

1/23 - 2/18, 2024

At Theatrical Outfit

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BRUCE COHEN

REMEMBER

THIS:

The Lesson of Jan Karski

by **Clark Young**
and **Derek Goldman**

A Co-Production with
The Breman Museum



A STUDY GUIDE

**"TRANSFORMATIVE THEATRE ... NEVER-TO-BE-FORGOTTEN"
- CHICAGO TRIBUNE**

REMEMBER THIS: *The Lesson of Jan Karski* comes to Atlanta direct from an acclaimed off-Broadway and international run. This dazzling, tour de force solo performance tells the story of Jan Karski, a Polish diplomat and freedom fighter during WWII who battled his way across Europe to bring evidence of the Holocaust to Western governments. From the Warsaw ghetto to the Oval Office, this daring and incredible story explores how this self-described "insignificant little man" risked his life in an act of extraordinary moral courage. Starring Andrew Benator, star of last season's hit comedy *The White Chip*, you won't want to miss this "soul-searing masterpiece" (*Hudson Valley One*).

Run Time: 90 minutes with no intermission

Please Note: *Remember This: The Lesson of Jan Karski* explores mature themes around human suffering as it relates to the Holocaust & contains strong language and simulated self-harm. We recommend this show for audiences ages thirteen and older.

About Jan Karski



Jan Karski was a courier for the Polish Underground resistance during World War II. In 1942, Karski volunteered to walk through the Warsaw Ghetto and a Nazi extermination camp before traveling to London to report to the Allied Nations on the conditions of occupied Poland and, specifically, the Holocaust. He personally delivered his eyewitness account - and urgent appeal for intervention on behalf of the Jewish people - to British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, and later, President Franklin D. Roosevelt in the Oval Office. His report was ignored. After the war, Karski earned his PhD at Georgetown University, where he was a beloved Professor in the School of Foreign Service for 40 years. Considering himself largely a failure and "an insignificant little man," Karski didn't share his story for decades until filmmaker Claude Lanzmann persuaded him to speak of his experiences for the first time in the celebrated documentary, "Shoah." Karski was made an honorary citizen of Israel and was awarded the distinction, "Righteous Among the Nations," by Yad Vashem. Karski died in Washington, D.C. in July 2000. President Obama awarded Karski a posthumous Presidential Medal of Freedom on May 29, 2012, at a White House ceremony.

The Play's Development

Originally conceived as an ensemble production starring David Strathairn, the play was first performed in its current form as a solo performance in November 2019 as a featured part of the Centennial Celebration Weekend of Georgetown's School of Foreign Service, and then in London in January 2020 as part of the 75th Anniversary Commemoration of the Liberation of Auschwitz, in partnership with Human Rights Watch. Following delays due to the pandemic, the play had a critically acclaimed premiere at the Shakespeare Theater Company in the Fall of 2021, and then traveled to the Chicago Shakespeare Theatre shortly after for another hugely successful and acclaimed run. It returned to Georgetown University's Gonda Theater in the Spring of 2022 before moving to Bilbao, Spain as a part of The Well-being Summit for Social Change. This fall, the production completed a critically acclaimed and extended Off-Broadway premiere in New York at Theatre for a New Audience and next moved to Berkeley Repertory Theatre in California for three weeks in December, 2022. The production traveled to Poland for a two-week tour of four cities in early 2023. The production will be remounted at Theatrical Outfit in Atlanta, GA for a four-week run in January of 2024 with actor Andrew Benator as Jan Karski.



Actor David Strathairn (right) at Georgetown University

Theatrical Outfit's Production Team



Andrew Benator
Actor



Clark Young
Co-Playwright



Derek Goldman
Co-Playwright & Director



Matt Torney
Co-Director

This production is co-produced by



The William Breman Jewish Heritage Museum
www.thebreman.org

Exploratory Questions and Activities for *Remember This: The Lessons of Jan Karski* by Clark Young & Derek Goldman

1.) An early lesson that Karski learns in his experience as a war refugee is "There is no such thing as good nations and bad nations. Each individual has infinite capacity to do good and infinite capacity to do evil." How does this relate to the lie he tells in order to escape his captivity? How does it later inform his moral stance against the Holocaust?

2.) Early on in *Remember This*, Karski poses the question "What is your duty as an individual?" List **three** personal sacrifices that Karski makes in his mission to warn governments and individuals of the approaching horrors of the Holocaust. Describe an incident or situation that would motivate you to make similar sacrifices.

3.) Think of an unjust situation, either locally or nationally, that you feel passionate about. Think of the lessons that Karski learned from his experiences during the war and the actions that he took to raise global awareness of those injustices. Think of three strategies that you might use to make others aware of the local or national injustices that you have witnessed.

4.) What was Karski's mother's *dream* for him? How might this dream have informed the actions that he took in his adult life?

5.) Being a Polish refugee, and eventually a soldier in the underground resistance during the war, describe **three** specific events that allowed Karski to cultivate empathy for the plight of Jewish people in war torn Europe?

6.) The authors have structured this play as a *one-person show*, with one actor occasionally playing multiple roles but primarily Jan Karski. Compose a **two-page one-person show** that focuses on a person trying to convince someone else of an injustice they have witnessed.

Consider the following:

- What is the nature of the injustice (historical or contemporary?)
- Who is the person they are talking to?
- What do they *need* from this person?
- What is at stake for them if they don't receive this person's assistance?

7.) Karski strives to be a rescuer and resister in the face of overwhelming odds. He used tactics such as: information, persuasion, and eyewitness testimony. What other methods and approaches for change do you think he employed? Thinking of some of the world's problems today, which of Karski's tactics could you use to make a difference? In what ways can you apply these tactics in your own communities?

* Further resources for the play can be found at the Jan Karski Educational Foundation.
<https://www.jankarski.net/en/rt/about-the-remember-this-project-2.html>

Social Studies Standards (9-12)

SSSocSC4 Analyze the function of social institutions as agents of social control across differing societies and times. (a., b.,c are highlighted in *Remember This.*)

- a. Analyze the function of social institutions in society, include: family, education, religion, economy, government/politics, health care, and media.
- b. Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of various social institutions.
- c. Evaluate other possible social institutions such as sports.
- d. Analyze the functions and inequalities of the criminal justice system in relationship to a society's construct of crime and punishment.
- e. Explain the role of total institutions.
- f. Analyze the re-socialization process.

SSSocIC1 Analyze forms of social inequality. (a. and b. are highlighted in *Remember This.*)

- a. Explain how unequal distribution of power and resources affects the life chances of individuals in that society.
- b. Analyze the sources and effects of stratification on the basis of social class, race and ethnicity, gender, age, and emotional, mental, and physical disabilities.
- c. Analyze the sources of global stratification and inequality.
- d. Evaluate the impact of global stratification and inequality on global relations.

Dramatic Writing Standards (9-12)

TAHSTL.RE.1 Evaluate various aspects of dramatic arts literature using appropriate supporting evidence. (d and e are highlighted in *Remember This.*)

- a. Compare and summarize theatre literature from various historical periods, cultures, and styles.
- b. Develop and apply a set of comprehensive criteria for theatre text analysis.
- c. Compare and contrast theatre texts to live/film performance.

d. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone.)

e. Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

World History Standards (9-12)

SSWH18 Examine the major political and economic factors that shaped world societies between World War I and World War II.

a. Determine the causes and results of the Russian Revolution from the rise of the Bolsheviks under Lenin to Stalin's first Five Year Plan.

b. Describe the rise of fascism in Europe and Asia by comparing the policies of Benito Mussolini in Italy, Adolf Hitler in Germany, and Hirohito in Japan.

c. Describe the nature of totalitarianism and the police state that existed in the Soviet Union, Germany, and Italy and how they differ from authoritarian governments.

d. Explain the aggression and conflict leading to World War II in Europe and Asia; include the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, the Spanish Civil War, the Rape of Nanjing in China, and the German violation of the Treaty of Versailles

SSWH19 Demonstrate an understanding of the global political, economic, and social impact of World War II.

a. Describe the major conflicts and outcomes, include: North African, Pacific, and European theatres.

b. Identify Nazi ideology and policies that led to the Holocaust and its consequences.