another, the newer song borrows beats, melody, or sometimes lyrics from the older work as a way of quoting the source material in order to create something new. As *Venice* is loosely based on William Shakespeare's tragedy, *Othello*, it samples from the older text. Although the plot and characters are quite different between the two works, it might be helpful in indentifying where *Venice* is in conversation with *Othello*.

Shakespeare wrote *Othello* in the early 1600s, during the same period where he wrote many of his major tragedies, including *Hamlet* and *King Lear*. Shakespeare's play was based on a novella from the collection *Hecatommithi* by Giraldi Cinthio, published in 1565 in Italian, and translated in French by G. Chappuys in 1583. In his adaptation, Shakespeare changed some of the characters from the original and accelerated the plot in order to make the story more theatrical and dramatic.

## *Othello* Synopsis

Set in the Italian city of Venice, Othello is the general in command of the city's military forces. Despite his high military rank, Othello is seen by many of the Italian characters as a foreigner because he is a Moor, a member of the dark-skinned Muslim people from northwestern Africa of mixed Berber and Arab ancestry; a minority in this society. The play starts after Othello has secretly wed Desdemona, the daughter of a Venetian senator. Iago, a low-ranking officer under Othello's chain-of-command, is angry because Othello has just promoted Michael Cassio to be lieutenant, passing over Iago. Iago convinces Roderigo, a Venetian nobleman who is in love with Desdemona, to alert Desdemona's father that Othello has ruined his family's reputation by stealing his daughter's virtue and marrying without the father's consent. When summoned by her father before the Duke of Venice, Desdemona confirms her love for Othello. The Duke admires Othello as a soldier and forces everyone to accept the marriage. Seeing that he has lost Desdemona, Roderigo wants to kill himself. Iago convinces Roderigo to help him in a plot against Othello.

The army is ordered to defend Cyprus, a Venetian colony, from the Turks, who were seen approaching the island. In Cyprus, Iago leads Roderigo to believe that Desdemona is in love with Michael Cassio, gets Michael Cassio drunk,

and then instigates a fight between Roderigo and Michael Cassio. In the brawl, Cassio strikes a fellow soldier and Othello demands an explanation about what happened. Because Othello trusts Iago, Iago provides an explanation that, although it does not explicitly blame Cassio, results in Cassio losing his position as lieutenant. Iago then persuades Cassio to go to Desdemona to get her help as a way to get back into Othello's good graces. By doing this, Iago plans to convince Othello that Cassio and Desdemona are having an affair.

When Desdemona goes to Othello to make the case for Cassio, Iago plants the idea in Othello's head that Desdemona is being unfaithful. Trying to calm her husband's jealousy, Desdemona uses her handkerchief, a gift from Othello, to wrap his aching head. When Desdemona drops the handkerchief, Iago's wife and Desdemona's maid, Emilia, finds it on the floor and gives it to Iago. Iago takes the handkerchief and tells Othello that Desdemona has given it to Cassio. Othello becomes enraged and demands that Desdemona produce the handkerchief, which she cannot. Rather than admit that she lost it, and unbeknownst of the plot against she and her husband, Desdemona innocently reminds Othello of his promise to meet with Cassio. To Othello, Desdemona's mentioning of Cassio at this time is proof of the supposed-affair, so he leaves in a rage. Emilia tells Desdemona that Othello might be jealous of his wife, even though he does not have a reason to be. Desdemona decided that she must try to talk to him again. In the same scene, when the women leave, Bianca, a local courtesan, appears to good-naturedly confront Cassio about the long time it has been in which he has paid her a visit. Cassio gives Bianca the mysterious handkerchief that he has found in his room, not knowing that it is Desdemona's missing handkerchief. He asks Bianca to make a copy of the handkerchief because he likes the design, but he is sure that whoever lost will come looking for it.

Iago reports to Othello that Cassio has admitted to the affair. Othello becomes so overwhelmed with rage that he faints. When he awakens, Iago has arranged it so that Othello overhears Iago and Cassio talking. Cassio talks about his relationship with Bianca, but Othello mistakes it for a relationship with Desdemona. Bianca appears with the handkerchief, this time she is genuinely angry because she thinks that the handkerchief given to her by Cassio was given to him from another woman. Othello now thinks that Cassio has given the Desdemona's handkerchief to a prostitute. Othello decides that he will kill Desdemona, and Iago is to kill Cassio. Still in Cyprus, a message arrives for Othello to return to Venice. If he were to return to Venice, Cassio would be

left in charge in Cyprus. To Othello's displeasure, Desdemona is pleased for Cassio's rank to be reinstated. Othello hits Desdemona in public, and accuses her of being deceitful, and orders her away.

Later, Iago urges Roderigo to attack Cassio. Roderigo only wounds Cassio, but in the confusion that follows, Iago kills Roderigo. Othello goes to kill Desdemona while she is asleep. She awakens, again denying the accusations against her. Othello smothers Desdemona in her bed. At that moment, Emilia enters, insisting on Desdemona's innocence. Othello calls on Iago for the proof that Desdemona was unfaithful. When Othello brings up the handkerchief, Emilia suddenly realizes what she has done, and then tells the truth about the handkerchief and how it got in Cassio's hands. For this, Iago kills Emilia and escapes. Othello is left alone filled with grief over not having trusted and killed his beloved wife. Iago is arrested, and brought back to Othello, who attacks him. Now realizing the full truth, Othello asks Cassio for forgiveness before stabbing himself, falling dead with Desdemona.

### *Othello's* Plot and Characters Re-Visited

Some of the themes, plot, and characterizations from *Othello* re-appear in *Venice*.

The title, also the setting of Shakespeare's play, is both the name of the main character and the fictional city in which the musical is based (it is explained in the text that the character was named in honor of the city in which he was born). Like the title character of *Othello*, Venice (the character), is the general of the army. General Venice Monroe is seen as an outsider by some because he was conceived through rape, "when the foreigners came [...] the enemy who hated us from far way raped the woman who made us feel safe." Shakespeare's villain Iago is re-created through Markos Monroe, Venice Monroe's half-brother. Markos has always felt overshadowed by his much-favored younger brother. Sibling rivalry is made worse when Venice promotes Michael Victor over Markos. Much like Iago plots against Othello, Markos plots for his brother's downfall.

Shakespeare's innocent victim Desdemona becomes Willow Turner, the daughter of the late President of the city of Venice. When it is revealed to Markos that Venice plans to marry Willow, it adds to Markos' jealousy; Venice always seems to win, while Markos always seems to be left out. Meanwhile,

Theodore Westbrook, the wealthy son of a late war profiteer, approaches Markos for help to stop Venice and Willow's pending nuptials. Theodore is in love with Willow in the same way that Shakespeare's character Roderigo was in love with Desdemona. Under the guise of helping Theodore court Willow, Markos plans to exploit Willow's friendship with Michael Victor, much like what happens in *Othello* when Iago invents the story about Cassio and Desdemona having an affair.

By pretending to want to create a special wedding present for Willow and Venice, Markos enlists the help of his wife Emilia (named for Desdemona's maid). As Willow's former maid, Emilia uses her close relationship with Willow to gain access to take jewelry or some other special token from Willow. When she agrees to help her husband, Emilia is not aware that this is a part of Markos' vindictive plan. Where Shakespeare's Emilia innocently took Desdemona's handkerchief, Emilia Monroe takes Willow's locket, a gift from Venice to his bride-to-be.

Another character borrowed from Shakespeare is Bianca, the courtesan, who becomes Hailey Daisy. Like her Shakespearean counterpart, Hailey Daisy uses her sexuality to make her living. Unlike Bianca, a minor character in *Othello*, in *Venice*, Hailey Daisy becomes a character central in the plot by participating in Markos' scheme.

The themes of betrayal, jealousy, revenge, duty, and honor appear in both *Othello* and *Venice*. Despite these salient parallels between the two works, in many other ways (particularly the plot of Act II), *Venice* diverges widely from *Othello*.

### Shakespeare's Language/ Verse in Shakespeare

In reading *Othello*, or any other of Shakespeare's plays or poetry, comprehending the language is often a difficult task for any reader. Contrary to popular belief, Shakespeare did not use "Old English", or even "Middle English." Shakespeare's English, what is now referred to as Early Modern English, is the same English we speak today (even if some of the words Shakespeare used are no longer used or if they now have completely different meanings). Besides the variations in vocabulary and sentence structure between the English we speak and that of Shakespeare, one of the most striking characteristics of Shakespeare's language in his plays is the use of

verse. How each character spoke was an intentional choice, meant to reflect important information for the actor playing the role and for the audience attending the play. This refers to not only the words or images in the speech, but the rhythm of the passage, whether there is rhyme, or whether there is any discernible rhythm at all.

In the sixteen century, nearly every play was written primarily in verse as a matter of convention. Verse refers to text that is marked by meter. The meter in a text is the rhythm that continuously repeats a pattern in the way in which the words are stressed, meaning where emphasis is placed on the syllables of the word. In Shakespeare, verse was usually given to the highborn characters, or the good ones worthy of our sympathy.

The meter, or pattern, that most commonly appears in Shakespeare is iambic pentameter. In iambic pentameter, within a line of text there are five pairs of syllables, and the stress falls on the second syllable in each pair: de-**DUM**, de-**DUM**, de-**DUM**, de-**DUM**, de-**DUM**.

The following passage from Act 3, Scene 3 of *Othello* is an example of verse:

*This fellow's of exceeding honesty,  
And knows all qualities, with a learnèd spirit,  
Of human dealings. If I do prove her haggard,  
Though that her jesses were my dear heartstrings,  
I'd whistle her off and let her down the wind,  
To prey at fortune. Haply, for I am black  
And have not those soft parts of conversation  
That chamberers have, or for I am declined  
Into the vale of years—yet that's not much—  
She's gone. I am abused, and my relief  
Must be to loathe her. O curse of marriage,  
That we can call these delicate creatures ours,  
And not their appetites! I had rather be a toad  
And live upon the vapor of a dungeon,  
Than keep a corner in the thing I love  
For others' uses. Yet, 'tis the plague of great ones;  
Prerogated are they less than the base;  
'Tis destiny unshunnable, like death.  
Even then this forkèd plague is fated to us  
When we do quicken. Look where she comes.*

This particular passage, where Othello expresses his trust in Iago and his doubts in Desdemona's fidelity, is written in blank verse. In blank verse, the lines are in iambic pentameter, but the ends of lines do not rhyme. Free verse refers to text where the meter is irregular, or the rhythm of the text is not metrical.

Understanding Shakespeare's language in such way makes hip hop and Shakespeare an obvious fit. The use of meter and rhyme in rap is similar to the way in which meter and rhyme are used in Shakespeare's plays. In their lyrics, rappers commonly make use of wordplay and puns, alter the pronunciation of words to illustrate the various uses of rhyme, and change stress on syllables to fit into a particular musical rhythm.

Prose refers to language that is close to ordinary, everyday speech, unadorned with intentional patterns of verse, rhythm, or rhyme. The "common characters", servants or those of low ranking, spoke in prose in Shakespeare's plays.

Just as Shakespeare deliberately chose when a character was to speak in verse or prose, the same holds true for the characters in *Venice* whether they are rapping, singing, speaking in verse, or speaking in prose. Playwright Eric Rosen explains thus:

Even with hip hop, *Venice's* characters are Shakespearean in that they speak in pentameter, free verse and blank verse. Like Shakespeare, we've used character status to give a reason for who speaks in couplets and we've given different voices to different characters to make sense of who they are and what their relationships are. Certain characters rap because that's what their heart is and what their station in the play is about. It's almost always true that they speak in rhymed couplet verse without rapping if they are colluding, and they speak freely when romance is happening.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> From interview with Amy Tonyes, Kansas City Repertory Theatre Education Associate

## From Shakespeare to Hip Hop

*“With its celebration of language, meter, poetic strictures, verbal play and display, [hip hop] hearkens back to earlier traditions of oral expression in African-American culture... and even to classical theatrical conventions and the productive wordplay of William Shakespeare.”*

—from “Getting the Spirit” by Harry J. Elam, Jr., Professor of Drama, Stanford University

Although the terms “hip hop” and “rap” are often used synonymously, rap is only one of the original four elements of hip hop (the other three elements will be explained in moment). As an art form, rap traces its roots back to African-American oral traditions, particularly the African-American poetic form known as the toast. In the form of a rhymed-monologue, toasts tell stories, recounting the adventures of heroes who use wit, bravado, or just plain trickery to overcome some type of obstacle. Like in rap as we know it today, the artistry in toasts relies on rhythmic displays of innuendo, sharp wordplay, and bravado. Toasting was popularized in places where the residents knew all too well about feelings of disenfranchisement and societal obstacles like racism, poverty, and unjust incarceration. The art of toasting evolved into the protest poetry of the 1960s and 1970s, as popularized by poets like Amiri Baraka, Sonia Sanchez, and especially the music-infused records by Gil-Scott Heron and the Lost Poets. In the 1970s, DJs in the Bronx like Kool Herc and Grandmaster Flash were spinning turntables and scratching beats, sometimes accompanied by rappers who rhythmically chanted to the unique sounds being created while dancers spun on their heads and moved their bodies in ways that made it look like they were going to break something—And hip hop was born.

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<sup>2</sup> Elam, Jr. Harry J. “Getting the Spirit (introduction).” *The Fire This Time: African American Plays for the 21st Century*. New York: Theatre Communications Group, 2004.

## Hip Hop or Not?

Hip hop is only one of a variety of stylistic choices and musical forms used in *Venice*. However, hip hop music and hip hop aesthetic feature so prominently in the show, it is worth exploring the genre of hip hop theatre. The term “hip hop theatre” first appeared in an article by performance artist Holly Bass published in *American Theatre* magazine in November 1999<sup>3</sup>. In the article, Bass quotes playwright Robert Alexander, author of the gangsta rap play *Preface to the Alien Garden*, who defines hip hop theatre as a theatre “influenced by the sensibilities of rap music”, continuing with:

For something to be truly a hip hop theatre piece it has to contain elements of schizophrenia and rebellion, creativity and destruction. There has to be a marriage between heaven and hell, light and dark, revolution and complacency and all of our various contradictions, whether it's a performance piece or a traditional play with dialogue.<sup>4</sup>

Although an exact definition of “hip hop theatre” can vary from self-described hip hop theatre artists, generally speaking, a piece of theatre is considered hip hop theatre if it contains or is about at least one of the four elements of hip hop: graffiti art, DJ'ing, B'boying/breakdancing, and rapping/MC'ing. By most accounts, hip hop does not just refer to music; hip hop is not just rap. As writer/performer Danny Hoch, founder of the first Hip Hop Theatre Festival and considered one of the pioneers of hip hop theatre, puts it:

Please notice that ‘rap’ is the last one of these original four. People often interchange the terms ‘rap’ and ‘hip hop,’ and this is dangerous, because if we define a culture solely by what it is renowned for in the mainstream, then we are only looking at a sliver of its totality. To use rap to define hip hop art is to define Jamaicans as ‘reggae people,’ Swedes as ‘meatballers’ or the British as Shakespearians<sup>5</sup> [sic].

Hoch goes on to expand the list of the original four elements of hip hop, noting that they are in no particular order, to also include: codification of language (spoken and written), dress, gestures and images; call and

<sup>3</sup> Bass, Holly. “Blowin Up the Set.” *American Theatre* 16:9 (November 1999) p. 18-20 Durable URL: [http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url\\_ver=Z39.88-2004&res\\_dat=xri:iipa:&rft\\_dat=xri:iipa:article:citation:ii pa00139893](http://gateway.proquest.com/openurl?url_ver=Z39.88-2004&res_dat=xri:iipa:&rft_dat=xri:iipa:article:citation:ii pa00139893)

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2

<sup>5</sup> Hoch, Danny. “Here We Go, Yo ... : A manifesto for a new hip-hop arts movement.” *American Theatre*.



response; sociopolitical context and legacy (post-Civil Rights/'70s nationalism/ Reaganomics); metaphor and simile; illusion (magic); polyculturism (immigrant and migrant); battle, braggadocio (competition); lack of safety, barriers, boundaries (stage); African and Caribbean diaspora performing traditions; lack of resources and access; reappropriation by hip hop creators or materials, technology and preserved culture; criminalization of poverty; and criminalization of culture. Like many others, Hock views hip hop, and by extension hip hop theatre, as holistic culture adding, "Hip hop art is not a coincidental pop novelty. It involves craft. There are old and new traditions, which are recognized by people inside and outside of the culture<sup>6</sup>." Writer/performer Eisa Davis, another self-proclaimed devotee of what she terms "the church of hip hop," has also written about hip hop theatre and its expansive nature:

But hip hop theatre is a name, and names hold water, weight, sway. Names can be outgrown. Names can be used to pigeonhole, denigrate, exclude. "You mean you're 'doing' poetry instead of writing it? Slam poems instead of page poems?" "How can you be a hip hop theatre artist and write a traditional play set in 1955 in the California redwoods! That's not street; write something uglier." "If you don't use the four elements, you are not hip hop." "You're Asian, you're white, you're Pacific Islander, so you are not hip hop." "You're black, so why are you so smart and articulate?" These attempts to limit expression don't just come from outside the community, they come from inside. Even when comments don't intend to be exclusionary, there is no agreement on what hip hop theatre is, whatsoever. It's like that, and that's the way it is. It's the internal dialogue that keeps the form vital, relevant, and enhances the ability to be participants and observers simultaneously. Which is what artists must always be.<sup>7</sup>

Danny Hoch and Eisa Davis both go as far as to say that in order for something to be hip hop, it does not even have to contain any of the four original elements. Hip hop is only one of a variety of stylistic choices and musical forms used in *Venice* and it aims to reach a younger generation of theatre audiences while remaining true to classical theatre traditions. Matt Sax,

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Davis, Eisa. "Found in Translation: Hip-hop theatre fuses the thought and the word, the rhythm and the rhyme, the old and the new." *American Theatre*. 28 July 2010. <<http://www.tcg.org/publications/at/JulyAugust04/translation.cfm>>.

Lyricist/composer of *Venice*, perhaps put it most succinctly, “All of these styles are fused in the world of *Venice* and reflects a generation that can marry the mash up of these forms.”<sup>8</sup>

## The Disappeared

In *Venice*, “The Disappeared” refers to the young people who lived in The Safe Zone while the city of Venice was at war. While *Venice* takes place in a fictional city in the “not-distant future” and not a specific time or place in history, the phrase “The Disappeared” has real-life resonance. In Argentina in the 1970s and 1980s, the country was enmeshed in the Guerra Sucia (“Dirty War”) where the dictator-led government kidnapped countless numbers of people who were political dissidents and those who were simply suspected of being against the government. Those who were kidnapped were called the “disappeared” (or, in Spanish, “los desaparecidos”) because they would vanish without a trace, never to be seen or heard from again. Most of those who were disappeared were from the middle and lower classes, namely students, professionals, and intellectuals. The families of the disappeared were not allowed to contact the authorities or to speak publicly about their missing loved ones, for fear of reprisal from the government. Chile also had its own version of the disappeared, where, as in Argentina, the dictator-led government kidnapped and tortured those who spoke out, or who were suspected of speaking out, against the government. Today, Argentina and Chile have democratically elected heads of state, but many of the disappeared have never been accounted for. Mass graves have been found, but the bodies cannot be identified. In Buenos Aires, for the past twenty years thousands of mothers and grandmothers wear white scarves in the Plaza de Mayo, a kind of central square, holding pictures of their disappeared loved ones in a mass protest over the atrocities committed in the not-too-distant past. In *Venice*, it is the privileged youth who are disappeared, but their time away is nothing like the brutal circumstances of the real-life disappeared.

### SOURCES:

“Argentina: In Search of the Disappeared.” *Time.com*. 24 September 1979. Time Inc. 28 September 2010 <<http://www.time.com>>.

Salinas, Janine M. Personal Interview. 3 September 2010.

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<sup>8</sup> Matt Sax. “Creating *Venice*.” Interview with Amy Tonyes, Kansas City Repertory Theatre Education Associate.

# Connections

Comprehension | Connections | Creativity

This section provides ways to explore connections between the ideas presented in the play, the students' lives, and the world we live in.

Structured thematically, each section contains questions and exercises that may be used for reflection, discussion, and/or writing prompts both before and after the performance.

## WAR AND PEACE

*“Is this the end of violence?  
Is this the end of war?”*  
(Lyrics in the opening song of *Venice*)

In the beginning of *Venice*, we find a community that has experienced extreme trauma through violence and is striving to heal those wounds. A bomb attack killed many of the city leaders and caused others to go into hiding. The citizens are encouraged to try and cultivate a climate of peace, hope and optimism. Continued violence makes their struggle extremely challenging.

- How do the characters of Venice combat the violence that is present in their lives?
- What are some of the causes of war in our world today?
- What are the causes of war in Venice?
- Who are the people of Venice at war with? Is it clear who the enemy really is?
- Who has power in Venice? Who wants power?
- How is greed for power related to the violence that is committed in the story of Venice? How is greed for power connected to the wars going on in our world today?
- When at war, a nation often takes the point of view that the enemy is outside of its borders. How might a nation also be its own worst enemy?
- When a country is at war, many companies profit financially from the conflict. One of the characters in Venice comes from a family who has cultivated wealth from this type of involvement. Is this a logical result of keeping a country safe or is it unjust for some to become rich off of war?

### 9/11:

- Like the citizens of *Venice*, we live in the shadow of a major terrorist attack. How does our world differ from the world of the play? How is it similar?

- How has our society changed because of the events of 9/11? How did Venice's society change because of the bombing it experienced? What are the similarities and differences between the two?
- In *Venice*, the characters often refer to the bombing that they experienced many years prior. Do you live with ever-present memories of 9/11 and the possibility of a similar event occurring in the future? If you lived in New York City or Washington D.C. do you think you would have the same reactions and expectations? Explain.

## Creating Peace

*"The world is at war  
But the city doesn't have to be."  
(Quote from the character of Anna in Venice)*

- How do the characters in the story go about creating peace?
- How do we go about creating peace in our world?
- Do you think it is possible to create peace? Why or why not?
- Two of the characters in Venice (Emelia and Theodore) decide to tell the truth to those, in power in order to prevent more violence from occurring. How is creating peace related to truth telling?
- Peace. An end to war. Are these the same thing?

## WE CAN STAND AS ONE

*"We could be decent and generous  
Don't let hate better us.  
Show the kids ahead of us  
We can stand as one.  
Let our difference bind us  
Don't let hate blind us....."*

*We can stand as one  
Chant as one."  
(Lyrics from Venice)*

These lyrics contain the heart of the message communicated by Anna, the former leader of Venice, who was killed in the first bomb blast. It was Anna's desire for her son, Venice, to be a symbol of peace over violence. As the city's new leader, he has been committed to carrying on this message.

- Do you think this message is realistic or idealistic? Explain.
- What are the citizens of Venice doing in the play to “stand as one”?
- What would it mean to “stand as one” in a community? What would people need to do to make this happen?
- What other leaders, past and present, have encouraged us to “stand as one”?
- Is there anyone in your community that displays this type of leadership? In your family, school, place of worship, neighborhood, city, state, county, world?
- Do you work toward your community standing as one?
- Does a community always have to stand as one united against something or can it stand as one purely to promote an idea?
- Does it always take a devastating event to inspire people to work together or can this be created in a time of peace as well?
- Do you think most people are more similar to the character, Venice (who promotes peace, collaboration and optimism), or are most people more like his brother, Markos (who is jealous, competitive and self-serving)? Can people in real life be so clearly defined, so truly good or bad, as these characters?

*“Her dream*

*My dream*

*Our dreams”*

(Sung by the character, Venice, about his mother)

This set of lyrics illustrates the journey of an idea. It begins with one person, is carried to a new generation by another, and integrated into the community. “Her... my... our”. In *Venice* the dream is one of peace.

- What leaders today embody the idea of standing together as one for peace? How do they communicate this message? What is their motivation for communicating this message?
- Does President Obama's message of hope and change have any connection to the material in *Venice*?

- How can promoting the idea of “standing as one” be used in a negative, destructive way? What examples from history illustrate this point?
- Why is it important to consider who creates a message and the motivation behind its creation?

*“We need to be great*

*For one instant*

*Let them say we didn’t miss it*

*And we pray every minute*

*Give us just one moment to shine”*

(We hear these lyrics sung throughout the play. They are also the final lyrics heard in *Venice*.)

Initially, individual characters introduced these lyrics. By the close of the play, the lyrics have changed from “I” to “we”. The characters of the play become united in their desire to continue their struggle for peace and prosperity.

- What happens during the course of the play to cause this shift from “I” to “we”?
- Which characters go through personal transformation, shifting their focus from “I” to “we”? How does this individual transformation affect the community as a whole?

## FABLES AND STORIES

- Why do we tell fables and stories?
- What is the difference between a fable and a story?

## Stories and You

- What is your favorite story or fable from childhood?
- What stories or fables inform your life now?
- Do you usually find yourself rooting for the hero or the villain? Why?
- Do you think stories can change society or only comment on it?
- How can we take the knowledge we gain from stories and integrate it into our lives?

- Do you view stories as being pure entertainment, full of meaning or existing somewhere in between? Explain.
- What kinds of stories appeal to you? Dramas, comedies, action/adventure, mysteries, etc.
- What are the sources of the stories in your life? (Books, television, film, internet, theater, video games, friends, family, school, etc.) Has it always been this way or has it changed during your lifetime?
- Which story telling method most affects you? (reading, theater, film, television, friends, family, etc.) Why?

## Music & Dance

- How does music affect storytelling?
- Imagine *Venice* being told with a different style of music. How would it affect your reaction to it?
- If you were able to change the type of music with which *Venice* is told, what style would you choose? Why?
- Much of the story of *Venice* is told through dance. As you watch the show, think about what is communicated about the story through the choreography. What do you observe?
- Watch video clips of the show, available on the Center Theatre Group website. Observe how the choreography helps to tell the story. Watch with and without sound. What do you notice? What do the dancers' movements communicate? How do they interact with each other? How would the telling of the story be affected if dance was not used?

## Connections Among Stories

- Stories are connected throughout the ages. Authors use and reference each other's material. For example, the authors of *Venice* used aspects of William Shakespeare's *Othello* when creating their musical. What other stories do you know that have these types of connections?

## Use of a Narrator

- How does having a narrator effect the telling of the story?



- How would the production be different without the narrator?
- Can you think of other productions you have seen that have a narrator helping to tell the story?
- Why would the authors place a narrator in their musical to help tell the story?

## Title

- Why do you think the creators, Eric Rosen and Matt Sax, decided to give the setting, the main character and the title of the play the same name?
- What other examples of symbolism can you find in the story of *Venice*?

# Creativity

Comprehension | Connections | Creativity

This section provides opportunities for your students to use theatre to explore and express.

Theatre activities are included that examine both specific artistic aspects of the production, as well as delve deeper into the ideas and questions raised by *Venice*. The activities and information in this section can be used both before and after the performance.

## Cultural Mapping

### OBJECTIVES

- *Students will gain knowledge of similarities and differences in their classmates.*
- *Students will be introduced to Venice and begin to reflect on the play.*

### EXERCISE:

Ask the students to move the desks to the side and stand in a circle. Describe the room as a map of the world. Identify Los Angeles in the space. Have students who were born in Los Angeles gather in that place. Have the other students group themselves according to their birthplace (north, east, south or west of Los Angeles). Each group must determine two additional things that they have in common. Report back to the whole class. (Example: The members of the “north” group all like pizza and are the oldest in their families.)

Repeat activity using other divisions:

Oldest, middle, youngest, only child.

Ask each student to stand by the quote that most intrigues them. Discuss in the group why they chose that quote. What intrigues them about it?

### Quotes from *Venice*

*If you dream of peace, follow us.  
If you dream of an end to the war, follow us.  
If you know these are not the same thing, well—  
Are you ready?*

*I AM THE BATTLE'S EYES  
HIDDEN THROUGH THE CLOWN IT'S MY BATTLE DISGUISE*

*CAN WE TRUST THE SILENCE  
WHEN ALL WE KNOW IS WAR*

*GIVE US JUST ONE MOMENT TO SHINE*

*JUST MAKE BELIEVE  
THAT MAKES BELIEF*

## Tableau/Frozen Picture

### OBJECTIVES

- Students will practice using their bodies to communicate an idea or theme.
- Students will reflect on the varied interpretations of the theme.
- Students will reflect on Venice through a physical exploration of its themes.

### EXERCISE:

Divide students into pairs. Student A is the artist. Student B is the sculpture. Have student A create a statue out of B on the theme of the “future”.

Examples: Flying cars, world peace, destroying the environment, graduating from college. Statues can be realistic or symbolic, personal or global.

Have each student title their statue and present to the class.

Repeat exercise with B as the artist and A as the sculpture.

Repeat with the themes of War, Peace, Greatness, Betrayal, Hope, Change.

Have each student sculpt an image that represents one of these themes. Have the students sculpt on the same theme from the point of view of one or more of the characters from *Venice*.

Discuss what these ideas mean to your students and what these ideas meant to the characters in *Venice*. Are they similar or very different?

## Sound and Motion Machines:

### BASIC MACHINE:

Have students stand in a circle.

Have a volunteer to come into the center of the circle and create a sound and a movement that is machine-like. Other students add onto the machine with their own sound and movements. Emphasize that students should make their gesture connect to other parts of the machine without directly touching anyone.

Once the machine is established, direct the machine to slow down or speed up, whisper or shout, or even sing. Stress the importance of remaining aware of everyone else in the machine and working together as an ensemble, especially when going faster.

#### THEMATIC MACHINES:

After several rounds, introduce the idea of a war machine. Ask for a volunteer to create a sound and movement that is “war-like.” Emphasize that this might be symbolic or realistic. Have students add on to the “war machine.” After the machine is established, have it move in slow-motion. Ask the students who are not part of the machine to observe the images and sounds of war being created.

Next, create a “Peace” machine using the above instructions.

Discuss both machines. Was it easier to create images of war? Do the images of peace seem achievable? What would it take to make those images reality? Discuss the images of war and peace in *Venice*. How did they compare to the images created in this activity?

Discuss the following quote from *Venice*:

*If you dream of peace, follow us.  
If you dream of an end to the war, follow us.  
If you know these are not the same thing, well—  
Are you ready?*

Create an “end to the war” machine. What is the difference between peace and an end to the war?

### MOMENT OF GREATNESS

In *Venice*, certain characters achieve a “moment of greatness” in their lives. This occurs when a character makes a conscious, heroic choice about how to proceed in the midst of an extremely challenging circumstance. Below are scenarios that illustrate this:

- Anna, the former leader of Venice, becomes pregnant because of being raped. Instead of allowing this to completely devastate her, she chooses to raise this child as the next leader and peacemaker of Venice.
- Emilia decides to tell the truth about wrongdoing that she has committed. She does this in order to prevent more bloodshed and to stop the city of Venice from being led by a dark figure.

- Theodore chooses to know the truth about his relationship with Willow, instead of manipulating her into marriage. He becomes willing to face whether she really loves him or not, and act accordingly.

**CHORUS**

*WE NEED TO BE GREAT FOR ONE INSTANT  
LET THEM SAY WE DIDN'T MISS IT  
AND WE PRAY EVERY MINUTE  
GIVE US JUST ONE MOMENT TO SHINE  
GIVE US JUST ONE MOMENT TO SHINE*

**WRITING PROMPTS/CLASS DISCUSSION:**

Why did the creators of Venice want to end the play with this message?

- Have you ever witnessed a “moment of greatness” by someone in your life?
- Have you ever wanted to, or decided to, live, a “moment of greatness”?
- What “moments of greatness” have recently occurred in the world today?
- What “moments of greatness” do we need today?
- How would you define “moment of greatness”?
- Imagine a “moment of greatness” for yourself.
- What other “moments of greatness” occurred in the play?

**EXERCISE: Creating a Moment of Greatness:**

Below are three writing prompts. Read each aloud with the class. Ask students to choose one and to write about the topic for 5-7 minutes:

- Have you ever experienced a moment when you made a courageous choice? What were the circumstances? Did you have a lot of time to make this decision, or did the situation come upon you suddenly? What were the risks involved? What were the positive consequences? The negative one? If you had made a different decision, what would have been some possible outcomes?
- Choose one area in life where you are feeling challenged. How would you like it to be different? What could you do to improve that area? How are other people involved in this decision? What are the risks? What are the payoffs?

- Imagine a “moment of greatness” for yourself. Picture yourself making a courageous decision in an area of life that has meaning for you. Be creative. You can make the moment as realistic as possible, or make the situation as fantastical as your imagination will allow. Add as much detail as you can think of.

Now that students have responded in writing, instruct them to take the exercise a step further. Below are choices to cultivate additional exploration:

- Create a visual collage to accompany the writing prompt. Use images from magazines, newspapers, photographs, the internet, etc.
- Students find a partner. They are to take turns creating “sculptures” based on their writing prompts. This means guiding their partner into a pose that creates a “statue” based on their writing. Then, they give the “statue” a title. Each partner creates a statue.
- Have students work in small groups of 3-5. After reviewing each writing prompt, they are to create tableaux (frozen pictures) representing each student’s prompt. Each prompt will have two tableaux created for it. One depicts a world where the moment of greatness takes place. The other depicts a world where the moment does not take place. Each student gets to direct the scenes involving his/her writing prompt.
- Create a song based on the writing prompt.
- Create a poem based on the writing prompt.

Students present their work to the class. Discussion takes place about the material.

## Gesture Choreography

In groups of three, ask students to share a time that they witnessed or experienced a “moment of greatness”. As one student shares their story, ask the other two to listen and watch for any spontaneous gestures that the speaker uses in telling the story. Emphasize that the student should just tell the story and not try to force a gesture or repress a gesture. After the story is completed, the other two students share the spontaneous gestures they observed and narrow it down to one that the speaker likes. After all three students have shared their story, each group will have three gestures.

Ask the students to create a movement phrase using the three gestures. The phrase can be as simple or as choreographed as the group desires. Put on music during this exploration. Have each group share their movement phrase.

Adding text. Students share their “moment of greatness” story verbally while their partners continue the movement phrase.

Gesture circle. Come together in a circle. Without speaking, have each student share their moment of greatness gesture.

Discuss the use of gesture in *Venice*. Read and discuss the interview with the choreographers in the Discovery Guide.

## SLOGANS

Throughout the musical *Venice*, slogans are utilized by characters that are in positions of political power.

### WRITING PROMPTS/CLASS DISCUSSION:

- What is a slogan?
- Where and why might a slogan be used?
- Who creates slogans?
- Name some slogans that you have heard often.
  - Where did you hear them?
  - Why do you remember them?
  - Who created them and why?



A **slogan** is a memorable motto or phrase used in a political, commercial, religious and other context as a repetitive expression of an idea or purpose. The word slogan is derived from *slogorn* which was an Anglicisation of the Scottish and Irish Gaelic *sluagh-ghairm* (*sluagh* “army”, “host” + *gairm* “cry”). [1] Slogans vary from the written and the visual to the chanted and the vulgar. Often their simple rhetorical nature leaves little room for detail, and as such they serve perhaps more as a social expression of unified purpose, rather than a projection for an intended audience.

(Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slogan>)

slo-gan [**sloh-guhn**] Show IPA

**–noun**

1. a distinctive cry, phrase, or motto of any party, group, manufacturer, or person; catchword or catch phrase.
2. a war cry or gathering cry, as formerly used among the Scottish clans.

**Origin:**

1505–15; < ScotGael *sluagh-ghairm*, equiv. to *sluagh* army, host ( cf. *slew2* ) + *gairm* cry

(Source: <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/slogan>)

In *Venice Anna* the leader of the Peace movement describes the message she wanted to communicate to her citizens. The women join with her and communicate her message in the phrase or slogan, “We Can Stand As One.”

**ANNA**

LET US BE DECENT  
AND GENEROUS  
DON'T LET HATE BETTER US  
SHOW THE KIDS AHEAD OF US  
WE CAN STAND AS ONE

**ANNA & WOMEN**

WE WE WE  
WE CAN STAND AS ONE  
CHANT AS ONE  
WE WE WE  
WE CAN STAND AS ONE  
CHANT AS ONE

## WRITING PROMPT/CLASS DISCUSSION:

- What is your response to Anna’s message?
- Do you believe that “we can stand as one”?

In the world of the musical *Venice*, the characters are grappling with the consequences of a devastating bombing that took place a generation ago and killed their beloved leader, Anna. The following are some of the slogans created as a result of this tragic event:

*IF YOU SEE SOMETHING—SAY SOMETHING*

*HER DREAM*

*MY DREAM*

*OUR DREAMS*

(In speech made by Venice about his mother’s work and vision; immediately repeated by ALL.)

*THE WHOLE WORLD IS WATCHING...*

There are parallels between the world of *Venice* and the post-9/11 world in which we live in today. After the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks in the United States, media outlets used slogans to brand their coverage. These slogans usually appeared in the bottom area of a television broadcast or in the headlines of newspapers. Much of the time they used American flags and red, white and blue in the designs. Examples include:

- “America Attacked”, “A Nation United” (ABC)
- “Attack on America”, “A Nation Challenged”, “Day of Terror”, “Portraits of Grief” (The New York Times)
- “America’s New War”, “War Against Terror”, “America under Attack” (CNN)
- “War on Terror” (Fox News)
- “America on Alert”, “America under Attack” (MSNBC)
- “The Second Pearl Harbor” (Honolulu Advertiser)
- “War On America” (The Daily Telegraph)

(Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slogans\\_and\\_terms\\_derived\\_from\\_the\\_September\\_11\\_attacks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Slogans_and_terms_derived_from_the_September_11_attacks))

THEATRICAL EXERCISE:

Students work in small groups of 3 to 5 students.

The group creates an original slogan that addresses the topic of war and peace.

They must know:

- What message or idea they are trying to communicate?
- Why they are trying to communicate this message or idea?
- Who the audience is (high school students, voters, senior citizens, etc)?
- How they will communicate this idea? What images will they use?

The group creates a tableau (frozen picture) based on their slogan.

Group presents tableau to the class.

Audience members offer responses. They explore what the group is trying to communicate, what the slogan might be, and who the target audience is.

Group reveals their slogan and the details of their tableau work (what, who, why).

List of Recent Political Slogans from U.S. Presidential campaigns:

- **Let's make America great again** — 1980 U.S. presidential campaign slogan of Ronald Reagan
- **Morning Again in America** — Ronald Reagan Slogan for 1984 presidential election
- **It's Time to Change America** — a theme of the 1992 U.S. presidential campaign of Bill Clinton
- **It's The Economy, Stupid.** — 1992 presidential campaign of Bill Clinton
- **Ross for Boss** — a 1992 U.S. presidential campaign slogan of independent presidential candidate H. Ross Perot.
- **Yes, America Can!** — 2004 U.S. presidential campaign slogan of George W. Bush
- **Yes We Can** — 2008 U.S. presidential campaign slogan of Barack Obama.
- **Change We Can Believe In** — 2008 U.S. presidential campaign slogan of Barack Obama.
- **Country First** — 2008 U.S. presidential campaign slogan of John McCain.

- **The Strength and Experience to Bring Real Change** — 2008 U.S. presidential campaign slogan of Hillary Clinton

(Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_political\\_slogans](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_political_slogans))

WRITING PROMPTS/CLASS DISCUSSION:

- Do you see any connections between the above slogans and slogans used in the play? What are they? Why do they connect?
- What slogans above do you believe are the most effective? Why?
- Which slogans do not appeal to you? Why?
- What political slogans do you come across in the media today? How do they affect you? Do you think they will always stay with you?

The song lyrics below are not political slogans, but could be seen as slogans that are communicating ideas and messages from the play itself. Some of these “slogans” could be used to describe a character. Others are slogans that are adopted by many characters once they are initially presented:

*“I WANNA LOVE AND BE LOVED”*

(First introduced by Theodore in his song. He is referring to his love for Willow and wondering where he went wrong. Afterward, other characters adopt this chant or slogan throughout the play.)

**THEODORE & CHORUS**

*I WANNA BE GREAT FOR ONE INSTANT  
LET THEM SAY I DIDN'T MISS IT  
AND I PRAY—EVERY MINUTE*

**THEODORE**

*LET ME JUST HAVE ONE MOMENT TO SHINE*

(In this moment, Theodore introduces another “slogan” that others take up later in the play.)

WRITING PROMPT:

- Create a personal slogan. It could describe you or be about your approach to life. Explain why you have created it and what it means to you.

## Slogan Study

Take a look at the slogans listed below. Some are from the musical, *Venice*, and others are from recent political and historical events in the United States. Write your reaction to each slogan in the space provided.

Slogan	My Reaction (What It Makes Me Think and Feel)
The Whole World Is Watching	
Yes We Can	
Country First	
Let Me Have Just One Moment To Shine	
If You See Something, Say Something	
Change We Can Believe In	
The World Is At War, But This City Doesn't Have To Be	
We Are Turning The Corner	
Deeds Not Words	

## Slogan Study Key

The Whole World Is Watching	In <i>Venice</i> , refers to the upcoming wedding of Venice and Willow
Yes We Can	2008 U.S. presidential campaign slogan of Barack Obama
Country First	2008 U.S. presidential campaign slogan of John McCain
Let Me Have Just One Moment To Shine	In <i>Venice</i> , the character of Theodore sings about wanting to live an honorable moment. Other characters take up this slogan.
If You See Something, Say Something	Instructions from the Soldiers to the citizens near the beginning of <i>Venice</i>
Change We Can Believe In	2008 U.S. presidential campaign slogan of Barack Obama
The World Is At War, But This City Doesn't Have To Be	In <i>Venice</i> , the character of Anna used this slogan to lead the citizenry.
We Are Turning The Corner	1932 campaign slogan in the depths of the Great Depression by U.S. Republican President Herbert Hoover
Deeds Not Words	W.S.P.U. (Women's Social and Political Union) suffragette slogan, 1903

## Archetype Exercise

Playwrights (and authors of all kinds) often use archetypes as starting points for the characters in their work. By creating recognizable characters, the author allows the reader some comfort and familiarity with the people inside the world of the play, no matter how foreign that world may be. However, there is another reason authors choose to use archetypes. By using characters we think we already know, the author tempts us into making certain assumptions about these people. These assumptions may or may not be correct, and the characters may or may not maintain a given archetype. Use of archetypal characters can be a useful convention, as it may increase surprise, satisfaction or even disappointment introduced by plot twists or character arches.

In the play *Venice*, director and playwright, Eric Rosen bases his characters on recognizable characters. The character of Venice himself is not only an archetypal hero / king / general, but is also based on the larger than life Shakespearean character of Othello (a flawed hero, ultimately brought down by his own jealousy in the play by the same name).

- **Explore a Type:** Students walk slowly and quietly around the room (cleared of furniture) without interacting with each other, “exploring the space.” Students should not talk or touch one another during this time, but rather turn their focus inward, concentrating only on their own breath and what they observe through sight and sound around the room.
- **Sculpture Garden:** Instructor “freezes” students periodically with an agreed upon vocal cue (“Freeze!” works well...). Students should literally freeze mid-stride as if they have been turned to stone right in the middle of an action. This will create a “sculpture garden” of frozen people in various physical and facial positions.
- **Taking on a Character:** Continuing to walk about the space, students are asked to “become” a king or queen. As they do this, they may be asked some questions to help them make physical choices:
  - ◇ Are you good or evil?
  - ◇ How does it feel to have so much power?
  - ◇ How do you look at all the other people in the kingdom?

- ◇ How does being a powerful leader change your posture?
- ◇ How does it change your gait?
- ◇ How does it change the way you hold your head?
- **Going Deeper:** Students are now asked to add on to the physical characters they have already created on their own.
  - ◇ What does a king / queen wear on their head? (crown)
  - ◇ Students are asked to hold their hands up by the sides of their heads with fingers pointing upward “towards the heavens” (for strength, to give thanks for the divine rite of Kings, etc.). Hands held in this way represent a crown.
  - ◇ Students are told they must keep their crowns on their heads, or they will lose their power; they may not lower their hands.
  - ◇ If students let their arms come down, they may be asked to sit down where they are, as the other kings and queens continue to walk.
  - ◇ As students walk about the room, the instructor may ask questions and use directions to deepen the experience. For example:
    - Are your shoulders starting to ache?
    - Now imagine all of the people around you who may want to take away your power. How does that feel? How does it change the way you walk, how does it change the way you look at others? By the way, how are those shoulders feeling?
  - ◇ It’s hard to be the king!
- **Short Discussion: What is an archetype?** Discuss the word and what it means in order to introduce the concept of recurring character-types within the greater context of literature, theater and art.
  - ◇ The word breaks into two parts—arch=over reaching, and type=sort or kind
  - ◇ Dictionary Definition:
    - ar-che-type** (*n*)
    - 1. A typical, ideal, or classic example of something
    - 2. Something that served as the model or pattern for other things of the same type



3. In Jungian psychology, an inherited memory represented in the mind by a universal symbol and observed in dreams and myths
  4. An image or symbol that is used repeatedly in art or literature
- **Human Sculpture:** Instructor will lead an exercise which allows students to explore the use of archetypes in a physical way, allowing them to show (rather than tell) what they know.
    - ◇ Teacher Prompt:
      - Since an archetype represents a familiar sort of character often found in literature, theater, film and television, we probably already know some. In fact, a King / Queen is an archetype, and you all knew a lot about them. Let's try another one. Is a villain an archetype? (Yes)
      - Does anyone know what a villain looks like?
        - Students will raise their hands or call out, even change their bodies to represent what they know a villain looks like.
      - Students should take a moment to think, and then begin striking poses as their own villains. Students are asked to freeze when instructor says, "3...2...1... snapshot!"
    - ◇ Allow students to show what a villain looks like to them one at a time in order to show that there are differences between the images we all have in our minds (long mustache, slouched posture, scowl-faced, cape, etc.)
    - ◇ Now ask students to volunteer to show an archetypical Hero, repeating the process. Other examples might be: Army General, henchman, trickster, princess, etc.
  - **Longer Discussion: How do we know?** Students are asked to consider where their information comes from. The following prompts may be useful:
    - ◇ Have you ever actually met any of these characters?
    - ◇ If so, did they look like the archetypes just shown by you and your classmates?

- ◇ Where do we get these images? (Television, movies, books, plays, video games, comics, etc.)
- ◇ Do we know what to expect from these characters? (Examples: a villain is always trying to thwart the plans of the hero, the class clown is always there with a joke, a general is always ready to lead, etc.)
- ◇ Why do we see these characters so much?
- ◇ Create a list of archetypes students already know and where they come from (these could come from both classical and contemporary sources, e.g., class clown, school principal, whacky neighbor, side-kick, librarian, etc.).
- ◇ How might it be useful for an author, playwright, screen or television writer to base their characters on archetypes?
- ◇ Is it possible for a character to represent more than one archetype?

In the musical *Venice*, heroic characters appear throughout the story. They come from a variety of stations in life: maids, soldiers, business tycoons, and presidents. Each one has a unique path to follow. Some succeed in achieving their goals and surviving their challenges. Others enact heroic deeds, but are not fortunate enough to live beyond those moments.

WRITING PROMPT:

- How would you define “hero”? What qualities does a hero possess?

*Webster’s* dictionary defines heroes and heroines as people “of distinguished courage or ability, admired for (their) brave deeds and noble qualities.” Heroes and heroines surround us in our everyday lives: firefighters, parents, friends, relatives, teachers, world leaders, and fictional characters in books, film, television, and video games.

WRITING PROMPTS:

- Who is someone you identify as a hero? What qualities do they have that make them a hero to you?
- Have you ever thought of yourself as a hero? Have you ever performed a heroic act? Describe the situation.
- After seeing the production of *Venice*, write about each of the heroic characters of the play. Explain why they can be seen in this light. If you think they are not heroic, offer your reasons. Are any characters missing from this list?

- ◇ Venice
- ◇ Michael
- ◇ Willow
- ◇ Theodore
- ◇ Emilia

The journey of the hero is a crucial element in storytelling. It has been analyzed by a variety of scholars, many of whom have found patterns that occur in stories across cultures, ages, and genres. Mythologist Joseph Campbell developed a specific series of steps taken by a hero, which he described in his book, *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*. The following is a description of Campbell's version of the hero's journey:

1. Ordinary World — The hero's normal world before the story begins
2. Call to Adventure — The hero is presented with a problem, challenge or adventure
3. Refusal of the Call — The hero refuses the challenge or journey, usually because he's scared
4. Meeting with the Mentor — The hero meets a mentor to gain advice or training for the adventure
5. Crossing the First Threshold — The hero crosses leaves the ordinary world and goes into the special world
6. Tests, Allies, Enemies — The hero faces tests, meets allies, confronts enemies & learn the rules of the Special World.
7. Approach — The hero has hit setbacks during tests & may need to try a new idea
8. Ordeal — The biggest life or death crisis.
9. Reward — The hero has survived death, overcomes his fear and now earns the reward.
10. The Road Back — The hero must return to the Ordinary World.
11. Resurrection Hero — Another test where the hero faces death – he has to use everything he's learned
12. Return with Elixir — The hero returns from the journey with the “elixir”, and uses it to help everyone in the Ordinary World

WRITING PROMPT:

- Apply the structure of Joseph Campbell's hero's journey to the heroic characters from *Venice*.

## THEATRICAL EXERCISE: HEROIC MOMENT

In *Venice*, our main hero, the character of Venice, encounters many challenging situations along his journey; the death of his mother, two separate bombings of his city, the betrayal by his brother, the death of his fiancé. Eventually a moment comes where he no longer wants to live. However, he is able to survive his own despair and to find the desire to courageously continue living. He becomes empowered by remembering the words of his loved ones, receiving support from those around him, and embracing the knowledge that he must move on to the next stage of life.

The following exercise explores what a person does to survive a challenging moment in life.

- Students form small groups with four members each.
- One student is chosen to be the hero.
- The hero thinks of one current challenge in his or her life that he/she is experiencing or witnessing. The problem can come from any arena:
  - ◇ Personal (challenges with parents, siblings, friends, self)
  - ◇ Community (challenges in school, neighborhood, peer group, city, etc.)
  - ◇ Global (challenges faced by the nation or the world)
  - ◇ The hero decides whether to reveal the challenge to the group or keep it to himself or herself.
- The hero is to create three tableaux (frozen pictures) about this situation using the group members and himself/herself.
  - ◇ Tableau #1: A frozen picture that depicts the problem. The hero is to place the other group members as the challenges and place himself/herself as the protagonist/hero.
  - ◇ Tableau #2: A frozen picture that depicts the hero solving the problem in a courageous way.
  - ◇ Tableau #3: A frozen picture that depicts the hero after surviving the challenge or solving the problem.
- Tableaux are rehearsed, and then presented to the class.
- Other class members discuss what they see in the scenes.

- If desired by the hero, he or she may reveal what was being portrayed.
- If there is time, each member of the group may take a turn being the hero.

Websites with more information on the hero's journey:

The Hero's Journey [http://www.mythichero.com/what\\_is\\_mythology.htm](http://www.mythichero.com/what_is_mythology.htm)

The Monomyth Cycle <http://www.wiu.edu/users/mudjs1/monomyth.htm>

Heroes of History <http://library.thinkquest.org/05aug/00212/monomyth.html>

Additional Info:

Link to "George Lucas and the Power of Myth" lesson from the PBS American

Masters series:

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/lessons/george-lucas-and-the-power-of-myth/lesson-overview/1292/>

## Throwing Focus

Throughout *Venice*, Eric Rosen and Matt Sax have created a world where the focus of the audience is frequently shifted from one part of the stage to another in order to represent different geographical locations or even time periods. Lighting, sound, video images, stage craft and the actors themselves all send signals to the audience as to where their attention should be and what points of reference they should use to keep the action in context.

The techniques used in order to adjust or "throw" an audience's focus from one place on the stage to another are extremely useful and a fun way to make the most out of the limited space available.

- **Warm up with Focus:**
  - ◇ Pass the clap:
    - In a circle, one student begins the exercise by clapping once.
    - As quickly as possible, the student to the left of the original student claps once, then the next, and so on, until the clap returns to the original student.

- The group should try to go as quickly as possible, then as slowly as possible.
- Things to remember:
  - All students must concentrate and focus on the clap itself in order to be successful.
  - Receiving the message is as important as sending it off.
- ◇ Zip, Zap, Zop:
  - One student will begin the game by pointing at another student in the circle and saying “Zip.”
  - The second student, with no hesitation, must immediately point to a third player and say “Zap.”
  - The third player then must, in turn, immediately point to a fourth person and say “Zop.”
  - The fourth person then continues the game by immediately pointing to someone else and saying “Zip,” thus completing the circuit and starting the pattern over.
- ◇ Group Roar:
  - Split into three groups, students hum a sustained note together, creating one large sound. Each group should create a different sound.
  - Acting as “conductor,” the instructor alternately points to one group or another, gesturing to them to increase or decrease their volume.
  - Each group should maintain the volume they are left with by the conductor until they are directed to fade or increase or cut their sound.
- **Scratching the Surface:**
  - ◇ Conducted Story:
    - Six students stand in a line or arch, facing the instructor.
    - One of the remaining students from the class, i.e., a member of the audience, is asked to provide the title of a story that “has never been told before,” for example, “The Kid with the Magic Pebble.”

- The conductor then raises his / her hands, quieting the orchestra, and begins the exercise by pointing to a single student, indicating that they should start the story (e.g., “Once upon there was a kid who found a magic pebble...”)
- When the first student has had a chance to speak for a moment or two, the conductor moves on by pointing to another student who must then pick up the story immediately where the last student left off (e.g., if Student # 1 says “Once upon a time, there was a kid who found a magic...” and right at that moment the conductor points to a new student, the new student must pick up the story without repeating what was said. So, the next word might be “pebble” or “wand” or “carpet” or whatever they want to make magic.)
- The instructor (or a volunteer) “conducts” the storytellers, fading one person out and “bringing another up” like an orchestra until a complete story is told.

The goal of the conducted story is to have the players tell a story that moves seamlessly from one player to another. The goal of the conductor is to make the story flow as well as possible. If the conductor moves from one player to another the new player that is speaking must continue on as though there was no pause (e.g., The story should flow from player 1 who said, “all the kids were afraid of the kid with the magic pebble because they knew it might ha...” to player 2, who would immediately continue “...ve dangerous powers.” The key is listening and maintaining focus on the story.

- **Social Mixer:**
  - ◇ The playing area is divided into three distinct spaces, with a pair of students standing or sitting in each.
  - ◇ The remaining students (i.e., the audience) are asked to suggest a topic of conversation for each pair.

- ◇ When three topics are decided on, the pairs each begin chatting quietly about their assigned topic.
- ◇ Just as in a crowded room full of socialites at a party, there is a din of conversation. Every so often, one couple may get louder or softer, depending on the rhythm of their own conversation.
- ◇ From within the pairs, students should try to listen to the rest of the sound around them.
- ◇ As one group increases its volume, the others should take that as a cue to fade themselves out until they are only pantomiming without actually making any sound at all, allowing the focus of the audience to be directed to a single couple.
- ◇ When the “spotlighted” couple has had a few moments to speak, they may begin to fade themselves out, at which point, one of the other couples should increase their own volume and continue speaking, as if they have never stopped.
- ◇ This continues until focus is thrown around and shared between all three couples several times each, picking up the individual conversations from different points until the conversations come to a natural close.

Again, students should be listening carefully for audible cues that indicate when a focus shift might be coming.

## Rhythm and Music Development

*Venice* is a wonderful example of rhythm, music, movement and speaking coming together.

Incorporating basic rhythm and music into the curriculum can help develop both a sense of ensemble and musicality in our speaking and singing voices. Utilizing a basic rhythm and attaching syllables to it will help the students to slow their speaking and practice basic diction.

The students will be most successful if the exercise is taught in steps.

### STEP 1:

- First, get a water bottle, plastic or metal, with water in it, so there is a little weight to the bottle. Make sure the bottle won't leak.
- Then, write this on the blackboard and teach the students this basic rhythm:



Beat: // // // Give the Doh and Re one beat each and the Mi, two beats.

Syllable: Doh Re Mi This is 4/4 time. Four beats to a measure.

- Direct the class to join you by speaking these syllables with this rhythm repeatedly.
- Clap the rhythm with the syllables next.

These syllables, which are probably familiar, are the syllables of the Solfege Music system. It is the same system used in “The Sound of Music” in the song, “Do Re Mi.”

To learn more about Solfege: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solf%C3%A8ge>

**STEP 2:**

- Direct the class to form a circle and to pass the bottle to the person next to them on the Mi syllable. Have the bottle progress around the circle in one direction repeatedly until the students feel confident about the rhythm and the passing of the bottle.
- Feel free to go back to clapping and speaking the rhythm to rebuild confidence in the rhythm and speaking of the syllables.

**STEP 3:**

- Then add tones. Doh is the sound of the starting note of any scale. Re is the tone of the second note in a scale and Mi is the third tone in a scale. Practice singing Doh, Re, Mi with the students—just like in “The Sound of Music” movie.
- Clap the rhythm with singing the tones.

**STEP 4:**

- Then, combine passing the bottle as before on only Mi while singing the Doh, Re, Mi this time.

**STEP 5:**

- If you feel you want to challenge the students, change the rhythm and syllable placement of Mi and have them pass the bottle on only Mi or for example, only Doh.

Another pattern:

///  
Doh Mi Re Doh

- Try making up your own patterns. You can get more complex with the rhythms or learn more Solfege to build the scales further.

The whole scale is:

Doh, Re, Mi, Fa, So, La, Ti, Doh

- Speak each syllable, and then sing each syllable moving up the scale and Doh at the end will be the octave of the first Doh.

Don't worry if a student is unable to match the tone or rhythm. Continue playing and monitor to see if the student eventually can match the tones and rhythm. If students are nervous they may not match tones or rhythms and repeated practice offers them chances to coordinate and find the tone or rhythm. Also, if the tone happens to be out of their range, they may be challenged to match the tone. Experiment with choosing a pitch and octave that most can match.

Make a game of the exercise to see how many times the students can get the bottle around the circle is always a way to engage them creating team work and success!

- Discuss with your students the use of rhythm, ensemble and choral voice in *Venice*.
- How did those elements contribute to their experience as an audience member?

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Center Theatre Group's mission is to serve the diverse audiences of Los Angeles by producing and presenting theatre of the highest caliber, by nurturing new artists, by attracting new audiences, and by developing youth outreach and education programs. This mission is based on the belief that the art of theatre is a cultural force with the capacity to transform the lives of individuals and society at large.

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**Arts Education Leadership:** Contributing to the community-wide efforts to improve the quality and scope of arts education in Los Angeles.

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