

THE DEATH OF KLINGHOFFER DISCUSSION GUIDE

LEADER'S INSTRUCTIONS

INTRODUCTION

- Opera Theatre of Saint Louis will be presenting the contemporary opera, *The Death of Klinghoffer* by American Pulitzer prize-winning composer John Adams in June 2011 at the Loretto-Hilton Theater. The opera originally premiered in Brussels in 1991, just six years after the incident.
- The opera has had a controversial history with critics divided on the opera's treatment of the Palestinian and Jewish characters. Manuela Hoelterhoff said in *The Wall Street Journal* that the opera "turns the sport-killing of a frail old Jew in a wheelchair into a cool meditation on meaning and myth, life and death." Katrine Ames wrote in *Newsweek*, "Adams creates a revolutionary, continually shifting tapestry," calling the opera, "a work that fires the heart."
- Christian, Jewish and Muslim leaders in the St. Louis religious community formed a steering committee in preparation for the opera's St. Louis debut and believe the performance provides an important opportunity to deepen interfaith communication and understanding.
- This material has been prepared to help study groups in faith, civic, arts and education communities begin a discussion of the themes raised in this provocative work.
- We hope your group will find this presentation a useful resource in generating conversation not only on interfaith subjects but also about the relevance and role of art in our world.
- Finally, we hope the presentation will spur further investigation by attending a performance of *The Death of Klinghoffer* at the Loretto-Hilton Theater June 15 – 25, 2011.

USING THE GUIDE

- The material in this guide may be shown or copied for distribution along with background materials, libretto excerpts and a chronology for all participants. Ideally, these should be read by all participants in advance of the formal discussion sessions. The materials may be used for a set of discussions over one session or multiple meetings.
- The materials are built around three "vignettes" from the opera.
- Each "vignette" has a listening sample introducing the scene and a set of discussion questions.

DISCUSSION GUIDE FORMATS

- PDF (Hard copies can be printed from this format and shared with participants. Audio sample links are played from this document using internet connection.)
- Powerpoint (Best format for a slideshow presentation from laptop computer and projector. Internet connection required for audio samples.)
- DVD (Available only by request. Audio samples are on disc. No internet access required. Call 314.963.4251 or email 251@opera-stl.org to request a copy.)
- Print copy with accompanying audio disc (Available only by request. No internet access required. Call 314.963.4251 or email 251@opera-stl.org to request a copy.)

A TIMELINE

- A more recent timeline of the Jewish and Muslim conflict is included in your packet. It highlights many, but not all, of the significant events in their history from 1897 to present day. *(Please print a hard copy for your use.)*

A CHRONOLOGY OF THE OPERA AND ITS CRITICISM

- A history of the opera and the praise and criticism it has received by audiences and critics is included in this packet. *(Please print a hard copy for your use.)*

LIBRETTO

- Text excerpts of the opera are included. *(Please print a hard copy for your use.)*