



The College of Fine Arts
at Webster University presents

AN EVENING WITH KURT VONNEGUT

featuring the St. Louis premiere of the

Vonnegut text for

L' HISTOIRE DU SOLDAT

by composer Igor Stravinsky

Arranged and coordinated by Professor Harry James Cargis

Webster



he story of Eddie Slovik is the story of a man who didn't count. Anyone familiar with the writings of Kurt Vonnegut will understand what attracted him to this person: his littleness, his dismal life, his tragic death.

As Vonnegut suggests in all of his writings, everyone counts, everyone matters. He would disagree, I think, with Aristotle's requirement that the hero of a tragedy must fall from a high place. Slovik is a real life character who could have been the protagonist in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*. Slovik mattered because he was.

The male character in *L'Histoire du Soldat* was a petty criminal, a loser. Over a six-month period he embezzled \$59.60 from a drug store and went to prison where no one visited him. This made him ineligible for military service at the outbreak of World War II. But by the time he was 22 he had married and straightened his life out; the Army "overlooked" his early past and drafted him.

In less than a year he was in the front lines in one of the most vicious confrontations of the conflict. He deserted, surrendered to authorities, was tried and sentenced to death. There were 40,000 other deserters during the war; 49 were sentenced to death. Only Slovik was executed (under Dwight Eisenhower's orders).

He died bravely; he knew what he was facing. It seems that the uncertainties of combat were what frightened him. As Vonnegut shows here, with the music of Igor Stravinsky—one of the major 20th century artists—this is a tragic story, tragic for an individual, tragic for our world.

Harry James Cargas,
Professor Emeritus,
Literature and Language Department

L'HISTOIRE DU SOLDAT

Music by
Igor Stravinski

Written by
Kurt Vonnegut

Created and Choreographed by Patricia Birch

Directed by
Seth Gordon

Musical Direction by
A. Robert Johnson
aka de Neveu

Cast

General Art Romans*
MP Bill Lynch*
Soldier Jacob Knoll '98
Red Cross Girl Anne Devereaux Vega '97
Dancer Constance Noyes '98
Dancer Saki Tsukiy '99

* indicates members of Actors' Equity Association

Special Thanks

Marilyn and Sam Fox, Margie W. May, John May &
Sally Levy and family,

Dorothy Marshall Englis, Carole Tucker, John Wylie,
Allen Carl Larson, Virginia Johnson & Alamo Military Collectibles,

Production Staff

Production Manager	Matt Lacey '97
Scenic Designer	Dunsi Dai
Costume Designer	Melissa McVay '97
Lighting Designer	Matthew Gross '97
Assistant Choreographer	Gary Hubler
Technical Director	Thomas Begley
Stage Manager	Amy Gornet '97
Assistant Stage Manager	Melissa Sorenson '00
Accompanist	Alice Nelson
Casting Director	Carrie Houk
Orchestra Contractor	Allen Carl Larson
House Manager	Tanya Zivkovic '97

Orchestra

Violin	Haruka Watanabe
Bass	Ann Muehimann
Clarinet	Elsie Parker
Bassoon	Donita Bauer
Trumpet	Malcolm McDuffee
Trombone	David Bruenger
Percussion	Michael Faris

Participating Schools

- Webster Groves High School: William Gussner, Superintendent;
Pat Voss, Principal; Ed Grooms Drama Faculty
- Nerinx Hall High School: Sr. Barbara Roche, S.L. President;
Mary Schenkenberg, Principal; Maggie Ryan, Drama Faculty
- St. Louis University High School: Father Robert Costello, President;
Dr. Robert Bannister, Principal; Joseph Schulte, Drama Faculty

Patricia Birch

Creator and Choreographer

Patricia Birch, the creator and choreographer of the production, has received two Emmys and four Tony nominations. Most recently she won an Emmy for her direction of the two-part PBS special, *Celebrating Gershwin* and for *Natalie Cole, Unforgettable with Love*. Birch has done the musical staging and choreography for the original Broadway and off-Broadway productions of *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*, *The Me Nobody Knows*, *A Little Night Music*, *Grease*, *Candide*, *Pacific Overtures*, *Zoot Suit*, and *Gilda Radner: Live From New York*.

A. Robert Johnson

Musical Director

A. Robert Johnson, aka de Neveu, a graduate of The Juilliard School is a music director and conductor. He made his New York conducting debut on February 12, 1972 in Town Hall during the New York City radio station WNYC's Annual Festival of American Music. In 1969 Johnson resigned his position in the horn section of the New York Philharmonic to found the New York Philomusica, which is known for its stimulating programming and probing interpretation of both traditional and unfamiliar music. It is now in its 25th season. The Stravinsky/Vonnegut project is one of numerous original programmatic ideas for which Johnson, through the New York Philomusica, has become widely known and respected.

Seth Gordon

Director

Seth Gordon, director, is the associate producer of Primary Stages in New York City, an off-Broadway theater company dedicated to producing new plays. He has directed productions at many different theaters in New York, in addition to Primary Stages, and has served as resident director for the Carnegie Mellon Showcase of New Plays in Pittsburgh. He also recently served as a panelist for the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts.

**This is a presentation of
The College of Fine Arts**

Peter Sargent—Dean

Byron Grant—Chair, Department of Theatre and Dance

The Conservatory of Theatre Arts at Webster offers B.F.A. degrees in regional theatre, musical theatre, design/tech, and stage management, and is the only undergraduate institution in the country that works directly with two major regional performing arts organizations, The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis and The Opera Theatre of St. Louis. The Conservatory presents six fully produced shows a year, including two musicals.

Gary Hubler—Director of Dance Program

Dance majors at Webster have the opportunity to perform with two campus-based dance companies. The Webster Dance Ensemble presents three major concerts per year. Webster Dance Theatre is a professional company that includes advanced students and area professionals, both B.A. and B.F.A. degrees are offered.

Tom Lang—Chair, Department of Art

The learning environment in the art department emphasizes personal expression, alternative approaches and experimentation. Students work toward a specialized B.F.A. degree or a general B.A. degree in art with an emphasis in studio art or art history and criticism. An art education emphasis is also available.

Allen Carl Larson—Acting Chair, Department of Music

Performance opportunities are an integral part of Webster's music program. The primary focus of the music department is instruction designed to prepare students for careers in commercial music, composition, jazz studies, music education, pedagogy, and performance. Complementing the impressive environment of St. Louis, a full and varied season is offered by the department. The season includes student and faculty recitals, as well as performances by guest artists and campus musical organizations.

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