

SEATTLE
REP



Tectonic Theater
Project's

HERE THERE ARE BLUEBERRIES

BY **MOISÉS KAUFMAN AND AMANDA GRONICH**

Youth Guide

Welcome to *Here There Are Blueberries*

This play is an unraveling mystery, one that begins with a simple question and opens into something much larger. As the story unfolds, it asks us to look closely at photographs, at history, and at ourselves. What do images show us? What do they hide? And what responsibility do we have when we uncover the truth?

Here There Are Blueberries brings history vividly to life, not as something distant or sealed away, but as something human and unsettlingly familiar. The events explored on stage may have happened decades ago, yet the questions they raise still shape the world around us. Rather than offering easy answers, the play asks us to sit with uncertainty and consider how individual choices matter.

We hope this experience does not end when the curtain comes down. Many students find that returning to the play reveals new details and moments they may have missed the first time. Our **post-show talkback series** extends the conversation beyond the stage, offering space to reflect, ask questions, and hear from artists, scholars, and community members. Join us again soon for these talkbacks—find dates at seattlerep.org/TalkbackSeries.

If today's performance sparks something in you, we encourage you to take the next step. Through **Young Rep**, Seattle Rep's suite of youth classes and intensives, students can explore theater-making, storytelling, and creative expression in a supportive, creative community.

Thank you for being here, and for being curious.



Deanna Martinez
Education & Community
Programs Director

BEYOND THE STAGE

The Album and The Investigation **EXCERPT**

by **Drew Lichtenberg**, Resident Dramaturg, Shakespeare Theatre Company

Over the last twenty-five years, no one has done more to bring the working methods of Brecht and Piscator into mainstream theatre practice than Moisés Kaufman. An acclaimed director, playwright, and filmmaker, Kaufman has led the Tectonic Theater Project since its founding in 1991. With his collaborators at Tectonic, he has created landmark works now recognized as modern classics: *Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde* (1998), *The Laramie Project* (2000), *I Am My Own Wife* (2003).

In their content, these works are inspired by real life and focus on social justice, marginalized communities, and topical issues. *Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde* examines queer identity and the invention of the legal category of "homosexuality." *The Laramie Project* looks at the fallout of a hate crime in small-town America — the 1998 murder of Matthew Shepard, a young gay man. For *I Am My Own Wife*, playwright Doug Wright, working with

Kaufman and Tectonic, conducted interviews with Charlotte von Mahlsdorf, a German survivor of Nazi and Communist regimes who lived their life as a transgender woman.

These works, like tectonic plates, lie at the intersection of the personal and the political, the topical and the historical. They also happen to be among the most produced plays in America, at every level from professional stages to universities and even high schools. Kaufman & co. have shown that the political can also be popular.

Kaufman and Tectonic's works also showcase the Piscator-Brecht method of composing works of powerful drama out of materials drawn from everyday life. *Gross Indecency* consists of trial transcripts and other writings. During *The Laramie Project*, Kaufman and Tectonic company members interviewed members of the Laramie community. And Doug Wright interviewed von

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Delia Cunningham and the cast of *Here There Are Blueberries*. Photo by Morgan Sophia.



The cast of *Here There Are Blueberries*. Photo by Morgan Sophia.

Mahlsdorf, creating a one-person play that would win the Pulitzer Prize and Tony Award.

For Tectonic, the specific materials used for creating theatre shift depending on the story being told. The results offer audiences around the country a means to process the unthinkable, which also happen to be the complex realities of our world.

For *Here There Are Blueberries*, co-authored with Amanda Gronich, Kaufman and company's form and content have shifted yet again. The play centers on a mysterious album of photographs that a retired army colonel donated to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. in 2007. The photographs, as archivist Dr. Rebecca Erbelding recognized immediately, are of the Auschwitz concentration camp. What makes the album unique is that these photos do not focus on the victims, but instead the perpetrators. It documents the Nazis, male officers and female secretaries living their ordinary, everyday lives: lighting Christmas trees, spending time with their children and pets. Just a few kilometers away, in scenes not captured on camera, scenes of horrific suffering were unfolding.

The project began when Kaufman read about the album in a newspaper story and flew to Washington to speak to Dr. Erbelding. It would grow to encompass a trip to Auschwitz with his

co-writer Amanda Gronich, their dramaturg Amy Seidel, and the Producer of the play Matt Joslyn, as well as hundreds of hours of interviews with historians and scholars.

In 1962, Erwin Piscator — the inventor of the epic, political, documentary mode — returned to post-World War II Germany. Many former Nazis had returned to civilian life, and discussion of people's past lives was taboo. In 1965, he directed the premiere of Peter Weiss's landmark play, *The Investigation*. It was based on the Frankfurt Auschwitz trials, which Weiss attended, taking detailed notes, and accounts in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*. Though Germans had known about the Holocaust, Weiss's play made them experience it with new eyes.

Here There Are Blueberries is strikingly similar. It, too, is inspired by newspaper accounts. It, too, asks the audience not to identify with individual Nazis, but to think in terms of a system that condemned countless others whose stories and images are not documented. As the play unfolds, we share the experience of the archivists. We are asked to see, to feel, to think, to piece together a detective story illuminating what human beings are capable of doing while living normal lives. Perhaps, after seeing the show, we will examine our own lives, or ponder our own society, in all its complexities.



Scan to discover more about the photographs that inspired *Here There Are Blueberries* and download the accompanying discussion guide and lesson plans.

SEATTLE YEP
YOUTH GUIDE

Lesson

1. THINKING ABOUT THE ROLE OF CHOICE

Throughout *Here There Are Blueberries*, audiences are reminded that the perpetrators at Auschwitz (and in the Holocaust more generally) participated in horrific crimes for their own reasons. Karl Höcker was from a poor family and went from being a bank clerk in the 1930s to the assistant of the commandant. Other notorious perpetrators were accountants, candymakers, and teachers in prewar life who personally benefited from their participation in these crimes, both materially by taking valuables that had been confiscated from the prisoners upon arrival and by gaining social and political power. Application essays by members of the Helferinnen ("female helpers/auxiliaries") show the young women's desires to serve their country, to continue their BDM (League of German Girls) service, or to honor the sacrifice of loved ones killed fighting for the Fatherland.

DISCUSS

- What pressures and motivations might lead individuals and institutions to collaborate with an oppressive or even murderous regime?
- Based on what you learned while watching the play, what were some of the motivations of the perpetrators at Auschwitz?
- What factors might encourage someone to participate in something they knew or should have known to be wrong? What factors might discourage them?
- Can you identify motives, pressures, and fears that might lead you to compromise your own sense of morality? How can you use that knowledge to resist the slippery slope toward collaboration or complicity in something you know to be wrong?
- When referring to ordinary people who participated in Nazi crimes, Melita Maschmann said that their "great and terrible mistake was made up of countless small mistakes." What does she mean?

GENOCIDE RESOURCES

10 STAGES OF GENOCIDE

"Genocide is a process that develops in 10 stages that are predictable but not inexorable. At each stage, preventive measures can stop it. The process is not linear....Logically, later stages must be preceded by earlier stages. But all stages continue to operate throughout the process." —Gregory H. Stanton, President, Genocide Watch

1. Classification

4. Dehumanization

8. Persecution

2. Symbolization

5. Organization

9. Extermination

3. Discrimination

6. Polarization

10. Denial

7. Preparation



Scan to explore the full *Here There Are Blueberries* Discussion Guide from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.