

EDUCATIONAL DEPARTMENT



# AFTER THE REVOLUTION

BY AMY HERZOG  
DIRECTED BY TONY ESTRELLA

sandra feinstein-

**GAM**  
theatre

## STUDY GUIDE

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*This study guide was prepared by Susie Schutt, Tracy Morreo, and Steve Kidd*

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# Prologue

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Dear Educator,

The Sandra Feinstein-Gamm Theatre is pleased to offer you this study guide to share with your students designed to prepare them for our production of *After the Revolution* by Amy Herzog.

This Study Guide is broken into five acts. In the first act, you will find a few more reminders for you and your students about the nature of performance and what is expected of all audience members attending the theatre. In the second act, you will find a biography of Herzog, the history of the play, and a breakdown of the characters. In Act Three, Director Tony Estrella articulates his vision and ideas behind our production. Act Four examines the dominant themes in *After the Revolution* and includes ways to integrate the production into your curriculum. Our Study Guide closes with Act Five, which offers activities for the classroom. At the end of our study guide, you will be able to find information on how to learn more about The Gamm's Educational offerings.

As part of our Stage-to-School program, I would like to offer a workshop with your classroom/school before your visit to The Gamm in order to help prepare your students for the play. In these workshops, I will not only discuss the play and the concept(s) in our production, but I will also get students out of their seats and up on their feet engaging in the themes, motifs and language of the play. This type of kinesthetic engagement with language and literature ensures students a deep comprehension and the sort of text-to-self connection that encourages students to invest in reading and literacy-learning.

Much of this work was discovered, developed and inspired by the ArtsLiteracy Project at Brown University. I personally had the good fortune to work with "ArtsLit" and the strategies and models for learning developed by the organization continue to serve as a foundational pedagogical tool for all Gamm Education programming.

Some benefits of ArtsLiteracy learning include:

- **Community Building in Your Classroom** (Applied Learning New Standards: A1; A2; A5)
- **Inspiration and Background on the Artist** (English Language Arts New Standards: E1; E2; E3; E5; E6; Applied Learning New Standards: A2; A3; A5)
- **Entering and Comprehending Text** (English Language Arts Standards: E1; E2; E3; E5)

- **Creating Text for Performance** (English Language Arts Standards: E1; E2; E3; E5)
- **Performing in Your Class** (Applied Learning Standards: A1; A2; A3; A4; A5)
- **Reflecting on Your Performance** (E2; E3; A1; A2; A5)

Moreover, the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) has developed GSE's (Grade Span Expectations) and GLE's (Grade Level Expectations) to help "capture the "big ideas" of reading that can be assessed."

We believe that all of our Literacy through Performance work helps to develop the following literacy skills.

### **WRITING**

- W-2: Writing in Response to Literary Text (showing understanding of ideas in a text). A "text" covers not only books and plays, but film and other kinds of media.
- W-3: Making Analytical judgments about text (how good was it? What stuck out?)
- W-4: Creating a Storyline
- W-5: Applying Narrative Strategies (how did they tell the story?)
- W-14: Reflective Essay

### **ORAL COMMUNICATION**

- OC-1: Interactive Listening (how well students listen; how much information they pick up hearing something once – asking a student to write a comprehensive account of a play certainly works)
- OC-2: Making Presentations (each senior in Rhode Island will be asked to put on a senior exhibition, capstone project or portfolio that includes a public demonstration on a particular subject. Learning about public performance is an obvious tie-in).

### **READING**

- R-4: Initial Understanding of Literary Texts (where is the climax in a story? How would you set this play in contemporary society?)
- R-5: Analysis and Interpretation of Literary Text/Citing Evidence
- R-11: Reading Fluency and Accuracy (part of the benefits of reading a script out over and over in rehearsal is an increase in reading fluency and accuracy)

Please see more exercises and strategies for ArtsLiteracy learning at [www.artslit.org](http://www.artslit.org). We would love to hear from you about your experiences

using this study guide. It is a great help to us as we build on our education program from year to year.

Steve Kidd  
Resident Actor/Education Director  
The Sandra Feinstein-Gamm Theatre

## ACT I: Theatre Audience Etiquette

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What is so exciting about attending the theatre - especially in a smaller space such as the Gamm - is that it is live! Live theatre is different from other forms of entertainment; unlike film and television you are encouraged to pay close attention and actively engage your imagination.

You are mere feet (and sometimes inches!) away from the actors. Thus, you the audience, play an active role in the experience. The actors can see and hear you and any distracting behavior (talking, text messaging, unwrapping candy, the ringing of cell phones, etc) can affect the actor's concentration, disrupt the performance, and ruin the experience for other audience members. So we ask that you refrain from talking during a performance, but welcome your applause and laughter. Thank you!

### **The Nature of Performance**

Controversial British playwright Sarah Kane once observed: "There's always going to be a relationship between the material and that audience that you don't really get with a film... People can walk out or change channels or whatever; it doesn't make any difference to the performance... It's a completely reciprocal relationship between the play and the audience."

The performance you see will never be precisely the same, for it will never have the same audience; every performance is unique. Theatre scholar Robert Cohen observed the essential paradox of live performance:

- It is unique to the moment, yet it is repeatable.
- It is spontaneous, yet it is rehearsed.
- It is participatory, yet it is presented.
- It is real, yet it is simulated.
- The actors are themselves, yet they are characters.
- The audience is involved, yet it remains apart.

“Theatre is not just another genre, one among many. It is the only genre in which, today and every day, now and always, living human beings address and speak to other human beings... It is a place for human encounter, a space for authentic human existence...”

-Vaclav Havel, President of the Czech Republic and Playwright

(From Robert Cohen's *Theatre: Brief Version*)

**Discuss with your students the particular demands and benefits of attending a live performance. Perhaps have them brainstorm how theatre is different from film, television and sporting events.**

## **ACT II: Amy Herzog & *After the Revolution***

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**Amy Herzog** was born in Highland Park New Jersey. She holds an M.F.A. in Playwriting from the Yale School of Drama (Audrey Wood Scholarship) and a B.A. in English from Yale University (Henry H. Strong Prize in American Literature). She received the 2008 Helen Merrill Award for Aspiring Playwrights, was the 2010 Playwright in Residence at Ars Nova, and was awarded the prestigious Whiting Writer's Award for her play *Bellville* in 2011. Her plays have been produced at Ensemble Studio Theater, American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco, The Williamstown Theater Festival, The Actors Theatre of Louisville and the Yale School of Drama; she has had readings and workshops at Manhattan Theater Club, New York Stage and Film, Arena Stage in Washington, D.C., The Black Dahlia in Los Angeles, Ars Nova, and The Rattlestick Playwrights Theatre, among others. She recently completed commissions for the Yale

Repertory Theatre and the Williamstown Theatre Festival. She currently teaches playwriting at Yale lives in Park Slope Brooklyn.

**About *After the Revolution*:**

*After the Revolution* was commissioned by the Williamstown Theater Festival in Massachusetts and was performed at Playwrights Horizons Off-Broadway. It received a Lillian Hellman Award and was named in the Annual Best Plays Theater Yearbook as one of the ten Best Plays of 2010-2011. *After the Revolution* was inspired by Amy's own Marxists grandparents, as was her play *4,000 Miles*.

**Characters and Setting**

*After the Revolution* centers on the late Joe Joseph, a fictional famed Marxist and activist, and his granddaughter Emma who has started an advocate's organization in his honor and memory. It takes place in New York and Boston in May and June of 1999, a year and a half after Joe Joseph's death.

*Ben Joseph*, Joe's middle child

*Mel*, Ben's Partner

*Leo Joseph*, Joe's oldest child

*Vera*, Joe's second wife

*Emma Joseph*, Ben's youngest daughter, an activist

*Miguel*, Emma's boyfriend

*Morty*, a donor to Emma's fund

*Jess*, Ben's older daughter

## ACT III: Our Production

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### From the Director:

#### Decency

*In such a world of conflict, a world of victims and executioners, it is the job of thinking people, as Albert Camus suggested, not to be on the side of the executioners.*

- Howard Zinn

*"And you? Perhaps a bit to the left?"*

*"I believe in kindness," he said. "Compassion. We don't have a party."*

-Alan Furst, *Dark Voyage*

Those among us of a certain age and even casual students of history are probably familiar with the following exchange from the Army-McCarthy hearings of 1954:

*Joseph Welch: "...If it were in my power to forgive you for your reckless cruelty I would do so. I like to think I am a gentle man but your forgiveness will have to come from someone other than me."*

*Senator Joseph McCarthy: "May I say that, uh, Mr. Welch talks about this being cruel and reckless—"*

*Joseph Welch(interrupting): "Senator, may we not drop this? ...Let us not assassinate this lad further, Senator. You've done enough. Have you no sense of decency, sir? At long last, have you left no sense of decency?\*"*

Though the context and eventual demise of McCarthy's communist "witch hunt" of the early 1950's is far more complex, the legend of its proceedings credits the gentlemanly army lawyer Joseph Welch with quite possibly America's supreme "J'accuse" moment, a historically stunning revelation that the Emperor (in this case a Senator from Wisconsin) was now and had always been stark naked. So whatever Welch's dramatic remarks achieved practically, their powerful simple eloquence will forever be a symbol of what so many wanted to but couldn't find the courage or circumstance to say.

What gets lost in the above transcript or even an audio recording of the event is what happens in the pause after Welch's "forgiveness will have to come from someone other than me." He bows his head before the microphone with a look of wizened sadness and disgust, for McCarthy, for himself, for the whole of these contemptible proceedings, the outpouring of what Arthur Miller dubbed the "built-in pestilence of the human mind." Then shaking his head back and forth he utters something between a sharp breath of exasperation and an exclamatory, whispered "damn" before leaning back against his chair in *momentary* resignation. McCarthy takes his cue and like a spent ham actor at the end of a long run drones out the next part of the tired, third rate script. But Welch has had enough, he leans back towards the microphone... the rest is history. It is a moment of revelatory humanness, a *catharsis*. A seemingly modest "thinking" man recognizes his commonality with the "victims" and confronts the "executioner."

Amy Herzog's brilliant *After the Revolution* invites each of us, like Joseph Welch, to indulge that pause, to take the measure of our own dignity so as to understand the full breadth of others'. It is a play about identity and ideals, family politics and geo-politics that demands we move beyond the *political*, that is the oversimplified view that sees human as pawns in a battle of ideologies, that we are red or blue cheerleaders screaming from the sidelines to the clichéd, soundbite cacophony of the culture wars. Yes, identity matters, ideals matter, family matters, all of which is to say humanity matters, so then must decency.

We are proud to launch season 28 by introducing Amy Herzog to RI audiences. This production along with her newest, *Belleville*, and the long running Off-Broadway hit *4000 Miles* have trumpeted the arrival of a major new voice in the American Theatre. Tough-minded, unsentimental and complex, hers is deeply personal and powerfully political writing that calls to mind Ibsen, Miller and most closely, Clifford Odets classic *Awake and Sing* (staged here at the Gamm in 2009). *After The Revolution* was first produced at the Williamstown Theater Festival two summers ago, followed by an acclaimed NYC run. Since then friends and colleagues who had seen it would contact me and say, "I just saw a great GAMM play." I couldn't agree more. Enjoy.

-Tony Estrella

\*This clip is a great conversation starter and is available on You Tube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Po5GIFba5Yg>.

## Dramaturgical Notes:

By Jennifer Madden, *Gamm Theatre Resident Scholar*

### All in the Family: The Work of Amy Herzog

*New York Times* critic Charles Isherwood observes of playwright Amy Herzog, "It is rare for a young playwright to be in such confident command of all the theater's resources."

33-year old Herzog, a graduate of the Yale School of Drama, has quickly established a reputation as a formidable playwright, interrogating complicated familial relationships and Leftist politics with rigor and bracing lack of sentimentality. Her two most successful plays, *After the Revolution* and *4000 Miles*, are semi-autobiographical, drawing heavily from her extended family's radical past. As in *After the Revolution*, Herzog's paternal step-grandfather, Julius Joseph, was also a blacklisted Communist. What's more, his activities as a Soviet spy were publicly revealed in 1999, causing intense reverberations within the Joseph/Herzog clan. (Side note #1: Herzog's biological grandfather Arthur Herzog Jr., wrote the Billie Holiday classic "God Bless the Child").

Herzog's 95-year-old grandmother, Leepee Joseph, still politically active and unrepentantly Marxist, provides even richer source material, serving as the inspiration for the firebrand Vera Joseph, a character appearing in both *After the Revolution* and *4000 Miles*. (Side note #2: Like the protagonist in *4000 Miles*, Herzog once rode her bike from New Haven to San Francisco as a Habitat for Humanity fundraiser). Themes of inter-generational dynamics run throughout much of her work; the present constantly interacts with the past. Emma Joseph shares deep sympathies with 80-ish family friend and benefactor Morty and intensely spars with Vera. Herzog's writing (described as "surefooted and quietly brilliant" by critic Gerard Raymond) rejects cliché; sage elder gently passing down hard-earned wisdom or young upstart ignorantly infantilizing her elders. Herzog's characters are at turns tender and tough-minded, generous and cruel. Each side respects the other enough to tell hard truths and treat each other like intellectual equals and adults.

Herzog has received several major writing awards and teaches playwriting at Yale. Other works include: *The Wendy Play*, *Hungry* and *Belleville*.

## Fifty Shades of Gray: Amy Herzog's Revolution

*It can be hard, can't it? Even for very bright, well-meaning people.  
In a tough situation, to know what's right?*

**-Morty, *After the Revolution***

Revolution by its very nature is violent and cataclysmic. It destroys existing structures while creating new forms, leaving behind upheaval and chaos. Playwright Amy Herzog's *After the Revolution* examines revolutions both political and personal, and the carnage they leave in their wake. The Josephs, a family of proud Marxists, are stunned by revelations concerning their revered patriarch, Joe Joseph, a blacklisted Communist. As a family, they are forced to reexamine their mythology and very identity.

No one is more stunned, however, than Joe's granddaughter and political heir, Emma Joseph—a young lawyer who recently established the Joe Joseph Fund, an organization devoted to battling social and legal injustice. At the time of the play's revelation, the organization's focus is the exoneration of Mumia Abu-Jamal. The former Black Panther and outspoken radical was convicted and sentenced to death in 1982 for the murder of police officer Daniel Faulkner. Abu-Jamal's defenders believe race and radical politics erased any possibility of a fair trial, making him a global symbol of judicial impartiality and institutionalized racism. (In 2011, Abu-Jamal's sentence was reduced to life in prison.)

Historically, many American Communists regarded systematic racism as a symptom of a hopelessly corrupt and decaying political structure; and, like civil rights activists, were widely demonized for their views. Of course, any discussion about American Communism must include convicted Soviet spies Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. Rosenberg supporters, like those of Abu-Jamal, believed the couple were tragic victims of both their unpopular ideology and the national tenor of hysterical McCarthyism, making a fair trial all but impossible. Yet in 2008, after decades of proclaiming his innocence, co-defendant Morton Sobell admitted that he and Julius Rosenberg were indeed Soviet spies.

After seeing Herzog's play, Robert Meeropol, the Rosenbergs' younger son, wrote:

Those of us who grew up as "red diaper babies" were taught that the right-wing lies and the left tells the truth. More specifically, the line was that during the McCarthy period reactionaries, conservatives, middle of the roaders and most liberals falsely accused and persecuted communists of being spies for the Soviet Union. We were taught as children that those

accused were guilty of nothing more than holding opinions that were opposed to those who were in power. But while many of the charges against left-wingers were false, reality was more complicated than we were led to believe. The right-wing had not cornered the market on dishonesty. The scenario of discovery and betrayal depicted in *After the Revolution* played out repeatedly in progressive families across the country as a new generation learned to deal with shades of gray."

These are the shades of gray Herzog explores. She refuses to offer a one-sided polemic and she takes aim at the failings of the political left, as well as the right. What if Abu-Jamal, like Julius Rosenberg, is in fact guilty of his accused crimes? While this might lessen his efficacy as a useful political symbol would it erase the very real truth of entrenched racism? Can a symbol still have power and meaning if its nature changes? Does it lessen the value of a charitable institution like the Rosenberg Fund for Children or the Joe Joseph Fund? For many, Abu-Jamal's innocence or guilt is beside the point, serving as a critique of an inherently corrupt system. This, ultimately, is Emma Joseph's struggle: that there may be more than one side to a story and more than one truth.

## ACT IV: Background, Themes, & Questions for Discussion

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Use this section to spark a conversation with your students about the material they will see in the play, to assign a research or a writing assignment. Their familiarity with these issues will enrich their viewing experience.

### Communism, McCarthyism and HUAC

**Communism** is a political theory derived from Karl Marx, advocating class war resulting in a class-less society in which all property is publicly owned and each person works and is paid according to their abilities and needs. The **House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC)** was created in 1938 to investigate alleged disloyalty and subversive activities on the part of private citizens, public employees, and those organizations suspected of having Communist ties, especially registered members of the American Communist Party. In the post World War II atmosphere of fear and contempt for the Soviet Union, HUAC's activities commanded broad popular support and consistently attracted major headlines. Through its power to subpoena witness and hold people in contempt of Congress, HUAC often pressured witnesses to surrender names and other information

that could lead to the apprehension of Communists and Communist sympathizers. Committee members often branded witnesses as "red" if they refused to comply or hesitated in answering committee questions. More importantly, however, the questioning style and examination techniques employed by HUAC served as the model upon which **Senator Joseph McCarthy** would conduct his investigative hearings in the early 1950s.

In *After the Revolution*, Joe Joseph has been put on trial, accused of being a Communist spy for Russia because of his government work and affiliation with the American Communist Party. Communism was seen as a threat to Capitalism, freedom and democracy in the United States during a time known as the **Second Red Scare**. It lasted roughly from 1950 to 1954 and was characterized by heightened fears of Communist influence on American institutions and espionage by Soviet agents. During this time, Republican U.S. Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin began anti-Communist pursuits, and thus "**McCarthyism**" was born. McCarthyism is the practice of making accusations of disloyalty, subversion, or treason without proper regard for evidence. The term McCarthyism was originally coined to criticize Senator McCarthy, but soon took on a broader meaning, describing the excesses of similar efforts. It is now used more generally to describe unsubstantiated accusations, as well as attacks on the character or patriotism of political adversaries. During the "**McCarthy era**", thousands of Americans were accused of being Communists or Communist sympathizers (*Including Playwright Arthur Miller, see below*) and became the subject of aggressive investigations and questioning before government panels, committees and agencies. Suspicions were often given credence despite inconclusive or questionable evidence, and the level of threat posed by a person's real or supposed leftist associations or beliefs was often greatly exaggerated. Many people suffered loss of employment and/or destruction of their careers; some even suffered imprisonment. Most of these punishments came about through trial verdicts later overturned and laws that would be declared unconstitutional. Following Senator McCarthy's censure, however, and his subsequent departure from the Senate, the American public grew increasingly wary of the "redbaiting" techniques employed by HUAC and others. The work of HUAC continued to decline in importance throughout the late 1950s and early 1960s until the committee itself was renamed the House Internal Security Committee in 1969, prefiguring its eventual abolition in 1975.

*Questions for discussion:*

- *How does Emma feel about her Grandfather, Joe Joseph, being a communist?*

- *What was Joe Joseph's experience being interrogated as part of the McCarthy trials?*
- *How does Emma's work through her organization, The Joe Joseph Foundation, relate to her grandfather's beliefs?*

## McCarthy on Trial

The Army v. McCarthy hearings lasted from April 22 to June 17, 1954. The media coverage greatly contributed to McCarthy's decline in popularity and his eventual censure by the Senate in December 1954. Show your students the clip of Senator McCarthy being tried by Attorney Welch, available on You Tube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Po5GIFba5Yg> and quoted by Tony Estrella in his essay *Decency* (above).

*Questions for discussion:*

- *What does Welch mean by decency? What does decency mean to you?*
- *Does Emma Joseph have decency toward her Grandfather, Joe Joseph?*

## *After the Revolution and The Crucible*

The shared medium and parallel themes of *After the Revolution* and *The Crucible*, which is part of the high school curriculum, make them a natural pairing for the classroom. You can use your own established lesson plans for *The Crucible* as an introduction to attending the performance of *After the Revolution*.

*The Crucible* was written by the American playwright Arthur Miller. Miller wrote the play as an allegory of **McCarthyism**, after speaking with his friend and collaborator Elia Kazan, who had appeared before HUAC in 1952. Later that year, Miller traveled to Salem, Massachusetts to research the witch trials of 1692 and the play opened in early 1953. When Miller applied in 1956 for a routine renewal of his passport, the **HUAC** subpoenaed him to appear before the committee. Before appearing, Miller asked the committee not to ask him to name names, to which the chairman agreed. When Miller attended the hearing the committee reneged on the chairman's promise and demanded the names of friends and colleagues who had participated in similar activities. Miller refused to comply, saying "I could not use the name of another person and bring trouble on him." As a result, a judge found Miller guilty of contempt of Congress in May 1957. However, in 1958, his conviction was overturned by

the court of appeals, which ruled that Miller had been misled by the chairman of the HUAC.

*Question for discussion:*

- *A crucible is a severe test or trial. What are the crucibles John Proctor and Emma Joseph face? How are they different or similar?*
- *Both lead characters take a stand for what they believe in at the cost of something else. What do they each sacrifice and for what cause?*
- *How does Miller's quote "I could not use the name of another person and bring trouble on him." relate to Emma's feelings about her Grandfather? How does it relate to John Proctor's view of himself?*

## **ACT V: Activities for the Classroom**

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### **Personal Writing**

Writers often say, write about what you know. Amy Herzog did just that, and based the characters of Joe Joseph and Vera on her own grandparents. *After the Revolution* is a great example of personal writing for students to use to start their own piece.

*Writing Prompts:*

- *What stories might you be able to develop based on the people who matter to you?*
- *What issue is of particular importance to you? If you could start a foundation like the fictional Joe Joseph Foundation, what would be your cause?*
- *Research historical accounts of McCarthy and HUAC trials. Write a fictionalized personal account of appearing before HUAC.*

### **Research**

In *After the Revolution* Emma's organization, The Joe Joseph Fund, is working to help **Mumia Abu-Jamal**. Have your students research Mr. Abu-Jamal. Why did Emma chose this cause for her fund? What do Joe and Mumia have in common?

### **Word Images Activity**

Description:

This activity helps students explore the multiple connotations of words. The

physicalization of words is also a way to help students begin to perform text at a basic level.

Preparation:

Select meaningful words from *The Crucible* or *After the Revolution* before your students read the text or see the performance; words might indicate essential themes or they might be new vocabulary for students. [i.e. Witch Hunt, ideals, hero]

Procedure:

1. Divide students into small groups.
2. Give each group a word.
3. Each group will brainstorm 5 words that relate to or embody the assigned word.
4. For each word, the entire group will create a frozen sculpture capturing that word.
5. Connect all of the images, performing one to the next, fluidly. Before each sculpture call out, chant, or sing the word the sculpture represents. Consider incorporating pieces of the text into the sculpture work.
6. Perform.

*Reflection:*

- *Which sculptures were surprising?*
- *Did any sculptures make you think about the words in a different way? What do you think this text might be about based on the words you heard?*
- *Return to these tableaux while reading *The Crucible* or after seeing *After the Revolution* and reflect on the images in the text and production.*

## Epilogue

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Thank you for joining us for *After the Revolution* and for working with this Study Guide to ensure the best, most comprehensive theatrical and educational experience. We hope you will join us for more student matinees at The Gamm this season. Our education program also provides classes for students in elementary, junior high and high school and our Gamm Summer Intensive is the thing to do for summer time theatre fun. To learn more, find us on the web at [www.gammtheatre.org](http://www.gammtheatre.org) or reach Steve Kidd at 401 723 4266 ext. 17.