



Subscribe  
Starting at 99 cents

Members  
Sign In

STAGE REVIEW

# A reckoning with the toll of war, on and off the battlefield, in Shakespeare & Company's 'Cry "Havoc!"'

By [Don Aucoin](#) | GLOBE STAFF AUGUST 08, 2016

LENOX — Powerful theater can ensue when an artist simply, or not so simply, decides to bear witness: This is what I saw, this is what I experienced, this is what I think it means, this is why you should care.

Stephan Wolfert commits himself body and soul to that mission in "Cry 'Havoc!,'" and the result is riveting.

The subject of Wolfert's raw and personal solo show, which he is now performing at Shakespeare & Company, is the psychological devastation of war, both on the battlefield and long after the soldier has left that battlefield.

It's a topic he knows firsthand as a former infantry officer and medic in the US Army and a veteran of the first Gulf War who struggled with sleeplessness and excessive drinking for years and one day found himself on the brink of suicide.



SHAKESPEARE & COMPANY

**Stephan Wolfert wrote and performs the solo show "Cry 'Havoc!'"**

“We were recruited at a psychologically malleable age, then we were wired for war, but at the end of our military services we were not un-wired from war,” says Wolfert. “We were not rewired for society.”

Being “wired for war” meant developing a deep camaraderie with your fellow soldiers, but it has also historically meant, Wolfert makes clear, dehumanizing the enemy in ways that have sometimes led to atrocities, such as the My Lai massacre during the Vietnam War.

In a smart touch that immeasurably deepens and enlarges “Cry ‘Havoc!,’” Wolfert enlists Shakespeare as a kind of coauthor. Interspersed among his own personal reminiscences and observations are well-chosen excerpts, passionately delivered by Wolfert, from “Henry V,” “Richard III,” “Titus Andronicus,” “Julius Caesar,” and “Coriolanus.” Virtually no corner of human experience was beyond the reach of Shakespeare’s imagination, and he was never more penetrating than on the subject of war. So when Wolfert describes or reenacts an episode of battle or trauma from the recent past, and then suddenly unleashes a burst of Shakespeare written more than four centuries ago, the effect is to bathe the episode in a searing, almost blinding light.

It was the experience of seeing “Richard III” in a Montana theater that inspired Wolfert to leave the military and embark on a career as an actor, director, and

Twitter Share 0

---

where he serves as director of veteran outreach and is a cast member in Bedlam’s acclaimed off-Broadway production of “Sense and Sensibility.” Bedlam’s artistic director, Eric Tucker, is at the helm of “Cry ‘Havoc!’” (Tucker recently directed and performed in the troupe’s alternating versions of “Twelfth Night” at Cambridge’s Central Square Theater, presented by Nora Theatre Company.)

Wolfert delivers a dynamic and physically expressive performance in “Cry ‘Havoc!’,” remaining in constant movement while attired in a dark T-shirt and jeans. Though his subject could scarcely be more grim, Wolfert periodically breaks the fourth wall to banter with the audience, an approach that undeniably builds a certain rapport but risks dissipating the spell he is working so hard to cast.

He emphasizes the timeless universality of the soldier’s experience, dwelling at length on the story of an African-American infantryman during World War I named Henry Lincoln Johnson, who overcame nearly impossible odds to save a comrade from the Germans, suffering two dozen wounds in the process. What haunts Wolfert — he choked up at the performance I saw, and in that moment did not appear to be acting — is imagining Johnson’s struggles after the soldier returned home. He notes Johnson died homeless and penniless, drinking himself to death by the age of 33.

Wolfert has his own harrowing tales to tell, including an account of holding in his arms a mortally wounded friend who had been struck in the face by a round of ammunition. Almost as wrenching is his story of an episode from only a decade ago that illustrated how much psychological fallout Wolfert was still coping with. Yet while he lays himself bare in “Cry ‘Havoc!’ ” Wolfert also makes demands on the audience. In particular, he forces us to think about our responsibility to and for the countless vets who were “wired for war” but are now back home, struggling day-to-day, sometimes behind closed doors but often in plain sight, before the eyes of a society that claims to honor their service.

## **CRY ‘HAVOC!’**

Play by Stephen Wolfert Directed by Eric Tucker Presented by Shakespeare &

**1 of 5 free articles. [Subscribe now](#)**

---

\$60, 413-637-3353, [www.shakespeare.org](http://www.shakespeare.org)

Comments

*Don Aucoin can be reached at [aucoin@globe.com](mailto:aucoin@globe.com).*

**Get Today’s Headlines from the Globe in your inbox:**

Enter your email address

SIGN UP

[Privacy Policy](#)

0 COMMENTS

Stay updated, right in your news feed.

## Most Popular in Arts

---



MUSIC REVIEW

### Drake, Future contrasting collaborators in Garden extravaganza

Their careers have been intertwined for years now, but Drake and Future showcased dynamically disparate styles in a Summer Sixteen Tour stop. [MORE...](#)

---



MOVIE REVIEW

### 'Hell or High Water' is a very welcome throwback

Chris Pine, Ben Foster, and Jeff Bridges star in the tale of bank-robbing brothers and the Texas Ranger on their trail. [MORE...](#)

---



ART REVIEW

### 'Kanreki' brings a bit of Japan to Falmouth

It is a big deal for Falmouth, the only US venue, to be hosting this prestigious show. [MORE...](#)

---



THING TANK

### From false friends to fake vacations

1 of 5 free articles. [Subscribe now](#)

---

Comments



MOVIE REVIEW

### Wiener takes all in rude, inspired 'Sausage Party'

The computer-animated food comedy is offensive and hilarious. [MORE...](#)

---



STAGE REVIEW

### Love unfolds in parallel universes in illuminating 'Constellations'

British playwright Nick Payne's drama, now at Berkshire Theatre Group, is a small gem about love, fate, and the infinite possibilities of life. [MORE...](#)

---



MOVIE REVIEW

## Meryl Streep hits off-note, on purpose, in 'Florence Foster Jenkins'

The actress portrays the woman known as "the worst singer in the world" in Stephen Frears's new movie. [MORE...](#)

---



MOVIE REVIEW

## In 'Don't Think Twice,' Birbiglia improves on improv

Mike Birbiglia's film "Don't Think Twice" looks at an improv troupe. [MORE...](#)

---



ALBUM REVIEW

## Young the Giant ponders outsiderdom on hopeful third album

On its third album, California pop quintet Young the Giant deals head-on with the experience of being outsiders in America. [MORE...](#)

---



## The Go-Go's say farewell with no regrets

The band's not breaking up, says drummer Gina Schock, but the members plan to stop touring after their present road trip. [MORE...](#)

---

BOOKS IN BRIEF | MICHAEL ANDOR BRODEUR

## On poetry



1 of 5 free articles. [Subscribe now](#)

---



Comments

ALBUM REVIEW | ROCK

## Muse, 'Drones'

British rock trio Muse swings for the fences with "Drones," a mostly strong new concept album. [MORE...](#)

---



THE WORD ON THE STREET

## New biography of acclaimed potter Guy Wolff

Suzanne Staubach has produced an illustrated biography that joins the details of Wolff's career with a lively discussion of the demands of craft and business.

[MORE...](#)



TV CRITIC'S CORNER

## Does Naz's change come too quickly?

Some are saying that in the riveting "The Night Of," Naz's change from an innocent to a criminal in jail feels too sudden. [MORE...](#)



## The week ahead

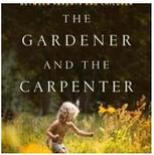
Picks for noteworthy concerts, shows, and other events in and around Boston this week. [MORE...](#)



COMMENTARY | TY BURR

## Donald Trump, Rupert Murdoch's dad, and the Butterfly Effect election

The Trump candidacy might never have happened if Rupert Murdoch's father hadn't lost his stutter. [MORE...](#)



BOOK REVIEW

## Alison Gopnik urges it's better to cultivate than control children

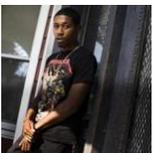
Psychologist argues against the idea that good parents can mold children into successful adults. [MORE...](#)

---

1 of 5 free articles. [Subscribe now](#)



The college is behind a broad-based effort to streamline how artists get paid for their work. [MORE...](#)



## Dorchester's Cousin Stizz takes the spotlight, quietly

"We don't over-promote. We put it out and see what happens, and if it gets love, then it gets love. It has to stay that way." [MORE...](#)



BOOK REVIEW

## 'American Ghost' by Hannah Nordhaus

The journalist braids personal memoir with historical research and resolute ghost

hunting in a narrative that investigates a restless spirit. [MORE...](#)

---



## Nigerian superstar King Sunny Adé returns with his big band, juju intact

A defining African star whose renown spanned the globe during the 1980s, King Sunny Adé continues to pursue his career and develop his sound. [MORE...](#)

---

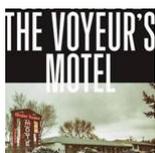


SEVEN BOOKS ABOUT...

## The history of America's national parks

I was naïve, it turns out, to think that national parks, those glorious emblems of America, sprang only from the better angels of our nature. [MORE...](#)

---

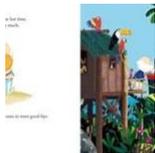


BOOK REVIEW

## Forget about disavowals. Gay Talese's new book is trainwreck anyway

The questions keep mounting about the recently released “The Voyeur’s Motel.” [MORE...](#)

---



SHORT STACK

## Love and loss in ‘Grandad’s Island’

Benji Davies’s “Grandad’s Island” metaphorically and movingly re-imagines the experience of loss. [MORE...](#)

---

1 of 5 free articles. [Subscribe now](#)

---



TV CRITIC'S CORNER

## Comments Tyler Henry makes celebrities cry

“Hollywood Medium” revolves around the work of Tyler Henry, a clairvoyant who goes for the emotional jugular. [MORE...](#)

---



## ‘Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner’ speaks to a new era

The play is still set in 1967, yet actor Malcolm-Jamal Warner is convinced the Huntington production remains relevant today. [MORE...](#)

---

James Taylor’s creativity flows anew



Taylor's first album of original songs in 13 years will be released next week.

[MORE...](#)



TV CRITIC'S CORNER

## Is '2 Broke Girls' the worst sitcom on TV?

Listening to the jokes on this show is like getting slapped across the cheeks repeatedly with a rubber ducky. [MORE...](#)



MOVIE REVIEW

## In 'Suicide Squad,' DC Comics reaches for the dark side

Will Smith, Margot Robbie, and Viola Davis are standouts in a movie that is like "The Dirty Dozen" with added superpowers. [MORE...](#)

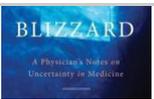


DANCE REVIEW

## Russian Grand Ballet's modest 'Swan Lake'

The performance of "Swan Lake" given by Russian Grand Ballet at the Strand Theatre on Saturday offered a chance to see a company from the Tchaikovsky/Petipa classic's home country in an intimate setting, and at prices lower than what you'd pay to see the Boston Ballet at the Opera House. [MORE...](#)

1 of 5 free articles. [Subscribe now](#)



## Dr. Steven Hatch investigates the spectrum of certainty

Comments

In "Snowball in a Blizzard," Hatch explores several questions for which definitive answers in medicine are not available. [MORE...](#)



## John Oliver begs you to pay for your news

Oliver gave an impassioned defense of journalism Sunday night on his HBO series "Last Week Tonight." [MORE...](#)

STAGE REVIEW

## A bumpy transition from page to stage for 'Confederacy of Dunces'



Though star Nick Offerman shines, Huntington Theatre Company's premiere adds up to less than the sum of its entertaining parts. [MORE...](#)

---



TV CRITIC'S CORNER

## 'Stranger Things,' Stephen King, and Steven Spielberg

The Netflix series bounces among a "Stand By Me" type kids story, a monster horror flick, and a paranoid thriller. [MORE...](#)

---



MOVIE REVIEW

## The battle's lost in this 'Macbeth'

People do evil and don't enjoy themselves in this doleful adaptation of the Shakespeare tragedy. [MORE...](#)

---



MOVIE REVIEW

## Hoping against hope in 'Miracles From Heaven'

Jennifer Garner stars in a film that recounts a based-on-fact tale of faith and medicine. [MORE...](#)

---



SUMMER MOVIES PREVIEW

## Coming to a theater near you: sequels, spinoffs, and remakes

**1 of 5 free articles. [Subscribe now](#)**

---

Comments

---



CLASSICAL NOTES

## After Paris tragedies, pianist ministered with music

Alexandre Tharaud, who performs with the Orchestre National de France at Symphony Hall, talks about playing after tragedy. [MORE...](#)

---



MUSIC REVIEW

## Rapper Vince Staples rejects hype in sold-out show

Rapper Vince Staples, who has vaulted to the forefront of contemporary hip-hop in just a few short years, ignored hype in a commanding Middle East show. [MORE...](#)

---



CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK | SEBASTIAN SMEE

## Picasso was wrong. Your child is not an artist.

The art of children has its charms, but it does not follow that every random squiggle and blob is a work of untutored genius. [MORE...](#)

---



## 'My Brother's Bomber' a labor of love and loss

Ken Dornstein confronts the people who are suspected of blowing up Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland. [MORE...](#)

---



## After 40 years, T.T. the Bear's calls it a night

One of the area's most beloved music clubs will open its doors for the last time tonight. [MORE...](#)

---



## Revisiting Marisol, years after her heyday

Maria Sol Escobar, known to everyone as Marisol, was famous in the 1960s and then forgotten. Now appreciation is rising again. [MORE...](#)

---



## You can finally see 'Hamilton'... kind of. A documentary will air on PBS.

**1 of 5 free articles. [Subscribe now](#)**

---

entirety of otherwise has yet to be determined. [MORE...](#)

Comments

---



MOVIE REVIEW

## 'The Lunchbox' is Indian food for the soul

The film is actually a romance in the classic tradition, a "Brief Encounter" transposed to the rhythms and flavors of modern-day Mumbai. [MORE...](#)

---



CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK

## WWII reenactment explores the theater of war

Welcome back to World War II and to the world of historical reenactments, which just might be one of the hottest forms of theater around. [MORE...](#)



MOVIE REVIEW

## Bryan Cranston puts the swagger in 'Trumbo'

Cranston plays Dalton Trumbo, who was as big a legend in the film industry as he was in his own mind. [MORE...](#)

---



KATHARINE WHITEMORE

## Six books examine the decline of the American middle class

These books that look at the decline of the middle class focus on economic inequality, special interest groups, and the political system. [MORE...](#)

---

## Daily guide of TV and radio highlights

Daily guide of TV and radio highlights [MORE...](#)

---



BOOK REVIEW

## Tale of an abandoned baby in Prohibition-era New England

"Leaving Lucy Pear" explores the impact of roads untaken on motherhood, class, and gender [MORE...](#)

---



BUZZSAW | MATTHEW GILBERT

**1 of 5 free articles. Subscribe now**

---



Often in the arts, it all comes down to timing and mood, to some mysterious combination of the piece itself and where you are in your life. [MORE...](#)

---



CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK

## A dazzling virtual reality rollout from New York Times

The Times has made a bold entry into this nascent news medium. [MORE...](#)

---



## The short story of the Stooges

There were many more than just three Stooges. [MORE...](#)

---



## So how did a hot fall book get published a month early? Ask Oprah and the Times.

In a surprise announcement, Winfrey announced that “The Underground Railroad” would be her pick for the next Oprah’s Book Club. [MORE...](#)



## Behind the Scene: ‘The Draft’

Director Diego Arciniegas solved many problems at once with his idea to cover portable garment racks with fabric. [MORE...](#)



DANCE REVIEW

## A lovely time warp at Jacob’s Pillow, ‘MONUMENT’ project revisits dance history

Adam H. Weinert presents a program that is a rare treat, featuring reconstructions of dance pioneer Ted Shawn’s choreography. [MORE...](#)



MOVIE REVIEW

## ‘A War’ is one of the best war movies ever

Not only is Danish director Tobias Lindholm’s tense, tragic saga the best film about the war in Afghanistan, it’s one of the best war movies, period. [MORE...](#)

1 of 5 free articles. [Subscribe now](#)



## Scott Meyers’ Boston Accents parody is silly fun

Comments

On his show Thursday night, Meyers poked fun at local accents and everyone’s obsession with them. [MORE...](#)



MOVIE REVIEW

## ‘Monster Hunt’ is a wacky, imaginative monster mash

What “Monster Hunt” lacks in narrative clarity the live-action/CGI-animated Hong Kong fantasy makes up for in moral ambiguity. [MORE...](#)

Classic hip-hop duo EPMD celebrates three decades



Three decades after they epitomized early hip-hop's party-funk aesthetic, Erick Sermon and Parrish Smith are keeping busy on an anniversary tour. [MORE...](#)

---



## 'Fairhaven' proves a good starting point for local actor-filmmaker

Tom O'Brien's film "Fairhaven," set in the town by that name near New Bedford, opens Friday in Somerville. [MORE...](#)

---



MOVIE REVIEW

## 'Anthropoid' ponders the price of confronting evil

"The film dramatizes the 1942 assassination of Nazi official Reinhard Heydrich, the "Butcher of Prague." [MORE...](#)

---



ART REVIEW

## Images speaking of desire and fear at the ICA

"Mary Reid Kelley" and its strong counterpoint "Steve Locke: there is no one left to blame" at the Institute of Contemporary Art reveal seams of vulnerability.

[MORE...](#)

---



STAGE REVIEW

## In *Company One's* 'The T Party,' the transgender experience unfolds in

**1 of 5 free articles. [Subscribe now](#)**

---

In a whirling theatrical language all her own, Natsu Onoda Power dramatizes questions of gender identity. [Comments](#) [MORE...](#)

---



MOVIE REVIEW

## In 'Equity,' it's female wolves on Wall Street

"Equity" turns upside down the gender balance on Wall Street. [MORE...](#)

---



MOVIE REVIEW

## 'Pete's Dragon': one of the summer's nicer surprises

The Disney remake "Pete's Dragon" is one of the summer's nicest movie

surprises. [MORE...](#)

---

---

---

© 2016 BOSTON GLOBE MEDIA PARTNERS, LLC

■ ■ ■ ■  
**1 of 5 free articles. Subscribe now**

---

Comments