



A PIECE OF MY HEART
BY SHIRLEY LAURO

Student Invite

The role of women in Vietnam is not what you may have been taught.

Their experiences in Vietnam should not be ignored. Take time to see this terrific production based on true stories of their service!

“The Play, *A Piece of My Heart*, by Shirley Lauro, has become the nation’s most enduring theatrical production that deals with the Vietnam War.”

-- **The VVA Veterans** The official voice of the Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc. ®
An organization chartered by the U.S. Congress

This is a powerful, true drama of six women who went to Vietnam; an intelligence officer, a Red Cross volunteer, three nurses and a country western singer booked by an unscrupulous agent to entertain the troops. The play portrays each young woman before, during and after her tour in the war torn jungle and ends as each leaves a personal token at “The Wall” in Washington.

“There have been a number of plays dealing with Vietnam, but none with the direct emotional impact of Ms. Lauro’s work.”
- - - *N.Y. Times*

“A riveting, rending dramatic experience.”
- - - *Louisville Courier Journal*

“A PIECE OF MY HEART...takes up a subject largely missing from the reams of material written about Vietnam, namely the women who served there....the play is exceedingly moving...”
-The Wall Street Journal

* *Original artwork by Alexandra Williams*

A Piece of My Heart

PLAY OVERVIEW

The true stories of six courageous women sent to Vietnam and their struggle to make sense of a war that irrevocably changed them and a nation that shunned them - a work with the music and soul of a tumultuous era in our history.

WOMEN IN VIETNAM

“Most Americans may not realize that nearly 10,000 American military women were stationed in Vietnam during the war. Many were wounded and some were killed. To my surprise, the United States Armed Forces never officially documented the women who risked their lives in service of their country. They can tell you how many pounds of explosives were dropped but not the actual number of women who served their country in Vietnam.”

--- Larry Nielsen, Director

Performances

April 2-3; 9-11; 16-18; and 23-25, 2010

Student Rate – Study Guide

Student and Group Rates Available
Study Guide Available for Class Credit or Extra Credit. Ask your teachers.

Study Guide online at:
www.twincityplayers.org

Twin City Players, Inc.

**Playhouse located at
600 W. Glenlord Rd, St. Joe, MI 49085.
Box Office – (269) 429-0400
Reservations required**

While the US Military prides itself on knowing the number of enemy weapons captured, little or no data exists on the women who served, were injured or killed in Southeast Asia during the Viet Nam era. Records on their service, their heroism, their decorations earned, where they served, and what they suffered – and what some still suffer – are nonexistent.

From the text “Women in the Military – An Unfinished Revolution,” by Major General Jeanne Holm, USAF (Ret), from collected anecdotal reports, letters, and books by those who were there we are able to get a picture of the service of women in Vietnam. For example:

- **Over six hundred (600) women in the Air Force were there.**
- **Army, Navy and Air Force Nurses and Medical Specialists numbered over six thousand (6,000).**
- **Untold numbers of Red Cross, Special Services, Civil Service and countless other women were there.**
- **Over five hundred (500) WACs were stationed in Vietnam.**
- **Women Marines served in Vietnam.**

In Vietnam, women served in support staff assignments, in hospitals, crewed on medical evacuation flights, with MASH Units, hospital ships, operations groups, information offices, service clubs, headquarters offices, and numerous other clerical, medical, intelligence and personnel positions. Discussions about drafting women nurses never materialized.

Some military women asked to go to Vietnam, and some were sent against their wishes. Some who enlisted were sent to Vietnam even though their recruiter may have promised they would not be sent to Vietnam.

Women officers and enlisted women were similar in age and tenure as their male counterparts; ranging from youngsters in their early twenties with barely two years in service and career women over forty. Women experienced the same hardships as the men. Many were often in the line of fire from rockets and mortars, particularly during the TET offensive.

Women sloshed through the same mud and blood as men, witnessed the same horrors of war, and suffered the same ignominious treatment and indignities upon their return United States of America.

Women were awarded the Purple Heart, the Bronze Star, Commendation Medals, and Unit Citations.

And, yes, there were casualties.

A Piece of My Heart

by Shirley Lauro

is based on Keith Walker's book, *A Piece of My Heart; the Stories of 26 American Women Who Served in Vietnam.*

The play is based on the true stories of some of the nearly 10,000 women who volunteered to serve As non-combatants in Vietnam. It weaves the stories of six American women through a series of monologues and vignettes into a poignant drama that lays bare the realities and the consequences of war. It offers a better understanding of the personal side of war, the way it affects individuals who served in all types of outfits.

The Characters include Martha, a Navy nurse; Maryjo, singer and guitarist in a rock band; Army nurses Sissy and Leann; Red Cross volunteer Whitney; and Steele, an Army intelligence officer. A variety of American men is played by one man. As the play unfolds, it becomes obvious how one man can play the role of all American men.

While no movie or play can capture the actual experiences of veterans, this play humanizes the impact service in Vietnam had on the women in this play. The experiences are approximately between the years 1967 to 1970. The experiences are dramatically portrayed in this play. The experiences of these six women veterans is gut wrenching and emotional for all.

It is heartbreak enough to watch their transition from fresh-faced do-gooders to exhausted war veterans, but nearly unbearable to witness their lives after 'Nam. All suffer some form of post-traumatic stress, accompanied variously by alcoholism, suicidal thoughts, nightmares and anger.

Please plan on seeing this Play!



Vietnam Women's Memorial Washington, DC copyright 1993, Vietnam Women's Memorial Foundation, Inc. Glenna Goodacre, Sculptor.