

LEGION OF MEMORYBy **Melanie Bennett****Characters:**

MC named Lloyd Stubing – Andrew Houston
 Veteran 1 – Brad Cook
 Veteran 2 – Nick Cumming
 Widow named Helen – Melanie Bennett
 Ladies Auxiliary named Phyllis – Heather Hill
 Lawrence Atchison – Derek Lindman
 War Refugee – Viktorija Kovac
 Representatives of the Immigration and Refugee Board –
 Melanie Bennett (Questioner) and Heather Hill
 (Interrogator)
 Stage Manager – Michelle Horel

Electroacoustic music / soundscape: Nick Storrington**Sound technician:** Steve Clarkson**Multimedia:** Sujoy Bandyopadhyay**Prologue**

Audience enters through the front door of the old legion hall at 48 Ontario Street North in Kitchener, Ontario. In the office just inside the building, a video is playing on an old TV. While the film is playing, a REFUGEE is in the chapel adjacent to the office. She is dressed in tights and a black t-shirt that reads, "You know you're Serbian when..." and sitting in a chair surrounded by lit tea lights. A smashed photo of a Serbian family hangs behind her with a spotlight on it. A suitcase filled with dolls is lying open on the floor. A wind-up lullaby is playing. She is performing a series of physical gestures that emulate waiting, thinking, and expecting. She then picks up one of the candles, holding it in the palms of her hands with outstretched arms. As a symbol of reverence, she performs three gestures with the candle. First, she holds the candle to the right towards the photograph of her family to show reverence towards family. She then turns the candle to the left towards a blank wall to show reverence for loss. Finally, she moves the candle in front of her towards the spectators as an act of summoning.

The film shows a close-up shot of a block of wood. The hand of a woman enters the frame and begins carving the wood with a key. The video speeds up as a voice-over fades in.

VOICE ON FILM. I immigrated to Canada in 1994. I am

neither fully Serbian, nor Slovakian, nor Romanian, nor Greek, nor German. I am what does not exist, like the country I was born in. So really, I am not an immigrant, but a refugee. When I say I'm Yugoslavian, people assume that I do not wish to be associated with the conflicting identities of the three separating parties: the Serbs, the Croats, and the Bosnian Muslims. It is best for me to just say that I am a former citizen of Belgrade and leave it at that because it is difficult to explain your background when your country, whose roots reach back to the seventh century, is slowly being erased off the map.

Religiously, I belong to the Eastern Orthodox Church. However, I have a hard time referring to that as part of my cultural identity. Maybe it's easier to say that I am a communist. It gives me a stronger tie to my roots and my ancestors. Of course, it is not popular to say that in a capitalist nation.

How to start over and continue at the same time? I am looking for a "home place" to recover.

I consider myself a Canadian, but I have a hard time being a Canadian. How can I have a Canadian identity when those born in Canada don't even understand what a Canadian identity is? According to media images, a Canadian likes hockey, Tim Hortons, and snow. I like soccer, espressos, and spring. Why would I even want a Canadian identity, which seems so indecisive and unstable?

I'd like to think of the Canadian identity as a narration of stories. It is in its first chapter of the second volume, and my Canadian identity is a page yet to be written into this second volume. Maybe it will be written when I stop living in my memories.

As the voice over fades out, the video goes back to regular speed. After the hand wipes away the excess wood particles, it exits the frame. The letters carved into the wood read, "BGD" (Belgrade).

LAWRENCE. (*Enters the room from the back office and turns off film. He's dressed in a vintage suit and black glasses, carrying a briefcase.*)



Photo courtesy of Sujoy Bandyopadhyay.

I have to get to the accounts. . . But first the mail.
 Is there a Paul Dukorov here?
 Is there a John Dukorov here?
 If any one knows John or Paul Dukorov could you kindly
 tell them that they have some mail down at the legion?
 Now time for the account—
 But first the Bills.

LAWRENCE picks up random pieces of paper off floor, containing angry complaints to the legion about lack of care and unreceived benefits.

I have to. . . but first forgotten promise.
 Broken tile, mould and plans for a newer and better legion.
 I have to. . .

LAWRENCE loses his train of thought and walks over to an old safe and takes out envelope of war memorabilia and family photos.

Pt. E W Gemmill 2043038.
 (Reads medal.) “HE DIED FOR FREEDOM AND
 HONOUR”
 Pt. E W Gemmill.
 (Reads medal.)

“THE GREAT WAR FOR CIVILISATION...”

Pt. E W Gemmill.

(Reads faded paper.) “Plot- 7 Row 6 Grave 22.”

There is a reason why I don't have many uncles or cousins...

There is a reason why many of us don't have as many relatives as we might have had.

The accounts.

LAWRENCE walks slowly upstairs to dance hall and spectators follow him.

Scene 1 – Welcome

While spectators arrive upstairs, the following is occurring:

War refugee interview soundscape plays in the background.

VETERAN 1 performs physical score by shrine.

VETERAN 2 performs physical score in dance floor doorway.

HELEN performs physical score by window.

PHYLLIS performs physical score by bar and coat rack.

LAWRENCE walks over to the painted wall mural of the mountainscape and sets down his briefcase. He strips down to his underwear and stands in a Christ-like position facing the mural.

LAWRENCE. Here where the shells are falling

In their fiery rain of death
and noxious vapours rolling
poisoning the breath
I dream of a distant homeland
Of a silver river's shine
The sun on the golden wheat fields
And a peace that is divine

Dying for you, O Canada
For honour, truth, and life
For we are the breed that never yield
And we conquer in the strife
Fighting for you, O Canada
in the valley or the height
In life or death, O Canada
We dream of you tonight

LAWRENCE freezes in position. MC walks onto the dance floor from the men's bathroom wearing dirty boxers, socks and bowling shoes, a tuxedo jacket, and a bomb strapped to his naked chest.¹

MC. Good evening. The first thirty seconds of any event are the most important because it's in this time that you have to establish a rapport with the guests and get them on your side. It's a good idea to put a joke into the first thirty seconds. It could be a verbal gag or it could be a visual gag.



Photo courtesy of Mark Bennett.

You need to think about what marks you out as different so that people will remember you later. It could be a catch phrase or a physical gimmick.

When hosting, the host might be sad and may not feel like going on, you may have things on your mind and so forth, “troubles” perhaps, but when the lights go down you have to get things done, you have to put your worries to one side and forget about them, you have to be professional because in the end people don't want to hear you moaning about your problems, they want to get away from things, to have a laugh and a few beers.

MC, looking at guests, begins putting on tuxedo pants that are lying on the dance floor.

There's a word for people like you, and that word is voyeurs. I know your type. The type who will gawk at a car crash, but wouldn't think of getting their hands dirty to help out. Thought you'd leave your double-car garage in the burbs for a couple of hours and slum it at the old downtown legion. Thought this was the place to get your kicks seeing someone do something repulsive. Something that would make your

neighbours call the cops. Fuckin' tourists. Maybe you're one of those nostalgic saps who's interested in "historical preservation." Mouldy buildings and peeling paint get you off? You're the kind who likes to reminisce about the good ol' days of World War II. The days when "fuck" and "cunt" weren't used in popular music. Or perhaps you've come here to forget the past and get lost in the moment. Well, good luck to you.

(To LAWRENCE.) You can put your pants on now Lawrence. They're just a bunch of fuckin' tourists.

LAWRENCE, looking embarrassed, grabs his clothes and scurries off into the stairwell. For the rest of the production LAWRENCE, fully dressed again, carries around a whiteboard writing various inappropriate comments during crucial scenes. The STAGE MANAGER is chewing gum and blaring music from an old walkman. She begins decorating the room with tacky decorations. The MC has on his tux jacket and trousers, and walks off the dance floor to the stage where his turntable and microphone are. PHYLLIS and HELEN dance on broken tiles that are scattered all over the floor. VETERANS get prepared for drills.

MC. (*Speaking into microphone slowly, playing/distorting vinyl records*) Rumours of war. Headlines of disasters. Threats of terrorist bombings. There's an amber alert again folks. Stormy and rough. Earthquakes and hurricanes. Katrina, eh? Ha, I had a sweetheart once named Katrina. A dirty girl she was. Hearts full of passion—jealousy and hate. It's still the same old story. A case for love or glory. A case of do or die. Havoc of war and battle's confusion. Blood washing away footsteps making the terror of flight into a gloomy grave. The sounds of the earth are like music. An old weeping willow is laughing at me.

(*Sings next two lines*) Thanks for the memory of things I can't forget. Journeys on a jet.

Thanks for the memory of letters I destroyed. Books that we enjoyed.

Regrets? I've had a few, but then again, too few to mention.

(*Singing*) I did what I had to do and saw it through without exemption. I planned each charted course—each careful step along the byway, and more, much more than this, I did it my way.

There surely can't be much to say about this old music. It's all been said before hasn't it. . . you know the sort of thing, the very special brand of escapism that takes in the old familiar places. Small cafes, a park along the way, a children's carousel, a chestnut tree, a wishing well. . . oh fuck it. . . what-ever.

Your ears are full and your stomach is empty and there's a limp dick in your hand.

The rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting in air, gave proof through the night that our flag was still there. Fuckin' patriotic bastards. What's the most difficult thing about living next to the land of the free and home of the brave? Let's go back to the start.

MC turns on overhead projector with "collateral damage" stats. The stats read,²

	<i>Population</i>	<i>Served</i>	<i>Died</i>	<i>Wounded</i>
<i>First World War (1914-1918)</i>	<i>7,800,000</i>	<i>625,825</i>	<i>61,082</i>	<i>154,361</i>
<i>2nd World War (1939-1945)</i>	<i>11,500,000</i>	<i>1,086,343</i>	<i>42,042</i>	<i>54,414</i>
<i>Korean War (1950-53)</i>	<i>14,000,000</i>	<i>27,751</i>	<i>516</i>	<i>1,072</i>
<i>Peacekeeping</i>		<i>N/A</i>	<i>119</i>	<i>N/A</i>

MC. One of our planes was missing with all its gallant crew. What a show, what a fight, boys. We really hit our target for tonight. With just one motor gone we can still carry on. Comin' in on a wing and a prayer. Oh fuck it. That's life, that's what all the people say. You're ridin' high in April, shot down in May.

PHYLLIS and HELEN make their way to the mirror on the dance floor to begin getting ready for dance.

Ladies and gentlemen, the scene has been set. Rumours of war. Let the sad music play, for tonight we will be merry. Enjoy this night, because tomorrow your ass is on the line for your country's gain. Stand up tall boys, cuz it's your time

to shine. To be a pistol packin' mama. (*VETERANS get pumped by stage.*) Forget your mama and your sweetheart too. No pansy ass mama's boys. Stop dreaming of things long forgotten. From now on your dreams are in green. Don't ask stupid questions like, "what is collateral damage?" Fuck your stupid questions. We've got work to do.

PHYLLIS and HELEN place troughs filled with water on dance floor. VETERANS cheer.

Conquer we must, when our cause is just. Glory hallelujah boys. Victory, triumph. Blow them to smithereens. Smoke the enemy out of their holes!

Could somebody start the drills please?

STAGE MANAGER pushes dumb waiter button.

Scene 2 – Drills

VETERANS are performing drills, while PHYLLIS and HELEN prepare for the dance in front of the mirror. Physical gestures are the following:

VETERAN 2 and VETERAN 1 – 10 jumping jacks

PHYLLIS and HELEN – Comb hair

VETERAN 2 and VETERAN 1 – 10 jumping jacks with clap

PHYLLIS and HELEN – Apply mascara

VETERAN 2 and VETERAN 1 – Knee/hand slap to middle of floor

PHYLLIS and HELEN – Hit lips to puff them up

VETERAN 2 and VETERAN 1 – 5 push-ups

PHYLLIS and HELEN – Pucker lips

VETERAN 2 and VETERAN 1 – 5 push-ups with claps

PHYLLIS and HELEN – Apply lipstick

VETERAN 2 and VETERAN 1 – Lunge with hand slap on floor

PHYLLIS and HELEN – Squeeze cheeks

VETERAN 2 and VETERAN 1 – Suicides

PHYLLIS and HELEN – Apply black lines to the backs of legs

VETERAN 2 and VETERAN 1 – 5 burpees

PHYLLIS and HELEN – Apply powder to legs

VETERANS put on formal jackets. PHYLLIS and HELEN turn away from mirror to face dance floor. They begin to flirt with the VETERANS.

Scene 3 – Dance

MC. (*At turntable playing swing music*) Ok everyone. It's time for our dance-off! Would all eligible dancers please approach the dance floor?

STAGE MANAGER *puts flags on dancer's backs.*

PHYLLIS *dances with VETERAN 2.*

HELEN *dances with VETERAN 1.*

STAGE MANAGER *bops for the entire scene to heavy metal on her walkman.*

Two swing dance songs—second one faster than first. VETERAN 2 and PHYLLIS eventually cut through VETERAN 1 and HELEN. VETERAN 1 pushes VETERAN 2 when he tries to dance with HELEN. MC breaks up fight between the two VETERANS. PHYLLIS stalks off and VETERAN 2 goes to the men's bathroom doorway and turns the lights off. The red lights are turned on. VETERAN 1 walks off to centre and HELEN follows him. They begin dancing.

Scene 4 – Nostalgia

MC. (*At turntable*) I hear your name and I'm aflame. Let's get lost. Let's tell the world we're in that crazy mood. Let's celebrate this night. As time goes by.

HELEN. We made love in a field. (*HELEN separates from VETERAN 1 and caresses him as she speaks to the spectators. VETERAN 1 continues dancing as if holding a ghost.*) The landscape was therefore in the act, perhaps the cause of the act and us falling in love. I wished to become pregnant by the act. This desire to be pregnant owed more to the landscape than to the lover—his power, his charm, his uniform notwithstanding. (*HELEN falls down on floor.*) The landscape was a cruel one, broken and foreboding. A nearly dark sky hung over us. Everything was redolent of loss, fear, and abandon, and we took this pain into the embrace. (*HELEN simulates making love, while VETERAN 1 continues dancing.*)

MC. While the breeze on high sang a lullaby. Under stars chilled by the weather. Under an August mood burning above. This day and age we're living in is cause for apprehension, with speed and invention and things like third dimension. Fly me to the moon.

HELEN. (*Sits up.*) The old photograph. (*Stands and goes to*

VETERAN 1, touching his face.) I've memorized the details of the face. What is behind the eyes? Something is going on behind the eyes. To turn the photograph on its edge. To scratch away the surface of his eyes. The landscape where this photograph was taken has never changed, but you and I have. I am no longer young, and you are dead. What would you have looked like had you lived? (*Turns around and collapses in VETERAN 1's arms closing her eyes.*) The photograph has the status of a wound, which smarts with its incompleteness. . .

MC. So we have to get down to earth sometime. Relax. No matter what the progress or what the mood. You must remember this: a kiss is just a kiss (*MC kisses HELEN and she awakens.*), a sigh is just a sigh. The fundamental things apply, as time goes by.

HELEN turns to VETERAN 1 and they begin dancing a foot apart and not touching.

VETERAN 1. I knew I was dying. She knew I was dying. In the instant of this knowledge everything that existed between us of love, history, and intimacy was extinguished. In this fraction of time, my whole consciousness reverted. She became alien to me as every other aspect of the world with which I have no more to do.

VETERAN 2 pulls out a cart from beneath the stage. HELEN begins guiding VETERAN 1 by the hands to the cart.

HELEN. (*HELEN takes VETERAN's jacket off.*) The day he died in the hospital, I began to refer to him as the "dead man," because he was not himself. (*VETERAN 1 lies down on the cart and HELEN sits on the cart beside him holding his hand.*) Those features that still showed signs of that self were altered, shrunken or parodied. The eyes were not entirely closed. There was an overwhelming sense of rejection, discarding and abandon, and nothing of repose. The dead man had left himself, a litter in a wretched hut. So I kissed it, for there was nothing better to kiss. . . I kissed his dead mouth (*Kisses him*); I held his dead fingers (*Holds his fingers to her breast*).

VETERAN 2. Death is not in the remains.

HELEN. I do not ask for responses, but my act is informed by the memory of responses.

VETERAN 2. Nothing known about death by the dead can be communicated to the living.

HELEN. The peace of the grave.

VETERAN 2. So it seems from outside the grave.

HELEN. Rest in peace.

VETERAN 2.

Why do you wish to bestow on the dead a condition of placidity in the world of the living?



Photo courtesy of
Melanie Bennett.

VETERAN 2 covers VETERAN 1 in a wool blanket and locks VETERAN 1 up under the stage.

VETERAN 1. How loud is the silence of the grave?

Holding the dead veteran's jacket, HELEN walks over to a large wooden cross with glass inlay covering orange light bulbs. The message, "lest we forget" is painted on the glass inlay. While the MC begins speaking, HELEN lights the cross up by plugging it into the electrical outlet.

MC. I said that's life and as funny as it may seem, some people get their kicks stompin' on a dream. But I don't let it get me down 'cause this fine old world, it keeps spinnin' around and around and around.

Scene 5 – March and Food Prep

PHYLLIS and HELEN prepare food in kitchen. VETERAN 2 pulls VETERAN 1 out on the cart from under stage. NICK STORRING noisily enters the room in the midst of the scene and begins playing the cello obstructing some of the spectators' views.

VETERAN 1. In Flanders fields the poppies blow³
Between the crosses row on row

VETERAN 2. Nothing said about death by the living can possibly relate to death as it will be experienced by the dying.

VETERAN 1 stands, wrapping a blanket around his feet and picking up his weapon, which is a wooden pole with a hook on the end. VETERAN 2 drags his cart to centre of dance floor.

VETERAN 1. That mark our place; and in the sky
The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

VETERAN 2. Nothing known about death by the dead can be communicated to the living.

VETERAN 2 turns to face VETERAN 1.

BOTH. We are the Dead.

Both VETERAN 2 and VETERAN 1 march, VETERAN 2 mirroring VETERAN 1.

Turn and face each other.

VETERAN 1. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved,

BOTH. And now we lie
In Flanders fields.

March, VETERAN 2 progressively becoming stylized. Face each other in middle and walk forward.

VETERAN 1. Take up our quarrel with the foe.
(*VETERAN 1 attacks VETERAN 2 with weapon and VETERAN 2 defends.*)
To you from failing hands we throw
(*Weapon toss exchange*)
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
(*Lifts up weapon.*)

BOTH stomp on the spot and salute. VETERAN 1 marches away.

VETERAN 2. If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

March –VETERAN 1 properly and VETERAN 2 in a stylized side march.

VETERAN 1. We should all like to choose our deaths, both the moment and the manner.

VETERAN 2. I choose a hero's death.

VETERAN 1. Death has no interest in how we die.

VETERAN 1 marches away. Both VETERANS gradually fight with fatigue and depression. In the middle of the dance floor, VETERAN 1 turns and faces VETERAN 2's side.

VETERAN 2. The horribly wounded soldier pleaded to be shot.

VETERAN 1. I pleaded with the unwounded soldier to grant me the death that would end my pain and self-disgust.

VETERAN 2 joins VETERAN 1 in the middle of dance floor.

VETERAN 2. In the first look that passed between us, everything was communicated: my pity for his shame, and the ecstasy of not being him.

Circular death collapse begins. The two VETERANS turn around

in a circle holding their weapons in an upright position, then move to a lunge holding their guns straight out in front of them as if in battle. They take ten march steps forward, holding their guns in an upright position again, and then salute. This sequence repeats as they move around the dance floor.

VETERAN 1. To become dead is to cease the elaboration of values, the prioritization of values, the valuing of values.

VETERAN 2. I left him to live. His weakness revolted me.

VETERAN 1. What if there is a chain of command in death?

VETERAN 2. Every day I woke up thanking God I was alive.

VETERAN 1. This relief wasn't proof of your enjoyment of life.

VETERAN 2. Death is the mother of beauty.

VETERAN 1 makes his way to the cart.

VETERAN 1. Was it a hero's death?

MC begins to lay Veteran 1 on cart.

VETERAN 2. In death came the fulfillment of my dreams.

VETERAN 2 sits down beside VETERAN 1 on the cart holding his weapon.

MC. Ummm...I apologize for this. Poor young whipper-snapper can't hold his liquor. (*MC begins to cover VETERAN 1 up.*) This wasn't what we rehearsed so I apologize.

MC slides cart with VETERANS underneath stage. STAGE MANAGER pours a bottle of red wine on the dance floor.

Scene 6 – Sacrifice Award

MC. When one of our boys goes down, we need to change the mood with a morale booster. Ladies and gentlemen, how about we play a game to discover who in this fine group of legionnaires has sacrificed the most. Everyone move up to the edge of the wood floor. If you can answer “yes” to any of these questions step forward one step.

STAGE MANAGER rings bell.

MC. Who’s ever held the door open for a stranger?
 Who’s ever let someone bud in line in front of you?
 Who’s ever given a homeless person change?
 Who’s ever given up a seat for a stranger?
 Who’s ever donated blood?
 Who’s ever loaned a friend money and never asked for it to be repaid?
 Who’s ever given away the last bite of a really good meal?
 Who’s signed the organ donor portion of their driver’s license?
 Who’s ever purchased something you didn’t want from a telemarketer just because you felt sorry for them?
 Who’s ever found a wallet and tried to return it to its owner?
 Who’s ever let yourself take the blame for something that someone else did?
 Who’s ever adopted a stray animal?
 Who’s ever adopted a child?
 Who’s ever sponsored someone so that they could move to Canada?
 Who’s ever saved someone’s life?⁴

Congratulations. You are the person in the room who has sacrificed the most. For that we award you a lovely purple legion ribbon. It’s vintage! (*Presents audience member with ribbon.*)

Scene 7 – Refreshments and Refugee’s Entrance

MC. After a competitive game like “Sacrifice,” I need something to eat. The ladies auxiliary have gone to a lot of trouble preparing snacks for you. I think it’s cheese dreams tonight.

War refugee and veteran soundscape plays at all the tables. Trays of

crackers and cheese are served to spectators by PHYLLIS and HELEN. MC heads over to bar to serve warm beer. STAGE MANAGER lets VETERANS out from under the stage and serves them beer. PHYLLIS and HELEN put on jackets and become Immigration and Refugee board reps as INTERROGATOR and QUESTIONER. MC, INTERROGATOR, and QUESTIONER begin drinking at the bar.

Scene 8 – Q & A

REFUGEE mingles with the spectators, while INTERROGATOR and QUESTIONER try to find her, asking spectators for their ticket numbers. Once they find her and check her ticket, the three of them walk in single file with REFUGEE in the middle to the interview chairs. QUESTIONER puts up “No Smoking” sign on the pillar beside REFUGEE.

QUESTIONER. *(In a slow, condescending, but friendly tone)* We don't smoke in Canada.

REFUGEE. I know.

INTERROGATOR gets REFUGEE to sign waiver forms. VETERAN 2, VETERAN 1, and MC play darts and drink beer at the bar. VETERANS gradually get louder and more aggressive throughout the scene.

INTERROGATOR. *(Edgy, unfriendly tone)* Yes. *(Stumbles on the pronunciation of name.)* Case # 254.
Are you updated on the current events in Former Yugoslavia?

REFUGEE. I should think so... yes.

QUESTIONER. Do you watch soap operas in Serbia?

REFUGEE. Soap operas?

QUESTIONER. You know, *As the World Turns, Guiding Light, Young and the Restless, Bold and Beautiful...*

REFUGEE. You mean daytime television?

QUESTIONER. Yes.

REFUGEE. We have some in Spanish with Serbian subtitles, but I don't watch them.

QUESTIONER. Oh. You should check out *Young and the Restless*. It's really good.

INTERROGATOR. Do you believe in the teachings of Karl Marx?

REFUGEE. We know it doesn't work, so does it matter?

INTERROGATOR. Do you believe in the teachings of Karl Marx?

REFUGEE. I mean it's ideal. It's kind of complicated.

QUESTIONER. Do you prefer Serbian music or North American music?

REFUGEE. I think I like World music.

QUESTIONER. World music, where's that from?

REFUGEE. You know, different genres.

QUESTIONER. Oh, you're eclectic. (*Turns to INTERROGATOR.*) She's eclectic, that's good.

INTERROGATOR. Do you believe that the punishment should fit the crime?

No answer.

QUESTIONER. Are the stars brighter in Serbia than they are here?

REFUGEE. I haven't had the time to look at the stars in this country.

INTERROGATOR. Are you Muslim?

REFUGEE. I'm not fully Serbian.

INTERROGATOR. Are you Muslim?

REFUGEE. No.

QUESTIONER. When you speak Serbian, are you a different person than when you speak English? I only speak one language so I'm the same person all the time.

REFUGEE. I'm not sure. It feels more right to speak Serbian.

INTERROGATOR writes something down.

INTERROGATOR. Why did you come here?

REFUGEE. Because I had to.

QUESTIONER. Is Serbian food spicy?

REFUGEE. Some of it. It's not like Mexican.

QUESTIONER. But spicier than here?

REFUGEE. Yes.

INTERROGATOR. Do you consider yourself Canadian or Serbian?

REFUGEE. Do I have a choice?

QUESTIONER. (*Laughing*) You're funny! I bet you're even funnier in Serbian. Are you funnier in Serbian?

REFUGEE. I don't find myself very humorous.

INTERROGATOR. Do you mind Serbia being called Former Yugoslavia?

REFUGEE. No. That's what it is.

QUESTIONER. What's the Serbian word for Love?

REFUGEE. Ljubve.

REFUGEE has to keep repeating it to her and compares the pronunciation to Spanish, which QUESTIONER is not familiar with. INTERROGATOR interjects because this is wasting time and giving the REFUGEE time to feel comfortable.

QUESTIONER. (*To herself*). I ljubve you. I ljubve you.

INTERROGATOR. How would you assess the outcome of the war in Former Yugoslavia?

REFUGEE. Is it over?

QUESTIONER. Do you dream in Serbian or English?

REFUGEE. I'm not sure. Sometimes I have dreams in English.

INTERROGATOR. Have you ever seen a bomb go off?

QUESTIONER. (*To INTERROGATOR*) She doesn't want to answer that.

INTERROGATOR. I know.

QUESTIONER. Why do people from Eastern Europe wear imitation American name brands?

REFUGEE. I suppose it's because of the sanctions.

QUESTIONER. The sanctions?

REFUGEE. You know, when they closed all the borders off. No import or export.

QUESTIONER. They did that to you?

REFUGEE. Yes. I guess we all want what we can't have.

INTERROGATOR. What does a Serbian tank look like?

REFUGEE. White, I think. My mom says they were white, because she saw them when she was giving birth to my brother.

INTERROGATOR. So they're white?

REFUGEE. Sure.

QUESTIONER. Are Serbian men better lovers than Canadian men?

REFUGEE. I really can't answer that.

INTERROGATOR. Who do you think is to blame for the conflict in Former Yugoslavia?

REFUGEE. Who isn't to blame?

INTERROGATOR. Would you like to expand on that?

REFUGEE. No.

Awkward pause.

INTERROGATOR. What's your position on Milosevic?

REFUGEE. I don't know anymore. It's complicated.

QUESTIONER. Speaking of positions, do Serbians have a favourite sexual position?

REFUGEE rips down the "No Smoking" sign and rolls the chair to the open window.

INTERROGATOR. (*To QUESTIONER*) Why did you have to ask that?

QUESTIONER. You asked about Milosevic. Everyone knows you don't ask a Serbian about Milosevic.

INTERROGATOR. It's a relevant question.

INTERROGATOR. (*To REFUGEE*) What do you mean it's complicated? What's your position on Milosevic?

INTERROGATOR looks at QUESTIONER.

QUESTIONER. (To INTERROGATOR) Go ahead. You're going to bulldoze my questions anyway.

INTERROGATOR. How did you feel when you saw people murdered in front of you?

INTERROGATOR. Hey! Number 254! Have you ever been tortured?

QUESTIONER, appalled at how the REFUGEE is being treated, stalks off and joins VETERANS on the dance floor. VETERAN 2 has blindfolded VETERAN 1 with his t-shirt and is pushing him around the room with a pole.

Scene 9 – Interrogation/Trial

QUESTIONER, VETERAN 2, and VETERAN 1 on dance floor. VETERAN 2 is putting VETERAN 1 in various tableaux resembling Abu Ghraib prison. QUESTIONER is taking photographs and inviting the audience to take a photo with the tortured soldier. MC and STAGE MANAGER form tiles together to make the shape of a bed for the REFUGEE. INTERROGATOR and REFUGEE begin the scene by INTERROGATOR dressing REFUGEE in an oversized dress jacket.⁵



Photo courtesy of Melanie Bennett.

INTERROGATOR. I see that you're not represented by counsel today. We understand that this is of your own choice. You do have the right, of course, to defend yourself. You also have a right to counsel, and you should consider carefully whether it's in your own best interests not to be represented. These proceedings will be long and complex, and you may wish to reconsider the position. Now, do you want some time to consider whether you wish to be represented?

REFUGEE. That's your problem. I consider this Tribunal a false Tribunal and the indictment a false indictment. It is illegal, being not appointed by the UN General Assembly, so I have no need to appoint counsel to an illegal organ.

INTERROGATOR. The next part of the procedure is to move towards having that indictment put to you. Now, do you want to enter pleas today or are you asking for an adjournment to consider the matter further?

REFUGEE. This trial's aim is to produce false justification for the war crimes of NATO committed in Yugoslavia.

INTERROGATOR. I asked you a question. Do you wish to enter your pleas today or are you asking for an adjournment to consider the matter further?

REFUGEE. I have given you my answer. Furthermore, this so-called Tribunal...

INTERROGATOR wheels REFUGEE around the performance space.

INTERROGATOR. The Rules state that if an accused fails to enter a plea, then the Trial Chamber shall enter a plea of not guilty on the accused's behalf. We treat your response as a failure to enter a plea, and we shall enter pleas of not guilty on each count on your behalf.

REFUGEE. As I have said, the aim of this Tribunal is to justify the crimes committed in Yugoslavia. That is why this is a false Tribunal—

INTERROGATOR. I beg your pardon, this is not—

REFUGEE. An illegitimate one.

INTERROGATOR. The matter is now adjourned.

Turning then to the accused, are there any issues you wish to raise in connection with your case or with your physical and mental condition?

You know the rules. No speeches at this stage. You'll have the opportunity to defend yourself in due course. But if there are issues you want to raise about the case or about your conditions, then this is your chance to do so.

REFUGEE. Well, I would like to know, first of all, can I speak or are you going to turn off my microphone like the first time?

MC. You're not talking to some Johnny come lately.

INTERROGATOR. If you follow the rules, you will be able to speak. If you deal with relevant matters, of course you will be able to speak.

REFUGEE. Well, I am, by the order of this illegal institution, in total isolation, and my question is: Why am I isolated from my family? Why my family cannot visit me the same way as the others have that possibility? Why the visits of my family are monitored? Why you need monitoring of my talks with my grandson, who is two and a half years old? So why you are making all those acts of massive violation of my rights? Why I am isolated from the persons who would like to visit me and who I need to talk to and to discuss different legal aspects of my position in this illegal imprisonment?

MC. Shoo shoo baby. Bye bye baby. You're pappa's off to the seven seas.

INTERROGATOR. Count 1: Persecution on political, racial, and religious grounds, a crime against humanity. How do you plead to that, guilty or not guilty?

REFUGEE. This indictment is the second act of the crime committed against my people because the victim is proclaimed as the culprit to protect the real culprits for the crimes against Yugoslavia. It is absurd to accuse Serbia and the Serbs for the armed secession of Croatia, which provoked a civil war, conflicts and suffering of the civilian population.

INTERROGATOR. This is not the time for speeches. It is the time for you to enter a plea. You haven't done so, and your failure means that the Tribunal will enter pleas on your behalf. There will be pleas of not guilty entered on every count of this indictment. We now adjourn.

STAGE MANAGER *rings the bell.* INTERROGATOR *puts REFUGEE to bed on the tiles and covers her with a UN flag.*

- MC. Counts 1 and 2: Genocide or complicity in genocide.
 Counts 3 to 7: Extermination, murder, and wilful killing.
 Count 14: Torture, a violation of the laws or customs of war.
 Count 21: Wilful destruction or wilful damage done to historic monuments and institutions dedicated to education or religion, a violation of the laws or customs of war.
 Count 24: Inhumane acts, a crime against humanity
 Count 26: Wilfully causing great suffering.
 Count 27: Murder, a violation of the laws or customs of war.
 Count 28: Cruel treatment, a violation of the laws or customs of war.
 Count 29: Attacks on civilians, a violation of the laws or customs of war.

MC. You're a pistol packin' momma.

INTERROGATOR. (*Sitting by REFUGEE feeding her crackers*)
 All acts and omissions alleged in this indictment occurred on the territory of Former Yugoslavia. All conduct charged as crimes against humanity was part of a widespread and systematic attack against the Bosnian Muslim, Bosnian Croat, and other non-Serb civilian populations within large areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The time has now come for you to enter a plea to that indictment. You should confine your answer, as you know, to "guilty" or "not guilty." On count 1 of this indictment, you are charged with genocide. How do you plead to that count, guilty or not guilty?



Photo courtesy of
Melanie Bennett.

REFUGEE. I would like to say to you that what we have just heard, this tragic text, is a supreme absurdity. I should be given credit for peace in Bosnia, not for war. The responsibility for the war in Bosnia is with the forces who broke up Yugoslavia and their agents in Yugoslavia and not the Serbs or Serbian policies.

INTERROGATOR. This hearing is terminated.

INTERROGATOR goes to the bar and starts drinking. She is joined by the VETERANS and QUESTIONER.

MC. No need to tell me now what makes the world go round... and round... and round. It's time to change the mood...

STAGE MANAGER rings the bell.

MC. Ladies and gentlemen, it's time for our Meat Draw.

Scene 10 – Meat Draw

STAGE MANAGER draws 3 tickets. MC gives instructions to the 3 contestant-spectators to throw pennies at the meat board. The winner receives a package of Schneider's Red Hot hotdogs.

Scene 11 – Horror of contemporary war

Soundscape with the sounds of war—bombs, shootings, etc.—and war veteran interviews. VETERAN 1 and VETERAN 2 drink at the bar. INTERROGATOR and QUESTIONER throw darts at the world map, and INTERROGATOR gets progressively angrier. REFUGEE continues sleeping on the tiles. A loud bomb explodes and VETERANS and QUESTIONER drop to the floor. Meanwhile INTERROGATOR weeps hysterically, continuing to throw darts at world map and eventually disappearing into the kitchen where her cries can still be heard. MC embarrassed at the outburst, apologizes to the spectators.

MC. Uh. Geez. Sorry about that. I haven't seen her react like that before. These are stressful times.

Scene 12 – Recurring dream

REFUGEE awakes and returns to the dance floor underneath the hole in the ceiling.

REFUGEE. Since I immigrated here, I have a recurring dream. Memories of monasteries, of tired stone surrounded by ancient mountains, rivers flowing and raspberries flourishing, limestone ranges, and rich, fertile plains. Lastly, smiles in the streets of beautiful Belgrade. (*Looks up at hole.*) Meanwhile, a dark hole is being dug out in the stone of my spirit, and in it my country is dying, calling me, spurring me on to be, to preserve, to endure, to return.

(*Begins walking in circles.*) When you're a refugee you go in circles, you cross land and it's not your land. (*Begins moving three lighted candles to the middle of floor positioning them in a triangle.*) Light wakes you up and it's not your light. Night comes down, but your stars are missing. You discover kindred souls, but they're not of your blood. (*Sits down in centre of triangle.*) You're like an embarrassed ghost and it's still so strange to you that you miss the hostile tension of your own country, the loud helplessness of your own people, the bitter quarrelling waiting for you from outside the door of your ransacked building. (*Begins walking around the candles in a circle.*) But inevitably in my heart, I still yearn for it, as if the sweetest nectar grows only in the trees of my own country.

With every year the dream gets fainter. Currently, Serbia is peaceful, yet I still breathe air through a wound. So, a spirit without roots is an injustice. It searches for its own unfortunate country and only there knows contentment.

Scene 13 – Displacement award

VETERAN 1 gradually moves over to his shrine. VETERAN 2 begins forming tiles into a chess board and places plastic army dolls on the black squares and child dolls on the white squares. QUESTIONER takes off her jacket and becomes HELEN again. She begins distributing numerous photographs of VETERAN 1 on the floor. INTERROGATOR stays in kitchen and becomes PHYLLIS again. STAGE MANAGER rings bell.

MC. Ladies and gentlemen, it's time for the last legion contest of the night. This is going to tell us who's the most homesick. Everyone on the dance floor. If you can't answer "yes" to a question, please step off the dance floor.

Who's ever had to ask for directions?

Who's ever had their parents paged in a mall because they couldn't find them?

Who's ever gone 24 hours without seeing or speaking to a single soul?

Who's ever done something just to fit in?

Who's ever been to a party where they didn't know anyone?

Who's ever been somewhere where they are the only person speaking English?

Who's ever woken up and didn't know where they were?

Who's ever moved away to be with someone else?

Who's ever forgotten their name for a moment?

Who's ever had to flee their country because it was too dangerous to stay there?

(REFUGEE is the last person standing.) Ah, a winner. Would you come to the centre of the dance floor, please. Congratulations. You are the most displaced person at this party. For you, we have a Canadian Military Directional Strategy (CMDS) guide that will help you find your way. *(MC gives her a children's maze book.)*

Jamais vu. The French opposite of *déjà vu*, where every

place seems foreign to you no matter how many times you've been there; everybody's a stranger no matter how well you think you know them.

Scene 14 – Conclusion

VETERAN 1 does push-ups and gets tired. Puts his jacket on and tries to light a cigarette.

VETERAN 1. (*At the plaque*) I never used to smoke. I've built this body to be a heroic warrior. And for what? I never even got to use it, God dammit. I died so fast that what I did made no difference at all. In battle it's between you and the other guy and the best man wins. Jesus. Didn't I do everything a good soldier is supposed to do? Discipline. Dedication. Determination. A good soldier does what he's told to do when he's told to do it. And now, all that I'm remembered for is this plaque.

(*Reads plaque out loud.*) "In loving memory." In loving memory. This is not how I wanted to be remembered. I actually wanted to make a difference. Jesus.

The silence of the grave. In loving memory.



Photo courtesy of
Melanie Bennett.

Knocks down the shrine. Tries to light cigarette with lighter. Throws lighter across the floor at the shrine. Walks over to HELEN and stares at her, but she doesn't see him.

HELEN. (*Looking through several copies of the same photograph of VETERAN 1 in his uniform*) This one is of our wedding day. (*Shows spectator photograph.*) This one is from his 30th birthday. That was a great party. Phyllis made the cake. This one is of the day our son was born. He was so proud. This one is of the day he went off to war. (*Angry, she rips up the photograph and messes up the remaining pile.*)

(*Stands up and faces the mural.*) As the memory of the lover fades, my love for the dead man intensifies, so that I don't know if it's him I love or the tragedy of losing him. We were together for 3 months before he had to go to war. I've never been able to love anyone since. One photograph. That's all I have to remember him by. Who can compete with a shadow and a photograph? I've lived in Canada my whole life and never seen the Rockies. I've never been anywhere. I dream about the first time that I see the sea and I become younger than the whole world. (*Begins walking over to window and grabs the hands of a young spectator.*) On the water, the endless tang of the universe rises to greet me, and I have no sense that the world existed before that moment of seeing the sea for the first time. After I've crossed the ocean, I find myself on foreign land where the lover greets me and takes me to an ancient cathedral. I begin to find so many things in so little, in my own twilight discoveries, in the sighs of love-making, in roots. Everything is new to me. This whole planet that is dying of old age and abuse is opening up for me to experience. (*Climbs onto the window sill.*) Suddenly, I realize that I am naked. I don't speak any languages and the only book I can read is the book of myself. The only life I know is my secret life. I can't even summon myself, because I wouldn't respond. I have used up that chance, so I fall back on things like memories and dreams. I am the displaced one, the drifter, the poor proprietor of my own skeleton. My faith lies buried in an ancient church somewhere and my love is found in a decaying corpse.

I suppose I covet the exotic.

VETERAN 2 on black tiles. VETERAN 1 on white tiles holding the dolls. VETERAN 1 trying to stay on the white tiles, but VETERAN 2 keeps moving them with his plastic army dolls.

VETERAN 2. Brothers. Fucking brothers. Brothers in arms, fucking. Plastic brothers. Brothers in black and white. Don't you wish the world was painted in black and white, soldier? That you had your own personal drill sergeant who would tell you what to do: when to get up in the morning, when to eat, when to shit. Well soldier, it's your move. White goes first.

You find something to protect. You're gonna protect them all. You're gonna save them all. Your brothers, your sisters, your lovers, your country. . . strangers. (*Piles all the child dolls into VETERAN 1's arms.*)

What are you saving them from? Are you defending them, or protecting our interests?

You're gonna keep the peace. . . you peacekeeper. You're not gonna be a murderer.

The world's been war-free for 61 years and counting. Thanks to you and your United Elations. You're a dying breed. And what is the cost? The cost of peace. What do you cost? Who can afford you? Can you? Can you? What can we afford to pay? Pay our respects? Can we pay to replace all those war toys you've broken? We want a "strong" military—what does that even mean. . .

What do we remember of you? What do we remember—we weren't there, we didn't do it, go through it, live and let die. . . What will you remember? What?

In the end, what will you remember? Broken limbs, shattered corpses, or happy memories?

VETERAN 2 pulls Barbie's head off with his mouth and throws the body at VETERAN 1. VETERAN 1 drops all the dolls on the floor and walks over to his window. VETERAN 2 walks over to his window.

PHYLLIS. (*At kitchen, opens door*) Come on in. You should have seen it before. It was nice. This was the liveliest kitchen you could ever imagine. So many parties. (*Plays with the pipes and begins making a design on the floor.*) So much clutter. Careful of the stain. It's always been there. I don't know what it is. Do you ever dream in colour?



Photo courtesy of Sujoy Bandyopadhyay.

I hung this plaque here. It's really inspirational. (*Reading the plaque.*) "We unwilling, led by the unqualified have been doing the unbelievable for so long with so little that we now attempt the impossible with nothing."

This will make the place prettier. (*Starts tearing off pieces of festive wrapping.*) There. That adds a little colour.

Gotta get the bugs out. (*Sprays corners with spray bottle.*)

Do you like rain?

Ah, the St. Patrick's Day event. That was a lot of fun. (*Referencing the red Ladies Auxiliary poster.*)

I'd whip you up something, but this is all the ingredients that we have. (*Acknowledges jars and containers.*)

We still have to get the water softener fixed. Is anyone here a gas expert? No? Ok, well I'll see if I can figure it out. (*Tries to affix pipes to the gas lines.*)

Have you ever dreamed of a blender? (*Looks out the window.*) Do you like the way sunlight looks on glass? Well, thanks for coming. Don't feel like you have to stay. It will take a while to get this place back to its original grandeur. Help yourself to some more cheese and crackers on your way out.



Photo courtesy of Sujoy Bandyopadhyay.

MC. (*By bar as bomb ticks*) I wish this place wasn't so mouldy. If only I could have been funnier. I wish the beer could have been colder. It's a shame that the roof is leaking and the tiles are loose. Why couldn't there have been more people? Why couldn't the event have been more linear? I wish I was a better host. *Bomb alarm goes off.* Ah, fuck it. My time is up.

REFUGEE. (*To LEGIONNAIRES*) Come on. You don't want to watch any more of this. Let's get some fresh air. Follow me.

REFUGEE leads LEGIONNAIRES down the stairs, past the following poem, which is written on the window and walls:

*Suppose the dead could crown their wit
With some intemperate exercise,
Spring from wine from their ivory
Or roses from their eyes?*

*Or if the wise could understand
And the world without heart
That the dead are not yet dead
And that the living live apart*

*And the wounded are healing,
Though in a place of flame.
The sick in a great ship
Are riding. They are riding home.*



Photo courtesy of Mark Bennett.

*Two cities sailed together
For many thousand years.
And now they drift asunder.
The tides of new wars
Sweep the sad heavens*

*Divide the massed stars,
The black and white universe
The booming spheres.*

*Down, down, down
The white armies fall
Moving their ordered snows
Toward the jaws of hell.*

*Suppose the dead could crown their wit
With some intemperate exercise,
Spring wine from their ivory
Or roses from their eyes?⁶*

On the way down, NICK STORRING can be seen in one of the rooms playing a wild composition on the cello. Spectators are led out through the loading dock door into the parking lot. The rest of the cast “pose” at the various windows. Music can be heard from the windows. REFUGEE invites LEGIONNAIRES to write in chalk on the walls with sentences beginning with “I wish I could (BLANK) here.”

REFUGEE. Like this building, I’m caught between what I once was and what I am becoming, displaced between memory and forgetting. A building is more than just these bricks. Memory is inscribed into its crumbling mortar. This place has spoken through us and we have spoken through it. And now, I invite you to leave your own trace on its walls.

REFUGEE disappears through the loading dock door. ❁

NOTES

- ¹ The first half of this scene and the MC’s costume were inspired by Forced Entertainment’s performance entitled, *Showtime* (1996).
- ² See “Remembrance Day.”
- ³ Scene 5 includes several fragments of, Lieutenant Colonel John McCrae’s poem, “In Flanders Fields.” See McCrae.
- ⁴ The questions in this scene were developed by the creative team working on this project. The style of questioning, however, was inspired by Mammalian Diving Reflex’s *Diplomatic Immunities* performance on Mother’s Day 2006 at Buddies in Bad Times Theatre in Toronto, where the performers asked the audience a series of questions that eventually left one person standing in the theatre.

- ⁵ Much of the text for this scene is taken from portions of the public transcripts of the Milosevic trial. See "Milosevic Trial Transcripts."
- ⁶ The majority of this poem was drawn from a book of Thomas Merton poems that we found in the legion hall. See Merton 422-23.

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