



**BALL STATE
UNIVERSITY**

**College of Fine Arts
School of Music**

BALL STATE OPERA THEATRE

presents

Glory Denied

an opera by Tom Cipullo

Saturday, November 20, 2021 | 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, November 21, 2021 | 3 p.m.

SURSA PERFORMANCE HALL

DIRECTOR'S NOTE & SYNOPSIS

The impact of the Vietnam war on our country and culture is deep and lasting, so it makes sense that the experience of the longest serving prisoner of war in American history would be the subject for an opera by an American composer. For people of my generation, Generation X, this is the war our parents fought in, protested, supported, or opposed, so it is quite personal for us (also, my father was in the army during the Vietnam era but didn't serve in-country).

This piece has achieved a strong amount of popularity, I think, because it doesn't treat the characters as either villains or heroes but as real people speaking in their own words. It also has a truly appealing and beautiful score that carries the action along in a manner that is modern while still being accessible. Additionally, it has been recognized by former prisoners of war like the late senator John McCain as a truthful reflection of their journeys and challenges.

Art shouldn't be merely "pretty", it should strive to be impactful and transformational. At times that means that the works challenge us, as this one does with some harsh language and difficult emotions expressed. It is our hope that we all emerge at the end of tonight's performance with a deeper understanding of Jim Thompson's experience, his wife Alyce's experience, and the context of their surrounding cultural milieu.

-Jon Truitt, director of opera

Glory Denied has four singing roles. Jim and Alyce Thompson are each played by two singers. Thus, young Alyce presents the character as Jim remembers her from letters written long ago. Older Alyce is the person she has become since his capture. Likewise, the older Jim reflects back on his imprisonment while the younger represents his character during the ordeal. On occasion, the singers may assume the voices of other figures as well (i.e., Pentagon spokesman, Army General, Vietnamese guard, etc.).

Act I - In Captivity

Colonel Floyd James Thompson (Jim), America's longest-held prisoner of war, looks back on his years as a captive. He sees himself as a young man and recalls episodes from his nine-year ordeal; escape attempts, torture, the overwhelming loneliness of four years in solitary confinement, being forced to sign a propaganda statement. Through it all, he finds the strength to survive in memories of his wife and family. He recalls every letter his beloved Alyce sent to him before his capture.

As Thompson thinks on his idealized wife, Alyce receives the news that his surveillance plane has been shot down. Filled with fear and bitterness, she soon begins a relationship with another man (Harold), eventually moving in with him and telling the children that their father has died. Alyce denies permission for Jim's name to be released to the public, not even for one of the P.O.W bracelets that were common at the time. She consults a lawyer in an effort to have him declared legally dead. As the act nears its conclusion, Thompson finds comfort in the 23rd Psalm as themes from the opera swirl around him. On his last word, "forever;" he is freed from prison, and a reunion with Alyce, inevitable and tragic, awaits.

SYNOPSIS & CAST, PRODUCTION TEAM, AND ORCHESTRA

Act II - Welcome Home

The P.O.Ws are released and Jim returns home. The Pentagon announces another man, a Navy pilot, as the longest-held prisoner. Excerpts from the Paris Peace Accords interrupt the pre-war memories of Jim and Alyce. Jim reads a letter of welcome from President Nixon, the text noting ominously that “Some things about America may appear to have changed since your departure.” Alyce meets Jim and confesses. She offers to disappear if that is what he wants, but only after he hears her out. Jim decides to attempt a reconciliation. He notes how the nation has become different during his ordeal, at first mentioning improvements in material items and civil rights, but inevitably concluding with disdain for the new permissiveness and for his wife’s infidelity. Soon, the couple begins to fight, and Jim complains, “You’re not the Alyce I left.” For her part, Alyce asserts her independence, refusing to be the docile obedient wife. She tells of what her life was like during his absence, of the callous behavior of neighbors and family, of late-night crank calls from malicious strangers, of her fear and loneliness. Jim visits the church where he and Alyce were married. He speaks to the congregation hopefully, ignoring the fact that his dream of home and family has been shattered. In the final scene we see the whirlwind of Jim’s thoughts as he thinks back over his life when writing his memoirs. He struggles with the contradictions of his desire to forgive and the pain of reintegration into a society that couldn’t be bothered to wear a bracelet bearing his name.

CAST

Thomas Hall	Older Thompson
Alex Gushrowski	Young Thompson
Ísis Jarnicki de Carvalho	Older Alyce
Rachel Spodek and Maggie Smith (cover)	Younger Alyce

PRODUCTION TEAM

Cara Chowning	conductor and vocal coach
Jon Truitt	stage director
Cameron Clevenger	assistant stage director
Bruno Theiss	rehearsal pianist
Nathan Anton and Ashley Dawson	graduate assistants
Robert Dirden	costume artist

ORCHESTRA

Sherry Hong	violin
Erin Rafferty	viola
Stephen Hawkey	cello
Joanne King	harp
Jeri Taylor	flute
Hayden Giesseman	clarinet
Corrine Edom	horn
Sam Thompson	percussion
Bruno Theiss and Cara Chowning	piano

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Mei Zhong, *soprano*

UPCOMING OPERA EVENTS

Amahl and the Night Visitors

Friday, December 3 (7:30 p.m.) and Saturday, December 4 (3 p.m.)
First Presbyterian Church, Muncie

Sixth Annual Opera Gala

Saturday, February 12 | 7:30 p.m. | Sursa Hall

Don Pasquale

Friday, April 12 (7:30 p.m.) and Sunday, April 14 (3 p.m.) | Sursa Hall

OTHER UPCOMING EVENTS OF NOTE

University Singers' Holiday Cabaret

Sunday, December 5 | 7:30 p.m. | Sursa Hall

Holiday Choral Concerts

Sunday, December 12 | 3 p.m. & 6 p.m. | Sursa Hall

University Singers' Winter Cabaret

Sunday, January 23 | 7:30 p.m. | Sursa Hall

Ball State Choirs and Symphony Orchestra

Sunday, February 27 | 3 p.m. | Sursa Hall

University Choral Union and Cardinal Chorus

Saturday, March 26 | 7:30 p.m. | Sursa Hall

University Singers 58th Spectacular

Friday, April 8 and Saturday, April 9 | 7:30 p.m. | Emens Auditorium

Ball State Chamber Choir

Saturday, April 23 | 7:30 p.m. | Sursa Hall

Ball State Symphony Orchestra and Combined Choirs

Sunday, May 1 | 3 p.m. | Sursa Hall

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