

Brooklyn Academy of Music

Adam E. Max,
Chairman of the Board

Katy Clark,
President

William I. Campbell,
Vice Chairman of the Board

Joseph V. Melillo,
Executive Producer

My Lai

Kronos Quartet, Rinde Eckert & Vân-Ánh Võ
Music by Jonathan Berger
Libretto by Harriet Scott Chessman

BAM Harvey Theater
Sep 27—30 at 7:30pm

Running time: approx. one hour & 15 minutes, no intermission

Direction and set design by **Mark DeChiazza**
and **Rinde Eckert**
Video projection design by **Mark DeChiazza**
Lighting design by **Brian H. Scott**

Season Sponsor:

**Bloomberg
Philanthropies**

My Lai Lullaby

For string quartet, đàn bầu and đàn tranh

Jonathan Berger, composer

In collaboration with **David Harrington** and **Vân-Ánh Võ**

•

My Lai

A monodrama for tenor, string quartet, and Vietnamese instruments

Jonathan Berger, composer

Harriet Scott Chessman, librettist

I. First Landing

Flight

Descent

The Ditch

II. Second Landing

Hovering

The Bunker

III. Third Landing

Postcard

Fishing

KRONOS QUARTET

David Harrington violin

John Sherba violin

Hank Dutt viola

Sunny Yang cello

Rinde Eckert vocalist

Vân-Ánh Võ, trung, đàn bầu, đàn tranh

ADDITIONAL CREDITS

Audio engineer **Scott Fraser**

Creative consultant **Drew Cameron**

Producer **Janet Cowperthwaite**

Production management **Kronos Performing Arts Association**

My Lai (music by Jonathan Berger, libretto by Harriet Scott Chessman) was commissioned for the Kronos Quartet, Rinde Eckert, and Vân-Ánh Võ by the Harris Theater for Music and Dance with support from the Laura and Ricardo Rosenkranz Artistic Innovation Fund and The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Gerbode-Hewlett Foundations 2013 Music Commissioning Awards initiative, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

These works were written for Kronos Quartet, Rinde Eckert, and Van-Anh Vo.

The massacre of over 500 innocent civilians by American soldiers in the village of My Lai on March 16, 1968, was one of the darkest moments of the Vietnam War—one that traumatized the nation and swayed the course of history. The events of that day may well have gone unnoticed save for the actions of a young army helicopter pilot who, by happenstance, witnessed the killing in the course of a routine reconnaissance flight. Appalled by what he saw, Warrant Officer Hugh Thompson attempted to intercede, first by reporting the incident, then by landing his helicopter between the civilians and the troops. Aghast at his inability to stop the slaughter, in a moment of enormous passion, Thompson threatened to open fire on his own troops. Failing to stop the carnage, he pulled a wounded child from its dead mother's grasp and flew him to safety. Thompson's refusal to remain silent about the massacre forced the military to conduct an inquiry and trial that shook the national conscience, and left Thompson vilified as a disloyal outcast for much of his life.

Scored for tenor, traditional Vietnamese instruments, and string quartet, the work takes place in a hospital room, where Thompson, surrendering to cancer, faces death under hospice care. Feeling neither heroic, nor particularly proud of what he did, the consequences of Thompson's naïve, idealistic attempt to stop the carnage are pieced together in an effort to seek closure and resolution. *My Lai* simultaneously represents a continuation of my creative path and an exciting departure into new sound worlds. As was the case in my recent work *The War Reporter*, *My Lai* seeks a mode of expression in which the political and societal underpinnings of conflict, and its senseless brutality are set through a character study of an individual who unintentionally becomes inextricably bound up in the fray of war.

—Jonathan Berger

It has been a joy and honor to collaborate on *My Lai*. As soon as Jonathan Berger told me, in June 2013, the story of Hugh Thompson, I sensed the courage and humanity this young officer from rural Georgia must have had that morning in March 1968. I also caught sight of how much Thompson had to face, from that day on, as his actions came under fire by his own country.

Once I started to do research, Hugh Thompson increasingly emerged for me as a compelling, extraordinary figure. I sought first to listen for his voice, and somehow this voice—open, plainspoken, humble, yearning and furious, forthright, baffled, pained and sorrowful—came to me powerfully. I wrote the first draft of the libretto trusting this voice and following the arc of that terrible morning, involving the three unauthorized landings this 24-year-old pilot made with his reconnaissance helicopter and young two-person crew.

This is my first libretto—I am a fiction writer primarily—and one of the most surprising and fulfilling aspects of this process has been the effort to write musically. I revised the libretto, with Jonathan's suggestions, over the course of the first year and a half, before I heard one note of his composition. Once Jonathan started to compose the music, the libretto changed, gradually gaining the shape it has now, and yet the voice I imagined for Hugh Thompson has held and deepened.

I am grateful for this chance to stretch my musical wings, and to participate in the creation of this piece together with such an inspiring group of artists and musicians.

—Harriet Scott Chessman

KRONOS QUARTET (performer)

For more than 40 years, San Francisco's Kronos Quartet—David Harrington (violin), John Sherba (violin), Hank Dutt (viola), and Sunny Yang (cello)—has combined a spirit of fearless exploration with a commitment to continually reimagine the string quartet experience. In the process, Kronos has become one of the world's most celebrated and influential ensembles, performing thousands of concerts, releasing more than 60 recordings, collaborating with many of the world's most intriguing and accomplished composers and performers, and commissioning over 900 works and arrangements for string quartet. Kronos has received more than 40 awards, including the Polar Music and Avery Fisher Prizes, two of the most prestigious awards given to musicians.

Integral to Kronos' work is a series of long-running collaborations with many of the world's foremost composers, including Americans Terry Riley, Philip Glass, and Steve Reich; Azerbaijan's Franghiz Ali-Zadeh; Russia's Vladimir Martynov; Poland's Henryk Górecki; and Serbian-American Aleksandra Vrebalov. Additional collaborators have included Wu Man, Laurie Anderson, Tanya Tagaq, Mahsa Vahdat, Trevor Paglen, Van Dyke Parks, múm, Dawn Upshaw, Noam Chomsky, Tom Waits, Asha Bhosle, Taraf de Haïdouks, and Howard Zinn.

On tour for five months per year, Kronos appears in the world's most prestigious concert halls, clubs, and festivals. Kronos is equally prolific and wide-ranging on recordings, including the Grammy- and Latin Grammy-nominated *Nuevo* (2002) and the 2004 Grammy-winner *Alban Berg's Lyric Suite*. Kronos' most recent releases include the *One Earth, One People, One Love: Kronos Plays Terry Riley* box set; *Folk Songs*, which features Sam Amidon, Olivia Chaney, Rhiannon Giddens, and Natalie Merchant singing traditional songs; and *Ladilikan*, a collaborative album with Trio Da Kali, a "super-group" of Malian griot musicians assembled by Aga Khan Music Initiative.

The nonprofit Kronos Performing Arts Association manages all aspects of Kronos' work, including the commissioning of new works, concert tours

and home season performances, education programs, and a self-produced Kronos Festival. In 2015, Kronos launched Fifty for the Future: The Kronos Learning Repertoire, an education and legacy project that is commissioning—and distributing for free—the first learning library of contemporary repertoire for string quartet.

RINDE ECKERT (co-direction, set design, performer)

The multi-talented Rinde Eckert is an acclaimed writer, composer, librettist, musician, performer, and director. In the service of grappling with complex issues, his virtuosic command of gesture, language, and song takes the total theater artist beyond the boundaries of what a play, a dance piece, an opera, or a musical might be. Sometimes tragic and austere, sometimes broadly comedic, entirely grounded by presence, his work is alchemical—moving from rumination and distillation to hard-won illumination, or its lack. Eckert creates solo work, chamber pieces, and through-composed operas with larger casts, and has long collaborated with other art makers including choreographers, composers, directors, and new music ensembles. His opera and new music-theater productions tour throughout the US and to major European and Asian festivals. Three of Eckert's plays have run successfully off-Broadway, receiving Drama Desk nominations and a Lucille Lortel Award. His theater writing credits include *Highway Ulysses*, *Horizon*, *Orpheus X*, and *And God Created Great Whales*, which had three off-Broadway runs with the original cast and director for a total of 227 performances. In addition to *My Lai*, current theater and music projects in which he also performs include *Aging Magician* composed by Paola Prestini with direction by Julian Crouch; *Slide* with composer/performer Steven Macky; and *My Fools: A Life in Song*, his newest one-person show. Eckert was the 2007 finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Drama. His awards include being named an inaugural Doris Duke Artist in 2012, the 2009 Alpert Award in the Arts for Theatre, a 2007 Guggenheim Fellowship, and the 2005 American Academy of Arts and Letters Marc Blitzstein Award. Eckert lives in New York with his wife, the actress Ellen McLaughlin.



VÂN-ÁNH VÕ (performer)

Vân-Anh Võ is one of the finest performers on Vietnamese traditional instruments in the world, and a rapidly emerging composer. She dedicates her life to creating music by blending the sounds of Vietnamese instruments with other music genres, and fusing deeply rooted Vietnamese musical traditions with new structures and compositions. In 1995, Võ won the championship title in the Vietnamese National Đàn Tranh (Zither) Competition. Since settling in the San Francisco Bay Area in 2001, Võ has focused on collaborating with musicians across different genres to create new works, bringing Vietnamese traditional music to a wider audience and preserving her cultural legacy through teaching. She has released three CDs: *Twelve Months, Four Seasons* (2002), *She's Not She* (2009) with award-winning composer Bao Do, and *Three-Mountain Pãss* (2013), with Kronos Quartet as guest artist. Võ has also been collaborator and guest soloist with Southwest Chamber Music, and jazz, rap, and other world music artists. Additionally, she has been co-composer and arranger for the Oscar-nominated and Sundance Grand Jury Prize winner for Best Documentary, *Daughter from Danang*, the Emmy Award-winning film *Bolinao 52*, and the winner of multiple Best Documentary and Audience Favorite awards for *A Village Called Versailles*. She has presented her music at Carnegie Hall, Zellerbach Hall, Kennedy Center, Houston Grand Opera, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, on NPR, and at many world music festivals throughout the US, and as a guest artist with Kronos Quartet at the 2012 Cultural Olympiad in London. She has been invited and participated as a screening judge in the World Music category for the 2015 Grammys. In addition to the đàn Tranh, Võ also performs as soloist on the monõchord (dàn Bầu), the bamboo xylophone (dàn Trùng), traditional drums (trống), and other traditional instruments. Recently, in collaboration with Asian American for Community Involvement, an NGO which has served refugees in Santa Clara County for 40 years, Võ received an award from Creative Work Fund for *The Odyssey—From Vietnam to America*, which premiered during the 40th anniversary of the end of Vietnam War, highlighting the incredible power of the human spirit, the value of freedom, and the will of the Vietnamese Boat People to survive.

JONATHAN BERGER (composer)

Jonathan Berger's music has been widely hailed for its expressivity and powerful drama. Berger's "dissonant but supple" (*New York Times*) compositions include vocal, orchestral, and chamber music as well as electroacoustic music. Berger's sixth string quartet, *Swallow*, was premiered in New York in 2014 by the St. Lawrence String Quartet. Recent commissions include a work for the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, Chamber Music America, Spoleto Festival USA, National Endowment for the Arts, Denver Chamber Music Society, and the Gerbode, Mellon, and Ford Fellowships, among others. Berger's violin concerto *Jiyeh* was released last year on Harmonia Mundi's Eloquentia Label. Berger's works are also available on Naxos, Centaur, and Sony recordings. Following critically acclaimed performances in California and New York, Berger's opera, *Visitations*, is scheduled to receive its Chicago premiere in 2017. Berger has been composer-in-residence at Spoleto, Banff, and numerous universities throughout the world. In addition to composing, Berger is an active researcher in music perception and cognition, and has authored more than 70 publications. Berger is the Denning Family Provostial Professor in Music at Stanford University.

HARRIET SCOTT CHESSMAN (librettist)

Harriet Scott Chessman, a fiction writer, is the author of the acclaimed novels *The Lost Sketchbook of Edgar Degas*, *Someone Not Really Her Mother*, *The Beauty of Ordinary Things*, *Lydia Cassatt Reading the Morning Paper*, and *Ohio Angels*. Her fiction has been on the *San Francisco Chronicle's* Best Books list and featured on *Good Morning America* and in *The New York Times*, in addition to being translated into seven languages. She has taught creative writing and literature at Yale University (where she earned a PhD in English), Bread Loaf School of English, and Stanford University. After 12 years in the San Francisco Bay Area, she now lives in Connecticut, where she is working on a new libretto and a collection of short stories. *My Lai* is her first libretto, and she has been thrilled to contribute to this beautiful piece. harrietchessman.com

MARK DECHIAZZA (co-direction, set design, video projection design)

Mark DeChiazza is a director, filmmaker, designer, and choreographer. Many of his projects explore interactions between music performance and media to discover new expressive possibilities. His work can bring together composers, ensembles, and musicians with visual artists, dancers, music ensembles, and makers of all types. Investigating the body and its relationships to space, time, and experience remain vital to his process across all disciplines. His large-scale music-theater production *Quixote* premiered in spring 2017 at Peak Performances, and extends a creative partnership with composer Amy Beth Kirsten begun in Columbine's *Paradise Theater*, which was produced and performed by eighth blackbird. DeChiazza's ongoing creative partnership with this multiple-Grammy winning ensemble began in 2009 with his lauded production of Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*, and continues with Dan Trueman's *Olagón*, now in development. Recent projects include production concept, direction, and choreography for *Orpheus Unsung*, a collaboration with composer Steven Mackey which premiered at Guthrie Theater in 2016; direction and editing of the film *Hireath*, which partners with the performance of Sarah Kirkland Snider's 35-minute orchestral

work commissioned by North Carolina Symphony and Princeton Symphony Orchestra; and staging and design for composer John Luther Adams' *Sila*, a massive site-determined piece for 80 musicians commissioned by Lincoln Center. markdechiazza.com.

BRIAN H. SCOTT (lighting designer)

Brian H. Scott, a lighting and scenic designer based in New York City, is resident designer for Austin-based Rude Mechanicals, where he designed *Stop Hitting Yourself* at Lincoln Center, *Now Now Oh Now*, *Method Gun*, *I've Never Been So Happy*, *How Late It Was How Late*, *Lipstick Traces*, *Requiem for Tesla*, and *Matchplay*. At the Park Avenue Armory, he created lighting for *Oktophonie* and Ann Hamilton's *The Event of a Thread*. He designed lighting for Laurie Anderson and Kronos Quartet's *Landfall*. As SITI Company resident lighting designer, he created lighting for *Steel Hammer* with Bang on a Can All Stars, *The Persians*, and *Trojan Women* with the Getty Villa, *American Document* with the Martha Graham Dance Company, *Cafe Variations*, *Under Construction*, *WhoDoYouThinkYouAre*, *Hotel Cassiopeia*, *Death and the Ploughman*, *bobrauschenbergamerica 7*; Henry Hewes Design Award 2004), *Radio MacBeth*, and *War of the Worlds Radio Play*, many of which have been presented at BAM. brianhscott.com

For the **Kronos Quartet/Kronos Performing Arts Association**:

Janet Cowperthwaite, Managing Director
Sidney Chen, Artistic Administrator
Mason Dille, Development Manager
Sarah Donahue, Production Operations Manager
Lauren Frankel, Development Associate
Scott Fraser, Senior Sound Designer
Sasha Hnatkovich, Communications Manager
Reshena Liao, Strategic Initiatives Project Manager
Nikolás McConnie-Saad, Office Manager
Brian Mohr, Sound Designer, Technical Manager
Kären Nagy, Strategic Initiatives Director
Brian H. Scott, Lighting Designer
Lucinda Toy, Business Operations Manager

Contact:

Kronos Quartet/Kronos Performing Arts Association
P. O. Box 225340
San Francisco, CA 94122-5340 USA
kronosquartet.org
facebook.com/kronosquartet
instagram.com/kronos_quartet
twitter.com/kronosquartet

The Kronos Quartet records for Nonesuch Records.

MY LAI

CHARACTERS

Hugh Thompson, Jr.
Emcee and Phil (as voices in game show interruptions)

PLACE

Hospital room in the Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Pineville, Louisiana

Son M̄ Village (including the hamlet of M̄ Lai), South Vietnam

TIME

December 2005, a few weeks before Hugh Thompson's death on January 6, 2006 (Epiphany).

The morning of March 16, 1968

ABOUT THIS LIBRETTO

My Lai approaches the My Lai massacre through the memory and imagination of Hugh Thompson, Jr., the American Army helicopter pilot who courageously intervened in the atrocities, in which American GIs killed over 500 innocent Vietnamese villagers, including many women and children. Now facing cancer in the last month of his life, Thompson is haunted by this massacre, and by his own inability to save more lives.

HISTORY

Warrant Officer Thompson was a member of the 123rd Aviation Battalion of the 23rd Infantry Division. Flying his observation helicopter on the morning of March 16, 1968 on a reconnaissance mission, the 24-year old officer, together with his young crew Lawrence Colburn and Glenn Andreotta, could find no Viet Cong activity in Son My Village.

As Thompson and his crew started to realize that American soldiers were engaged in a large-scale massacre, he made three heroic and unauthorized landings, in addition to sending anguished radio reports. Upon his return to base, Thompson reported the massacre in person, which led to the order to cease fire that

effectively stopped the My Lai atrocities.

HUGH THOMPSON'S THREE LANDINGS

(inspiration for this libretto):

(1) On the first landing, near a large irrigation ditch filled with villagers' bodies, Officer Thompson tried to persuade the officer in charge, Lieutenant William Calley, to help those people still alive and to stop the killing. Calley ordered Thompson to leave. As the helicopter rose up again, Sergeant David Mitchell fired his M-16 into the dead or wounded in the ditch.

(2) Shocked and furious, Officer Thompson and his crew started to search from the air for ways to help the villagers. He bravely placed his helicopter between US troops and about 10 people—including children—hiding in an earthen bunker. Commanding his crew to train their guns on the American soldiers, he brought the villagers out of the bunker and successfully persuaded a large helicopter to airlift them to safety.

(3) As Thompson flew the helicopter over the village on the way to refuel, Andreotta spotted movement in the same irrigation ditch where they had landed the first time. On this third landing, Andreotta walked into the ditch, over the bodies of the dead and dying, and rescued a small boy.

Hugh Thompson became a passionate, devoted witness of this atrocity from that day forward. His testimony in 1970 became critical for the Army's investigations and prosecution of guilty parties. However, the House Armed Services Committee—with President Nixon's help—tried to undermine Thompson's credibility as a witness and threatened to court martial him for his intervention.

All of the officers and soldiers involved in the massacre—with the exception of William Calley—were ultimately acquitted. Found guilty of killing 22 South Vietnamese unarmed civilians, Calley was sentenced to life in prison, but served only three and a half years under house arrest.

Thirty years after the massacre, Hugh Thompson, Lawrence Colburn, and (posthumously) Glenn Andreotta were awarded

the Soldier's Medal. In 1999, Thompson and Colburn also received the Peace Abbey's Courage of Conscience Award.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank Jonathan Berger and Kronos for bringing me on board this resonant, moving project. I also thank the wonderful journalists, soldiers and writers who have investigated and remembered the My Lai massacre and other aspects of the Vietnam War.

I especially wish to acknowledge Trent Angers' valuable authorized biography of Hugh Thompson, *The Forgotten Hero of My Lai: The Hugh Thompson Story*, Michael Bilton's *Four Hours in My Lai*, and Seymour Hersh's *My Lai 4* and other writings.

I dedicate this libretto to the memory of my father, G. Wallace Chessman, who participated in the D-Day Landings, June 6, 1944, when he was 25 years old.

—*Harriet Scott Chessman*

LIBRETTO

FIRST LANDING

1: Flight

[Hugh Thompson sings in darkness]

My Lord, what a morning
My Lord, what a morning
Oh, my Lord, what a morning
When the stars begin to . . .

[Lights up. A hospital room, bare, with a bed, a TV, a chair.]

I always wanted to fly,
rise up like a bird,
to fly.

This cancer,
son of a bitch infantry,
moves through me.

I always wanted to fly!

They had no chance to fly.

If only I could fly
out of my body,
out of this sick body,
out of my soul.

No! No, no.
Please no more!
Please let me go.

2: Interlude

3: Descent

[As if peering out of his cockpit, surveying the landscape from the air]

I wish my little boy could see this.
I wish my son Bucky could see this.
Such beauty
This beauty

Ah! Just for a moment
I wish my little boy could see this.

This beauty . . .

This? This!
There!
That! This. There!
What's going on?
What's going on here?
How on earth?

Look! What's this?
Look! Look! Look there!
Along the hedgerow —

Along the road —

Here, there!
In the rice paddy —

Weren't those people just walking to market,
their baskets waiting to be filled?
Weren't those people just heading to the fields
on this bright morning?
My Lord, what a morning.

[as if talking into his radio]

I'm taking her down.
Open the door.
Open the fucking door!

Look!
In the ditch, that girl is still moving.

Medic! Medic!
That girl is still moving!

Where in God's name is the medic?

The captain walks up,
pokes her with his boot —
his boot!
He raises his automatic and —

God in heaven,
what did You do
creating such a son of a bitch?

4: The Ditch

The long ditch
The long, long ditch
Every morning
Every day

[As if talking on his cockpit radio]

Do you hear me? Over?
Can you hear?
God damn it, can you hear me? Over.
Over. Over.
Can you hear?

Ah!
Bodies piled on bodies,
just people,
children, like fish caught . . .
No, not fish,
just bodies,
just people caught,
some moving,
some crying out . . .

Help! Medic!
Why don't you . . .

[Hugh takes remote control, turns TV on, and starts to watch a game show.]

Game Show Interruption #1

[Applause, horns, laughter]

EMCEE

*[voice appears to come from
an old-fashioned TV in Hugh's hospital room]*

Welcome back! Welcome! We have an exciting
show for you this morning. We're playing with
a teacher from Idaho, a nurse from Maine, and
a Chief Warrant Officer in our Armed Forces. A
helicopter pilot, am I right, sir?

[some applause, approving murmurs]

All right, then! You know how the game is
played. We'll show you three doors—a red, a
white, and a blue one. Choose one and the game
is on. And to honor our brave American troops
. . . let's start with you, Officer.

I'm sure you've had to make difficult choices in
your line of work—this one should be a piece of
cake!

[laughter]

So, Officer, which will it be? Blue, white, or red?

[brief audience silence]

Our officer seems a bit lost. But he's a helicopter pilot, folks. I'm sure he knows how to land this thing!

[laughter]

So what'll it be, Captain?

[audience silence]

I said what'll it be, Captain.

HUGH

Are you talking to me . . . ?
I'm not a Captain.

EMCEE

Hey, that woke him up! Always important to get the right rank. Sir, yes SIR! *[as if snapping to attention and saluting]*

[laughter]

But seriously, Officer Thompson, time's running out! Make your choice!

[ticking clock music]

HUGH

All the doors are red . . . !

EMCEE

Look again, Officer.

HUGH

The doors are all red!

EMCEE

At last! Our contestant has chosen the RED door!

[applause, laughter, horns]

HUGH *[simultaneous with Emcee]*

No! Listen to me!!
That's not what I said!

For Christ's sake!

I never chose that!

EMCEE

This is the moment of truth, folks.
Are you ready, Officer?

[increasing laughter, applause]

So let's open the door and see what's behind it.
Here we go!

[cheers, applause, horns]

HUGH

Wait—Hang on!

EMCEE

Too late to change your mind, chief. Phil? What has the officer chosen?

PHIL

Well Dick, the smoke is clearing, and you can just make it out. Okay. Looks like a ditch full of bodies, old people, women and children. Yeah, I see it now, women and children, babies. All dead or about to be, Dick.

[murmurs, chatter, "oohs," light applause]

HUGH

Stop this! Stop this right now!

EMCEE

Can we stop it, folks?

[laughter and cries of "No!"]

HUGH

You are going to stop this!

EMCEE

That's right. This is how the game is played.

[laughter, applause, rising to include helicopter]

and gunfire)

EMCEE

This is how the game is played, you candy ass,
bleeding heart, motherf— . . .

SECOND LANDING

1: Hovering

The ocean is glistening.
The fields shine.
Once you land,
there's no turning back,
not for you,
not for your crew.

The ocean is glistening.
The fields shine.
Once you land,
there's no going back.

You can't just hover.
You have to go down,
down into the madness.

You have to leave your life behind
and dive, dive and dive
into the madness.
And dive, and dive and dive,
Ah!
into the madness.

I'm bringing her down.
I'm landing this bird now.

2: Bunker

There it is!
Over there!
An earthen bunker.
No! wait!
A rabbit hole?
Children hiding.
Little children hiding . . . almost caught.
Wait! Wait!
My God!
Jesus Christ,
what do I do?
What would *You* do?

My Lord, what a morning.
My Lord, what a morning.
My Lord, what a mor...

I'm going to try to stop this!
I'm going to land her there,
right there, between
those children and our troops.

[to his gunners]

We're going to stop this madness.
Larry! Man your gun.
Take aim. Take aim!
Aim at our soldiers.

If those bastards . . .
If those bastards open fire
on the children in the bunker,
blow them away,
blow those bastards away.
Ah, blow those bastards away.

My gunners nod,
Larry and Glenn.
They look at me and nod . . .
Incredulous
Angelic
Mortified.

We're caught in this.
How has this happened?

The ocean glistened.
The fields shone.
Here the world is changed,
forever changed.

[to the Captain on the ground.]

Hold your fire, Captain!
Captain, hold your fire!
What's that?
Orders? Orders?
I don't give a fuck about your orders!
For God's sake, hold your fire.

Ah!
I am caught in this.
Ah, I am caught in this.
It will never be over.
I will always be in it,
shouting at the captain.
I'm still shouting.

[TV turns on by itself. Game show starts again.]

Game Show Interruption #2

HUGH

I'm not playing this game anymore.

[surprised murmurs and laughter]

EMCEE

What do you say we give Officer Thompson here a round of applause for getting this far?

[applause, whistles, approving laughter]

All right, then! We're in the final round of the game now. Time for our Quiz! Two correct answers—just two!—and you're home free.

HUGH

I'm not answering any more questions. I already told you. I told everybody everything.

EMCEE

First question: Confronting American soldiers on the ground, what did you order your crew to do? You have 30 seconds.

[ticking clock music]

HUGH

I observed three or four villagers running. Non-combatants, obviously—two were little children. They were under fire. Our soldiers—Charlie Company . . . chasing them and—

[a buzzer sounds]

EMCEE

Time's up. So sorry, Officer. What did you order your crew to do? "Blow them away. Blow those bastards away" was the correct answer.

HUGH

No, Sir! Our troops . . . they were NOT soldiers. That is NOT what soldiers do.

EMCEE

Well, Officer Thompson, you didn't get that one, but you still have one more chance. You're still standing. He's still standing, folks!

[applause, laughter]

HUGH

They weren't soldiers. That was murder. They were animals. No—Animals wouldn't do that!

EMCEE

Last question—and this is for all the marbles. Are you ready, Officer? Are you ready, folks, Congressman Rivers, members of the House Armed Services Committee, President Nixon?

HUGH

This is a joke.

EMCEE

Are you ready for the last question?

HUGH

This is a fucking circus. I'm not playing! I'm out of this!

EMCEE

He's out of line here, folks. A loose cannon—he's jumping the gun. Can you blame the boy, though? Can you, folks? Can we blame him for jumping the gun?

[hoots and whistles, taunting]

HUGH *[simultaneous with Emcee]*

You're not going to prosecute a goddamned one of 'em—Calley . . . Medina . . . or any of the bastards that ordered this. You're not gonna do a goddamn thing!

EMCEE

What do you say, Mr. President, Committee members: Can we blame him? Can we,

Congressman Rivers? Can we finally find a way to blame him?

THIRD LANDING

1: Postcard

[Hugh sits, reading a newspaper. He picks up the telephone receiver and dials, holds the phone to his ear.]

Hello, yeah, I . . .
I . . . I just . . . I just . . .
I just wanted
to talk to Larry.

Can I leave him a message?

Tell him I called.
Tell him Hugh called.
Tell him . . . thanks for the postcard.
Maybe I'll see him soon.

Yeah, I'm still in the hospital.
No, it's not looking good,
but you know what they say—
nobody lives forever.

[Hugh hangs up the phone]

Oh Larry, you were just a kid
that morning
sitting on top of the world.
You and Glenn courageous,
just boys,

just boys, really, that morning.
(My Lord, what a morning)
Your country gone crazy.

2: Fishing

Once more the ditch
An ocean of bodies now
Too many to count
Small and smaller
Glistening
in the morning sun . . .

Walking on bodies,
we fish out a little boy.
I hold him by his small shirt.

A little boy—a little boy about Bucky's age—
limp, but breathing.

He looks at us like he's a thousand miles away
on some distant mountain.

He's as light as a leaf.

I take him in my arms.
I fly him out of hell . . . ah!

I bring him to a nun in Quang Ngai City.

I always wanted to fly.

[TV comes on for a brief moment. Hugh is asleep in the chair. Someone turns the TV off, and all the lights go out.]