"Words like 'bravery' and 'courage' are words that come after the fact. They are retrospective type words." —Stephen Lang
BEYOND GLORY

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How did you first become interested in history?
I really began to get interested in history as a resource for acting at some point. My background is in English literature, which is necessary as an actor. But when I was an undergraduate, I was a bit timid of history because my sister, who is about 50 times as smart as I am, went to the same college and was a history major and she had a tough time in it. I just started because I was researching character, something as mundane as how the guy is dressed or what boots he wore or what the weather was like. And just found that I love history.

How did you and Larry [Smith] begin the conversation around Beyond Glory, the book?
Well, what happened is when we were basketball buddies, we played in basketball games together every Sunday morning at 6:30. I have much since retired, my hip has gone on me. But in any case, it was a Sunday morning in 2003. I think in May, four years ago this month. We were lazing on our Chuck Taylors. Larry told me he’d just retired and had been working on a book. I asked him if I could read it and he brought me a copy the next week. I went over after the game and I sat down in my chair in my living room, just to kind of glance at the thing for a minute (I was still sweating and everything). Anyway, three hours later after reading the thing over to cover, I was just blown away by the authenticity; the unguessed-up truth that these guys spoke. I was immediately struck by the absence of the writer. Really wonderful journalism. These guys’ voices just came through so clearly. For many years, I’ve read aloud and I think even in that initial read there were passages I just started reading aloud and stayed with me. I began just sort of noodling around with it and felt that it was highly dramatic material. I took the chapter of John William Finn who was at Kaneohe Bay in Hawaii, on Dec. 7, 1941, which opens the show. I took this 25-page chapter and just reduced it to what I felt was sort of a bullion cube of drama. Then I took it to my toughest critic and biggest supporter, my wife, Tina. I said, “I want you to listen to something.” I read it to her and it baffled me that when I was done 7 or 8 minutes later she was weeping. Then I just began working on it. Larry and I went out for coffee and a bagel and I proposed that we turn this into something, and we did over the next couple of months. I did most of the writing and Larry would give me notes. I’d repeat the process with my wife and finally arrived at something that I wanted to hear. I had been doing all of the men myself, but instead I drafted ten fine actors from the Actors’ Studio, which is my artistic home, and we did a reading. The actors were all terrific in it, but I realized that it had a very linear quality to it. I missed my own voice in it and I also missed doing them. After that reading I determined that it was actually a solo performance. The stuff was already highly dramatic and the fact that it was done by one actor transforming would give it the element of tour de force that was necessary for it to be a real theatrical event. That’s really the genesis of it. Then I began doing readings of it for selected friends, workshops of it, working on characters in sessions at the Actor’s Studio and the Flea Theatre. Jim Simpson and Carol Ostrow, the Artistic and Managing Directors of The Flea were very gracious to me as well. By November of ’03, I was ready to do a full-scale workshop performance for the members of the Studio. The response to that was strong enough to warrant further work on it and, ultimately, open the first production in Arlington, which was really quite an extraordinary place to do it. The theatre was at the gates of Arlington National Cemetery. The National Endowment for the Arts took notice of it and we formed an alliance together. I performed pieces at different domestic bases and then did writing workshops with the servicemen and women. This was all part of an initiative they had called Operation Homecoming—writing the wartime experience. It consists of active troops that have seen duty in Iraq and Afghanistan and their families writing about what that was like. The NEA rightly felt that Beyond Glory had a direct bearing on that initiative. The chairman of the NEA, Dana Gioia, asked me what I would like to do with the show. I said, “I want to take it to the troops.” And through a unique partnership between the National Endowment for the Arts and the Department of Defense, we were able to tour it all over the world. From Guantanamo Bay to Guam, from the DMZ in Korea to the Persian Gulf, aboard carriers, destroyers, and military camps, on air force bases, Navy air stations—all over. We played over 50 bases and camps. From there, Bob Falls at the Goodman [Theatre in Chicago] decided that it would be a show that would fit in really well at their Owen, which is a 400 plus seat theatre, a gorgeous space for it. We remounted it and gave it a greater scale. It was a bigger theatre and we were able to add a lot of the technology that I think was called for. That’s essentially the production. Bob Falls became an integral part of the process for me, because it’s not an easy thing directing yourself. I’m really easy on myself. I gave myself a lot of time off. Bob is much stricter with me. When he came aboard, it was the final piece of this puzzle. We had marvelous designers already. Bob brought that last finish and leanness to the show that I play at the Roundabout.
This sounds like the journey of a lifetime, because you're touching so many different people in so many different ways, from the service men to doing the writing workshops.

I want to say something about that. So much of the stuff we see, whether it's in the theatre or on television or in print news, so much of it tends to divide us. The people who come to see whatever it may be tend to have their own viewpoint confirmed and vindicated by what they've seen. In other words, there are a lot of people who aren't going to go see Al Gore's film, and he really would like them to see it. Because to a large extent, the people who see it are people who feel that way anyway. The same thing for Mel Gibson's film or anyone else depending on your agenda. I really feel that we are so divided, so fractured as a nation. I wanted to do something, not that we could all agree on, but that has a meaning for everybody. Well, I supposed to some extent, I wanted to do something that we all can agree on. Not agree in a simple way, but examine some of the fundamental concepts that we share that do make us a remarkable nation and that make us human beings—make us civilized. I felt I wanted to do that.

How did you choose these particular eight stories/characters from the book? You had a lot of others, you said you had ten, and there are a lot more in the book.

There's something in a role that speaks to you. I would say it's a different answer for each one of these fellows. The easy answer, the sound byte answer, is that they chose themselves. But, there were certain criteria that I set up: I wanted a cross-section of services, I wanted a cross-section of ethnicities, I wanted a cross-section of wars. I knew I was going to concentrate on World War II, Korea, and Vietnam. That seems to me to be a big, big bite to take. And three is good. These were all living recipients. There were no World War I recipients living. At this point, seven of the men are still with us. Admiral Stockdale passed away in 2005, but he is still part of the show, perhaps the emotional center of it. I couldn't have done the show without his presence.

What was your process in creating this play?

I'm not sure. The voices came first, let's say that. Their wounds are documented, so that becomes something to work with. It's all the circumstances and fodder that we always work with as actors. Having said that, it's a very impressionistic piece. It's a very different kind of acting for me. It's probably the toughest thing I've ever done. Most of the time when we act, you never want to see the work—you never want to get caught acting. This is slightly different. I wanted to be graceful but I don't mind that the architecture of the work shows a little bit. It's all right if you see the transition, because this is also about the acting process for me.

Were you anticipating a particular response from the audience? Or is that dangerous?

The danger is anticipating the response. I don't think it's fair to count on anything. It was particularly interesting doing it for the troops, too, because many times I did it for people who are not theatre-goers. I can't tell you the number of times people said to me, “You know, listen man, I don’t go to plays. And this is even better than my sister when she was in Annie in junior high.” And I think, “That's fantastic! Thank you! At least it was almost as good as Annie.” To do it for people who don't usually get it done for them, who don't usually partake and for them to go, “Whew! That was too much, man, that was quite something!” That's the power of theatre.

Have you learned something from spending so much time with these men that you didn't know before?

Absolutely. I think I've learned something about what's really important. So many of the things in life that you think are of such huge importance, so many moments of crisis are really nothing. They're not life and death. There are people who've really been through the fire and none emerged unscathed. But the thing that I really hope has penetrated to me more than anything else is the sense of humility that these guys have. And that's the thing that binds them together. This sense of putting their own selves after the guy next to the guy, next to the guy, next to the guy. Being willing to give themselves up.

What advice would you give to a student who wants to do what you do?

Be an actor. You know, be an actor! I whole-heartedly support it. If you're saying you want to make your living as an actor, then...I hate to give the standard advice, which is don't do this unless you have to do this. I think that's the bottom line because it's a tough, tough, tough business. But life is tough. If it's the only thing for you, then by all means you go for it. I would say, ok, well what do you have to do? So, you want to be an actor, huh? All right, read. Read. Read history. Read Shakespeare. Read everything you can. Learn the basics. Watch the great actors. And ask yourself why you want to be an actor. If the answer is because I have to be an actor, because I was born to be an actor, then, ok, get the training. I'm not a conservatory-trained actor. It's not that I wish I were—I've acquired whatever I've acquired. But boy, to my way of thinking now, this is really quite a golden age of acting. when you look at the work that's being done out there. There are just so many fine, fine actors out there. And I think that is a result of the training that's available. There are so many fine schools. I really would advocate taking advantage of that.
What inspired you to write this book?
Well, I was a managing editor for Parade magazine for 20 years, and sort of by default inherited some military-oriented articles for the magazine. I did a thing on the 200th anniversary of West Point, and in the July 4th of 2000 issue, we were looking for a piece to go with our Independence Day theme. Walter Anderson, my boss, came up with the idea of interviewing some Medal of Honor recipients (which is the highest award for valor in combat). It's very distinguished. There's only been 3500 of these medals awarded since its creation by Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War. So these guys are pretty special. It is a very, very difficult medal to receive. Seventy percent of them are awarded posthumously, and most of the other recipients have been shot in combat. So I called up six or eight of these guys and interviewed them about Independence Day and how they thought folks ought to observe it. And in the process of doing so, you know, it's a truism that people who have been in serious combat don't like to talk about it, and yet to my surprise, these guys were extremely forthcoming about their experiences, which I found fascinating. And being an old newspaper reporter from way back, naturally I just kept on talking, and I ended up with about three feet of notes on each guy. Then in the article, I ended up with about 2 inches on each one. A number of persons said to me, you know, this is a book. Then, fortuitously, that December I retired. I approached the Medal of Honor Society about doing something like a book, and in exchange for some confidence and contribution discussion, I ended up getting access to these Medal of Honor recipients. I think there were around 142 left alive at the time. Colonel "Barney" Barnum—a medal recipient himself—was in charge of this outfit, and he helped me choose guys. I told him I didn't want all officers, I didn't want all Marines—because Barney was a Marine—and I wanted enlisted men besides officers, and I wanted all three wars. I ended up with six guys from World War II, some from Korea, and eleven from Vietnam.

Have you ever served in the armed forces?
No, no, that's the irony of it. I never did serve myself, but I'm basically a storyteller and nothing beats a good war story.

I found in reading the book that it's fascinating how these guys don't really see themselves as heroes.
The fact is, you know, heroism is a strange thing. I think it's a word that third-party observers make up to describe a certain type of behavior, because generally folks who act heroically never think of themselves as acting heroically at all. They just—there's a kid in the river, or it's their job, or it's their duty, or their responsibility, or it's an order, and they react accordingly. A number of these guys that I talked to—Hiroshi Miyamura being one of them—indeed thought that when they got called to Washington they were going to be court-martialed. Instead they ended up getting the Medal of Honor! It's touching, the humility of these guys. It just really tugs at your heartstrings.

How did you come up with the title?
The whole underlying theme of the book is that these guys all dwell in a place beyond glory. Glory doesn't really matter to them. I mean, some of them like it, and they like the publicity and all this kind of thing, but by and large, glory is sort of irrelevant to who they are and what they were accomplishing. What they were trying to do had nothing to do with glory. It comes back to the thing I mentioned a moment ago about having things in common, and initially I thought these guys had nothing in common. Some of them are high school dropouts, some of them are Annapolis graduates, some are rednecks, some are hillbillies, some are country boys, some are city kids. They come from all walks of life. One of the things I discovered in the course of this book was that there's a very compelling desire on the part of a great many Americans to simply...they wanted to serve their country. I heard this again and again. Each of them is the kind of person who thinks of someone else before he thinks of himself, and this is what I think is at the bottom of the action of the man in New York who jumped on the subway to save that guy. See, he wasn't thinking about himself, he was just trying to save that person—it's just an automatic impulse. Not all of us, of course, are cut and shaped that way, but these guys are.

Tell me about your friendship with Stephen. You've been friends for awhile, right?
We were part of a Sunday morning group that played basketball in Westchester. I have been with these guys for over thirty years. He'd heard about the book, and I brought an advance copy to class because a mutual friend was going to do a book signing for us—and for me in Chappaqua—and that's how Stephen heard about it. He himself is very patriotic, and he has such admiration for the folks who've served for us over the years.
As I’m sure everyone knows, he played General Pickett in (the movie) *Gettysburg*, and Stonewall Jackson in (the movie) *Gods and Generals*, and he was on Broadway in *A Few Good Men*, and lots of things like that. So we got talking about this—he was very interested—and I said, well, OK, great, I want to be part of this. He ended up taking each of these eight chapters, and brilliantly just doing them, doing each one for about ten-minute presentations, which I just think wonderfully, brilliantly recaptures who they are. He preserves their language, of course—the whole book is their language—and he recapitulates the essence of each individual in that ten-minute segment. He has a perfect understanding of who these folks are. I’m just delighted with everything he has accomplished.

**Tell me something—and this might be difficult to answer. Do you see this as a political statement?**

The beauty of the book, of course, is that it’s apolitical, and the response that the play and book have drawn is—well, it’s drawn accolades from the entire political spectrum. The conservative-leaning folks like it, because of what it is, and liberals—people more to the left of center—like it because all the very best war stories, as we all know, are anti-war. You read through this, you read Clarence Sasser’s story about being a medic, and being in a Turkish unit in the middle of these rice paddies with these Vietnamese—the North Vietnamese, or VC—shooting at these guys from all directions. So he swims around trying to save people’s lives, and he says, “You know, it’s not a good war story at all, it’s terrible.” So, it’s wonderful that it works out the way it does. Of course, I had no axe to grind, and neither do these guys. We’re just telling it like it is.
World War II
World War II lasted from 1939 until 1945. Throughout those six years, 50 million men, women and children were killed. The war occurred on two fronts: Europe and Asia and the Pacific. The war began because Germany felt cheated from the outcome of World War I. Hitler felt that United States, France and Britain had damaged Germany's economy. At the end of World War I, the Treaty of Versailles was signed and Germany was displeased by the outcome. They wanted more territory than was granted to them in the treaty. World War II began on September 1, 1939, when German forces invaded Poland.

The United States involvement began when Japanese forces attacked the American Naval Base, Pearl Harbor, in Hawaii on December 7, 1941. Before 1939, the United States was one of Japan's major suppliers, but the U.S. government shut off their resources in an effort to stop Japan's attack on China. Japan felt that the United States had gotten in their way and attacked Pearl Harbor to destroy their most threatening naval base. Four days following Pearl Harbor, Hitler declared war on the United States. The United States then entered the war and headed for Italy. German forces surrendered in Italy on May 2, 1945.

On D-Day, June 5, 1944, the Allies' plan was to land in Normandy, seize the port and then advance to Germany. Upon landing, the troops were met with heavy fire on the beaches that lasted all day long. Allied movement inland was slow but they pushed on to reach Germany. Germany led a surprise attack on the Allies but retreated due to overwhelming attacks on several fronts. Then, in April of 1945, German forces surrendered.

After completing the war in Europe. The United States turned its attention to the war with Japan in the Pacific. the United States had Australia and New Zealand as allies. The war in the Pacific was primarily a naval war. Japan had a lot of success in the beginning, but the Battle of the Coral Sea stopped Japan's offense. On August 14, 1945, Emperor Hirohito surrendered.

The Korean War
The Korean War began in 1950 and ended in 1953. In those three years, 33,629 American soldiers were killed. The war began because North Korea wanted to bring communism to South Korea. North and South Korea
were separated by the 38th parallel and the war began when North Korea crossed the 38th parallel.

The United States became involved because President Truman felt that if North Korea defeated South Korea, then communism might spread to other nations. American troops entered the war offering their support to South Korea. In the beginning, casualties were high and morale was down. North Korea continued to attack but American troops were able to push off the attacks.

On September 29, South Korea recaptured their capital city. However, the threat of Communist China entering the war made everyone nervous, and before long 300,000 Chinese troops were in Korea. Due to increased attacks, troops had to retreat 40 miles below their capital city. United Nations Command (UNC)’s concern was that China’s entrance in the war could make the war global. Troops continued advancing and regained the capital city again. It became clear that North Korean and Chinese forces did not stand a chance against the UNC. On July 27, 1953, armistice, or a truce, was signed and the war ended. At the end of the war, the border was only slightly different from how it began.

The Vietnam War
The Second Indochina War, or the Vietnam War, lasted from 1954 until 1975. The war began shortly after France decided to leave Vietnam. Vietnam agreed to split in half at the 17th parallel, creating a North and South Vietnam. The split was temporary because they planned to vote for reunification in 1956 and the separation would then dissolve. However, the United States was unhappy with this decision because they felt it would give too much power to the Communist Party in Vietnam. Ngo Dinh Diem, an anti-communist figure, was elected president of South Vietnam. Diem claimed that North Vietnam was attacking the South and in 1957, Diem began a counterattack with some assistance from the United States.

In 1960, the National Liberation Front (NLF) was created. The NLF opposed Diem and wanted to unify Vietnam. Many people accused the NLF of actually being communists. The United States didn’t believe in their validity either—they were referred to as the “Viet Cong”. On November 1, 1963, Diem was killed. After Kennedy was assassinated, President Johnson came into office and began sending troops to Vietnam. Eventually, due to the lack of volunteer soldiers, the U.S. government instituted a draft.

By 1966, 190,000 American troops were fighting in South Vietnam. Anti-war protests began breaking out throughout the nation. When Nixon became president, he began “Vietnamization,” which brought some troops home while increasing air raids on Vietnam. At this time, the war spread into Cambodia and Laos. Due to the horrible bombing in Cambodia, anti-war protests increased on college campuses nationwide. At Kent State in Ohio, four students were shot and killed on campus for having participated in anti-Nixon protests. Finally, in early January 1973, open fighting ended for the United States. On April 30, 1975, the war ended with North Vietnam capturing the presidential palace in Saigon.
The History of the Medal of Honor

What is the Medal of Honor?
The Congressional Medal of Honor is the highest military honor that the United States Armed Forces can bestow on one of its servicemen or servicewomen. It is awarded for exceptional valor in combat.

President Abraham Lincoln created the award during the Civil War, signing it into law December 21, 1861. [NB: According to a number of sources, the Medal of Honor was not created until July 12, 1862; its predecessor, the Navy Medal of Valor, was created in 1861.]

Medal of Honor Statistics
3,463 Medals of Honor have been awarded since its inception, including: 87 African-Americans, 41 Hispanic-Americans, 32 Asian-Americans, 22 Native-Americans, 16 Jewish-Americans and 1 woman.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conflict/Era</th>
<th>Medals of Honor awarded</th>
<th>Medals awarded posthumously</th>
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<tr>
<td>Total since the Medal's creation in 1862</td>
<td>3,463</td>
<td>614 (18%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>All conflicts in the 20th century</td>
<td>1,097</td>
<td>566 (52%)</td>
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<td>World War II (1939–1945)</td>
<td>464</td>
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<td>Korean War (1950–1953)</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>94 (71%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vietnam War (1962–1975)</td>
<td>245</td>
<td>154 (63%)</td>
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Medal of Honor Recipients

Hiroshi Miyamura is a Korean War Veteran. He was 18 when he was drafted and only 24 when he was awarded his Medal of Honor. He earned his Medal of Honor for a battle in April 1951 in which he helped defeat over 60 of the enemy and which led to his capture. For safety reasons, Miyamura wasn’t publicly awarded his Medal of Honor until August of 1953.

Alfred V. Rascon was a Medic in the Vietnam War. He joined the Army in August of 1963 and wanted to be in the infantry, but he ended up a Medic. His army unit was the first to go into Vietnam. His Medal of Honor was awarded for the extraordinary efforts he made during battle with the North Vietnamese. Early on in the attack, Rascon was severely injured, but he continued to attend to the men in his unit.

Mary Walker was a military doctor in the Civil War. She was the first American woman to be a military doctor, a Prisoner of War, and to receive a Medal of Honor. She was awarded the Medal of Honor on January 24, 1866 for her services during the war. Her Medal of Honor was rescinded in 1916 but in 1977, President Carter restored Walker’s Medal of Honor.
Why did you want to direct this show?
Stephen had brought it to me quite awhile ago. He had created it for himself as a very, very bare bones production that he could tour extremely minimally, which he did quite successfully. We had worked together very successfully on a couple of other shows and we were working on Arthur Miller's final play, *Finishing the Picture*. Stephen was telling me about this and I was very intrigued. He showed me a tape of the production that he had done and I made some, I think, rather good suggestions to give him, and at the same time suggested, "Why don't we try to do this at the Goodman and step the production up?" We began a collaboration with Stephen who really owned this material so completely as the adapter, as the actor, and as the director, although he's the first one to tell you that all along in terms of creating this piece he's had outside opinions directorially. I became another person in this process. Once we entered into a full production at the Goodman, I was around a lot as the producer and taking it to the next level of adding projected imagery and video, more elaborate lighting design and a bit more elaborate staging.

What resonates for you in this play?
Well, the thing that really impresses me and knocks me out is that we're at war right now. There are these anonymous men over there. Now over 3000 of them have died. I'm political enough to think that this current administration has been shameful in not giving full due to the men who have served over there and died for this war. It brought to my attention the real awareness that there's this deep real history of men who have served. There are men who go to war for any variety of reasons—they're drafted, they enlist, and they find themselves in this extraordinary position. We have hundreds of thousands of men in this country still alive who served in wars going back to the second world war. As a producer and director, I have read a lot of stories, but these very simple and complex stories of men who have served in our nation's foreign wars have not been represented. What I think Larry Smith did and what Stephen has done in a very non-political way—because it's something that could be easily politicized—is that they have humanized it: in seeing the lives of these real men put on stage in this artful way in which Stephen does it, you become aware of the transcendent humanity of these individuals, of men who find themselves in an extraordinary situation and became extraordinary as a result. The entire concept of the Medal of Honor also demonstrates that people do remarkable things under pressure. This play doesn't try to judge or make an opinion. It just simply says, "Look, in all wars, ultimately the victims are these young men and women who find themselves serving, on all sides."

What are some of the challenges of a solo show for a director?
Solo shows are wonderful because they bring the theatrical experience down to its essence, which is of a storyteller. A storyteller alone on stage holding an audience in their tale is essential to the human experience—it's the oldest form of the theatre. What's important is that you have a strong enough story that is generally metaphorical. There's a metaphor or there's a mirror being held up so that we can all see ourselves reflected in that solo individual on the stage and their story. There's a challenge in getting the metaphor and the story rich enough, and getting the storyteller both skilled and interesting enough to hold our interest for a narrative that's going to take us anywhere from an hour to two hours alone on stage. I think the challenges in this are just helping Stephen stay on track in terms of making his transitions, in terms of delineating his character, in terms of supporting him with lighting, with sound, with the video, with projections, that he be supported in his storytelling without overwhelming him.

What would you say to a young person who said they wanted to be a director?
Well, what's great is that you can't stop somebody who says they want to be a director. You hope that they understand all that it entails and that they realize you're forever in a learning position. I think what's rare find about
my over thirty years now of directing is that every situation I go into is a new one. I’m always open to learning something new. I think any young director should just put themselves in as many learning positions as they can. I think that assisting is fantastic. I think that you learn a great deal watching other people work. You learn a great deal doing your own work. You should never turn down the opportunity to have an experience as a director. I think there are some very good academic programs that help you, but there’s no substitute for experience in a director’s life. That experience also goes to all sorts of areas—of history, of music, philosophy, theology. The more you immerse, the more you absorb all sorts of disciplines, the better you are going to be when you step into that rehearsal room and start grappling with a play and an actor, in terms of the craft of what you bring. That’s my advice.
How did you get involved with this project?
I started with *Beyond Glory* with the Goodman Theatre production in Chicago. I had met and worked with Stephen Lang about a year before at the Goodman for a production of Arthur Miller’s last play, *Finishing the Picture*.

How would you describe your approach to designing this show?
The first part was to get an idea from Stephen. He had a few images in mind but he was pretty clear that he wanted to stay away from making this a documentary on stage. I learned that the core of the piece is the eight different characters that he portrays. What he really wanted to create was eight different worlds. In our initial discussions, my idea was to try and create eight completely different visual approaches to the work as well. So each of them has a different identity.

How did you go about finding the source material?
I actually have a great resource in Chicago—a guy named J. Fred Macdonald. He’s a former history professor who had just always had a passion for collecting old film stock. He spent all his weekends going to garage sales. When teaching history, he would gather up old newspapers, etc., and then he would show them for his class. His hobby became a passion, which became his business. He actually has one of the largest historic, private film archives in the country. I went to some of the image archives for photographs of the Vietnam era. It ranges from government footage, which is available to the public, to images we had to purchase the rights to that were more specific. There are some little bits of things I shot myself. I also went back to volumes and volumes of Jane’s *Defence Weekly* and found line drawings of specific weapons which some of the soldiers refer to. That became really important for one of the characters because the play is performed with very minimal props. In some cases, a character is dependent upon a weapon, and a prop helps to solidify their identity. I supplied images of some of those things, but not realistic depictions. We also used the technical drawings of some of them.

Where are the image banks located?
You can go online and search for specific images, seek permission, purchase them online, download them. The entire thing is done in the computer and then finally edited and sent out as a projected image in the theatre.

How do you balance the visual projection that you’re doing with what the actor is doing on stage?
Really good point. Over the years, having done a lot of work with projected images for live theatre, one thing I’ve learned to do is to get the hell out of the way and let the actors do what they do best. The projected image is always in a supporting role and there are definitely times when we need to just take a step back and let the actor take the stage. The process went like this: Stephen Lang and I met, talked about image ideas, exchanged more notes by email, and I started sending images by email. When he started his rehearsal process in Chicago, I brought in imagery that I had been looking at for each of the different characters. He and I then worked separately while he was there for the rehearsal process and we finally talked about where we would like to see the cues. I worked on creating the balance of what is actor-focused in a fairly intensive technical rehearsal process.

It sounds to me like all the images you’ve chosen are coming from the point of view of the specific men who are in this play.
That’s really it. Let me clarify—it is their point of view, but it is as often their psychological point of view rather than exactly what they see. We don’t literally show what the soldier looks like but maybe one element of the room that he was in. So it’s much more that kind of psychological point of view than it is what these men saw physically.

Can you explain the technical process to us?
The process is very collaborative. We started working. Tony [the set designer] and I, on just the ideas. He had envisioned a curved surface that would serve as a kind of backdrop for the action. He wanted it to be more than just a visual cyclorama, so he added the curve and then cut the top off at a slight diagonal. It throws the setting a little off balance. The actual surfaces themselves are a kind of industrial tarpaulin material. It’s actually partially reflective, silver vinyl that has an industrial kind of quality that reads a little like “this is a military installation that can be folded up and transported off as soon as needed.” From my point of view, I had to be concerned with whether or not that metallic material was appropriate to project on. So actually he [Tony] had samples sent to me in Chicago. I conducted some projection tests with it and realized that it doesn’t fit what would normally be described as a perfect projection surface, but I think it’s perfect for a theatrical projection surface. The image is still very readable, but it doesn’t dominate. All the projections are projected with a single 10,000 lumen video projector. It’s receiving all of its images from a single Macintosh computer. I use software called Isadora, which was originally created for live dance performance, but it happens to be very affordable and very successful for controlling the digital material in a live performance setting. So if a particular speech went long or a little short, we can vary the length of the video play that is needed for that particular scene. So it makes the projection as flexible and agile as the actor’s performance may be. There’s a combination of still images and motion video.

How many images will be projected throughout the show?
I don’t really know. For instance, one little video clip might be edited together to blend maybe a dozen images in 30 seconds. So I would say it’s probably in the few hundreds. It’s a relatively low number.

Do we ever see the faces of the real men?
The ending in Chicago did include a final moment of portraits of those eight men. I know that in an earlier discussion with Robert Falls about the New York production, there was some mention that we may have an alternate ending, so I don’t know if we’ll see those men’s faces or not.

If a student wanted to do what you are doing, how would you tell him to go about it?
Well, I would say go see lots of theatre, think about what’s working, what’s not working, and then find a piece that you want to work on. Do the picture research. Do as much research as you can. Then realize that the success of any project bringing projected images to the live theatre is in the collaboration, paying attention to the script, listening to the director and getting their vision for this specific production. When I am successful, I think it’s because I have learned to identify a specific aesthetic of a particular production; that is, exactly what does this script and these actors and this director bring to the stage and how can I bring something to it that will support them and move that to the next level?

As for this show, I think that there is really a lot to be learned from the process of collaboration as is evidenced by what you’ll see on stage here.
How is this play different from other plays you've designed?
Well, I guess it is different in that there is only one performer. It is a sort of virtuoso performance piece more than it is a conventional play. I guess after having seen Stephen perform the piece in a rehearsal hall, sitting on a chair, it became very clear that my biggest challenge would be to stay out of the way. And that really he needed nothing. Between the scenery and the projection and the lights, we are the wrapping on the package. We're hopefully helping the audience to be open to receive the story being told to them. If an audience came in and saw a bare stage and a guy sort of standing there, I think they may not be as open to the experience they're about to receive.

Can you describe the process and challenges of using the projections in this show?
What we didn't want was something that looked like a screen behind him—something that looked like “Hey! We're going to show you a slideshow?”, which I think for the audience would be a turn off. Suddenly it becomes a lesson or a lecture, a PBS special, and mentally and emotionally, I think that would sort of predispose the audience to, again, not being as open as they might be to the performance. I set out to create what is essentially a screen that didn't look like a screen, that felt more like a backdrop that could stand on its own, give it texture, give it a bit of an emotional quality, without giving any narrative information at all. So I chose steel trussing and a sort of industrial tarp-looking material that felt vaguely martial, vaguely utilitarian, and kind of tough, which supported the fact that these stories were all about soldiers—men of action—without having anything to do with patriotism or weaponry. So we wanted to make it feel sordidly without much bias—a non-partisan military feel.

So I would imagine that the American flag isn't everywhere or something like that, is that true?
One of the first things Stephen told us way back in the first version of this project four years ago—“there will be no American flags in this production.” He made that very clear. And that was very helpful in all of our decisions—or the sentiment behind that comment was very helpful in all our decision making: scenery, projection, costumes. This is not a flag-waving show. It's neither specifically pro-American nor anti-American or pro-military or anti-military. It's stories of men who really went above and beyond. Anything else is what you bring to it.

How were you involved with the concept of this show?
Stephen came in with two notions: First, that the piece should feel like a Greek drama—spare, elemental. We decided early on that he should be placed on a disc, a classic, primal shape, and thrust him toward the audience, to embody him with as much potential power as we could. Stephen's second notion was that there were projections in this show—he didn't know how or exactly what they might be. He had a list of many images, a few of which ended up in the show today, John Boesche, who joined us in the Goodman production, brought an ability to choose imagery that captures the feeling of what a specific narrative image might give you without showing you a specific narrative image. What the design elements do is pretend to keep the audience interested...to fool them into believing that something more is happening besides the virtuosity of this one actor.

What was your response to the show as an artist?
As an artist...I'm not really sure how to respond as an artist. As a person, I'm continually surprised that I find myself moved by these stories and I find myself respecting these men who are military men. I am generally a pacifist, yet I'm on board with these guys. I understand and admire what they did and why they did it. And hope that I could be that strong in such a situation.

Could you talk a little bit about who has been an influence on your artistic style?
That's sort of hard to say. I do a lot of research for each project. I'm sure on some level there is editing that goes on as I look through research, editing that may be I'm not necessarily aware of. That unconscious editing is surely inspired by a particular artist or a particular style that I've seen at one time or another.

Could you share any advice you'd give a student who might want to become a set designer?
I became a set designer because I fell in love with theatre and found that set design most closely fit the abilities I already had. I was fairly artistic and also had a strong, scientific mathematical mind, which sort of helped with problem solving. It's the love of theatre that's essential, I think, for anyone who's going to pursue a career in the
theatre as a designer or an actor. You've got to love what happens on stage in a theatre. That continues to be your greatest reward. If that's not going to satisfy you, then there's not much else.

Did you actually study set design at school?
Only after years of sort of working by accident in theatre, I have an undergraduate degree in Biology—I was pre-med. I fell into the theatre group in college and ended up spending more time at the theatre than studying biology or organic chemistry. But I finished up that degree nonetheless and the next day started an internship at Arena Stage. I don't know how happy my parents were at the time. Four years later, after working in theatres in various ways, I went back to grad school for theatre design at NYU.
Theatrical Devices

Transformation: The act of changing from one character to another through the use of costume and props.

One-Man Show: Theatrical productions involving only one performer.

Voice Over: The voice of an actor, narrator or announcer who is not onstage or whose voice has been pre-recorded.

Transition: The act of passing from one portion of a play to another.

Adaptation: A composition that has been recast into a new form.

Invisible partner: An unseen character in a play that is spoken to or referred to.

Properties (props): All objects that can not be classified as scenery that are held or used by an actor on stage.

Vocabulary

4-C Enemy Alien: 4-C is the classification of enemy alien. The War Department classified Italian and Japanese Americans as 4-C to block them from enlisting in the war.

Blooper Gunner: “Bloop Gun” is a slang term for grenade launcher.

Bucking Bales: Moving bales of hay from the ground to the truck bed.

Buffalo Division: An all-black division of the army in World War II.

Messerschmitt: German aircraft in World War II.

Mortars: Small portable cannons that were used to fire shells.

Mummy Bag: A sleeping bag that closes in around the shoulders and feet, leaving only a space for the head. It is warmer than a regular sleeping bag.

Reconnaissance: Examining the fields for useful military information.

Shrapnel: Debris or metal fragments from an exploded object.

Silver Star: A military award for gallant behavior.

The Forgotten War: A common term for the Korean War.

Tractable: Easily controlled.
Resources

BOOKS:


WEBSITES:
The Official Homepage of the United States Army:
www.army.mil

Battlefield Vietnam: A Brief History:
www.pbs.org/battlefieldvietnam

A Brief History of World War II:
www.worldwariihistory.info

The Congressional Medal of Honor Society:
www.cmohs.org
When you get to the theatre...

BELOW ARE SOME HELPFUL TIPS FOR MAKING YOUR THEATRE-GOING EXPERIENCE MORE ENJOYABLE.

**TICKET POLICY**
As a student participant in Producing Partners, Page To Stage or Theatre Access, you will receive a discounted ticket to the show from your teacher on the day of the performance. You will notice that the ticket indicates the section, row and number of your assigned seat. When you show your ticket to the usher inside the theatre, he or she will show you where your seat is located. These tickets are not transferable and you must sit in the seat assigned to you.

**PROGRAMS**
All the theatre patrons are provided with a program that includes information about the people who put the production together. In the "Who's Who" section, for example, you can read about the actors' roles in other plays and films, perhaps some you have already seen.

**AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE**
As you watch the show please remember that the biggest difference between live theatre and a film is that the actors can see you and hear you and your behavior can affect their performance. They appreciate your applause and laughter, but can be easily distracted by people talking or getting up in the middle of the show. So please save your comments or need to use the rest room for intermission. Also, there is no food permitted in the theatre, no picture taking or recording of any kind, and if you have a cell phone, beeper, alarm watch or anything else that might make noise, please turn it off before the show begins.