

KRONOS QUARTET VÂN-ÁNH VANESSA VÕ RINDE ECKERT



Mỹ Lai

MUSIC BY JONATHAN BERGER

LIBRETTO BY HARRIET SCOTT CHESSMAN



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Mỹ Lai

Kronos Quartet

David Harrington, *violin*

John Sherba, *violin*

Hank Dutt, *viola*

Sunny Yang, *cello*

Vân-Ánh Vanessa Võ, *t'rưng, đàn bầu, đàn tranh*

Rinde Eckert, *vocalist*

MUSIC BY Jonathan Berger

LIBRETTO BY Harriet Scott Chessman

- 01** **Mỹ Lai Lullaby** (7:58)
- 02** **First Landing: Flight** (9:36)
- 03** **First Landing: Descent** (7:04)
- 04** **First Landing: The Ditch** (14:16)
- 05** **Second Landing: Hovering** (8:26)
- 06** **Second Landing: Bunker** (12:31)
- 07** **Third Landing: Postcard** (5:16)
- 08** **Third Landing: Fishing** (5:45)

Track 1: (Jonathan Berger-David Harrington-Vân-Ánh Vanessa Võ-J.B. Lenoir/Noga Music, ASCAP-Inner Sunset Publishing, BMI-Vân-Ánh Vanessa Võ, ASCAP-Ghana Music, BMI)
Tracks 2-8: (Jonathan Berger-Harriet Scott Chessman/Noga Music, ASCAP-Ariel 100, ASCAP)

Introduction

BY JONATHAN BERGER

The massacre of over 500 innocent civilians by American soldiers in the village of Mỹ Lai on March 16, 1968, was one of the darkest moments of the Vietnam War—one that traumatized the nation and swayed the course of history. The events of that day may well have gone unnoticed save for the actions of a young army helicopter pilot who, by happenstance, witnessed the killing in the course of a routine reconnaissance flight. Appalled by what he saw, Warrant Officer Hugh Thompson interceded, first by reporting the incident, then by landing his helicopter between the civilians and the troops, attempting to prevent further bloodshed. Aghast at his inability to stop the slaughter, in a moment of enormous passion, Thompson threatened to open fire on his own troops. Failing to stop the carnage, he pulled a wounded child from his dead mother's grasp and flew him to safety. Thompson's subsequent refusal to remain silent about the massacre forced the military to conduct an inquiry and trial that shook the national conscience, yet left Thompson vilified as a disloyal outcast for much of his life.

It took almost 18 months from the day of the massacre before Seymour Hersh's startling exposé and army photographer Ron Haeberle's devastating photos of the carnage brought the story to light. I was 15 at the time. The chilling depiction and images comprised my political awakening, leading me to spend a good deal of my high school years, guitar in hand, at anti-war demonstrations haunted by the horrific images of the carnage.

Twenty-five years later, I had a chance encounter with historian Ben Kiernan, a Yale colleague who had founded the Cambodian Genocide Project. Discussing his work led to my reminiscing about the impact the news reports of the Mý Lai massacre had on me. Ben told me about Thompson and his crew and pointed me to the transcripts of the 1970 House Armed Services Investigating Subcommittee hearings on the investigation of the Mý Lai Incident. The hearings portrayed the massacre while also maligning and discrediting Thompson for breaking protocol and landing while on a mission, and for telling his crew to be ready to open fire on their own troops. It is a chilling document that should be read by every American.

After reading the transcript, I joined a petition campaign aimed at recognizing Thompson's heroism. Thompson and his crew, Larry Colburn and Glenn Andreotta (the latter posthumously), received the Soldier's Medal for "heroism not involving actual conflict with an enemy" in 1998, and I made a commitment to myself to make his story known. In 1996, the National Endowment for the Arts awarded me a composer's fellowship to compose a piano concerto, which I dedicated to Thompson. Each of the three movements of the work was inspired by one of Thompson's three landings. The process of writing that piece fueled my commitment to convey the tragedy of Mý Lai and the courage of Hugh Thompson through opera.

Another two decades passed when, in a backstage conversation with Kronos Quartet founder and artistic director David Harrington, I described my deep desire to bring the

story of Hugh Thompson to the concert stage. David called me the next day and said, “Let’s make this happen.” I had coincidentally just read Harriet Scott Chessman’s poignant novel, *The Beauty of Ordinary Things* (2013), which describes with devastating beauty the pain and fragility of a Vietnam veteran. I contacted Harriet and asked if she would help bring to life my vision of an opera segmented by the three helicopter landings in Mỹ Lai, recalled by Thompson decades later as he struggles with terminal cancer. Harriet delivered a stunningly beautiful libretto to which the music seemed to write itself.

The musical materials of the work are largely derived from a prayer recited near the conclusion of Yom Kippur, the Jewish Day of Atonement, beseeching pardon before the doors of judgment close. The musical reference is used in the scenes where Thompson opens the helicopter door in an attempt to stop the massacre, and in the surreal television gameshow in which he becomes an unwilling contestant forced to guess what’s behind a hidden door.

Mỹ Lai seeks a mode of expression in which the political and societal underpinnings of conflict and its senseless brutality are set through a character study of an individual who unintentionally becomes inextricably bound up in the fray of war. The monodrama takes place in a hospital room where Thompson, surrendering to cancer, faces death under hospice care. Feeling neither heroic nor particularly proud of what he did, Thompson grapples with the memories of his naïve, idealistic attempt to stop the carnage in a final effort to seek closure and resolution.

Mỹ Lai Lullaby

(Track 1)

“As Kronos began rehearsing *Mỹ Lai*, David Harrington reported a vision he had of the convergence of J.B. Lenoir’s ‘Vietnam Blues’ with the traditional Vietnamese lullaby that I was using as source material in the opera. What you hear today is my realization, inspired by David’s dream and by Vân-Ánh’s wizardry on the *đàn tranh*.”

—JONATHAN BERGER

Mỹ Lai Libretto

CHARACTERS

Hugh Thompson Jr.

Emcee and Phil (as voices in game show interruptions)

TIME

December 2005, a few weeks before Hugh Thompson's death on January 6, 2006 (Epiphany).

The morning of March 16, 1968

PLACE

Hospital room in the Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Pineville, Louisiana

Sơn Mỹ Village (including the hamlet of Mỹ Lai), South Vietnam

ABOUT THIS LIBRETTO

Mỹ Lai approaches the Mỹ Lai massacre through the memory and imagination of Hugh Thompson Jr., the U.S. Army helicopter pilot who courageously intervened in the atrocities, in which American G.I.s killed over 500 innocent Vietnamese villagers, including many women and children. Now facing cancer in the last month of his life, Thompson is haunted by this massacre, and by his own inability to save more lives.

HISTORY

Warrant Officer Thompson was a member of the 123rd Aviation Battalion of the 23rd Infantry Division. Flying his observation helicopter on the morning of March 16, 1968, on a reconnaissance mission, the 24-year-old officer, together with his young crew Lawrence Colburn and Glenn Andreotta, could find no Viet Cong activity in Sơn Mỹ Village.

As Thompson and his crew started to realize that U.S. soldiers were engaged in a large-scale massacre, he made three heroic and unauthorized landings, in addition to sending anguished radio reports. Upon his return to base, Thompson reported the massacre in person, which led to the order to cease fire that effectively stopped the Mỹ Lai atrocities. Mỹ Lai, however, was the site of only one of many massacres of South Vietnamese civilians to occur during the course of the war.

Hugh Thompson's Three Landings

(inspiration for this libretto):

(1) On the first landing, near a large irrigation ditch filled with villagers' bodies, Warrant Officer Thompson tried to persuade the officer in charge, Lieutenant William Calley, to help those people still alive and to stop the killing. Calley ordered Thompson to leave. As the helicopter rose up again, Sergeant David Mitchell fired his M-16 into the dead or wounded in the ditch.

(2) Shocked and furious, Officer Thompson and his crew started to search from the air for ways to help the villagers. He bravely placed his helicopter between U.S. troops and about ten people—including children—hiding in an earthen bunker. Commanding his crew to train their guns on the American soldiers, he

brought the villagers out of the bunker and successfully persuaded a large helicopter to airlift them to safety.

(3) As Thompson flew the helicopter over the village on the way to refuel, Andreotta spotted movement in the same irrigation ditch where they had landed the first time. On this third landing, Andreotta walked into the ditch, over the bodies of the dead and dying, and rescued a small boy.

Hugh Thompson became a passionate, devoted witness of this atrocity from that day forward. His testimony in 1970 became critical for the Army's investigations and prosecution of guilty parties. However, the House Armed Services Committee—with President Nixon's help—tried to undermine Thompson's credibility as a witness

and threatened to court-martial him for his intervention.

All of the officers and soldiers involved in the massacre—with the exception of William Calley—were ultimately acquitted. Found guilty of killing 22 South Vietnamese unarmed civilians, Calley was sentenced to life in prison, but served only three years and four months under house arrest.

Thirty years after the massacre, Hugh Thompson, Lawrence Colburn, and (posthumously) Glenn Andreotta were awarded the Soldier's Medal. In 1999, Thompson and Colburn also received the Peace Abbey Courage of Conscience Award.

Libretto dedicated to the memory of Harriet Scott Chessman's father, G. Wallace Chessman, who participated in the Normandy Landings, June 1944, when he was 25 years old.

LIBRETTO

First Landing

Flight (Track 2)

[Hugh Thompson sings in darkness]

My Lord, what a morning

My Lord, what a morning

Oh, my Lord, what a morning

When the stars begin to . . .

[Lights up. A hospital room, bare, with a bed, a TV, a chair.]

I always wanted to fly,

rise up like a bird,

to fly.

This cancer,

son of a bitch infantry,

moves through me.

I always wanted to fly!

They had no chance to fly.

If only I could fly out of my body,
out of this sick body,
out of my soul.

No! No, no.
Please no more!
Please let me go.

Interlude

Descent (Track 3)

[As if peering out of his cockpit, surveying the landscape from the air]

I wish my little boy could see this.

I wish my son Bucky could see this.

Such beauty

This beauty

Ah! Just for a moment

I wish my little boy could see this. This beauty . . .

This? This!

There!

That! This. There!

What's going on? What's going on here?

How on earth?

Look! What's this?
Look! Look! Look there!
Along the hedgerow—along the road—
Here, there!
In the rice paddy—

Weren't those people just walking to market,
their baskets waiting to be filled?
Weren't those people just heading to the fields
on this bright morning?
My Lord, what a morning.

[as if talking into his radio]

I'm taking her down.
Open the door.
Open the fucking door!

Look!
In the ditch, that girl is still moving.
Medic! Medic!
That girl is still moving!
Where in God's name is the medic?

The captain walks up,
pokes her with his boot—
his boot!
He raises his automatic and—

God in heaven,
what did You do
creating such a son of a bitch?

The Ditch (Track 4)

The long ditch
The long, long ditch
Every morning, every day

[As if talking on his cockpit radio]

Do you hear me? Over?
Can you hear?
God damn it, can you hear me? Over.
Over. Over.
Can you hear?

Ah!

Bodies piled on bodies,
just people,
children, like fish caught . . .
No, not fish, just bodies,
just people caught,
some moving,
some crying out . . .

Help! Medic!
Why don't you . . .

*[Hugh takes remote control, turns TV on, and starts to watch a game show.
Applause, horns, laughter]*

Game Show Interruption #1

EMCEE

[voice appears to come from an old-fashioned TV in Hugh's hospital room]

Welcome back! Welcome! We have an exciting show for you this morning. We're playing with a teacher from Idaho, a nurse from Maine, and a Chief Warrant Officer in our Armed Forces.

A helicopter pilot, am I right, sir?

[some applause, approving murmurs]

All right, then! You know how the game is played. We'll show you three doors—a red, a white, and a blue one. Choose one and the game is on. And to honor our brave American troops . . . let's start with you, Officer. I'm sure you've had to make difficult choices in your line of work—this one should be a piece of cake!

[laughter]

So, Officer, which will it be? Blue, white, or red?

Our officer seems a bit lost. But he's a helicopter pilot, folks.

I'm sure he knows how to land this thing!

[laughter]

So what'll it be, Captain?

I said what'll it be, Captain.

HUGH

Are you talking to me . . ?

I'm not a Captain.

EMCEE

Hey, that woke him up! Always important to get the right rank. Sir, yes SIR!

[as if snapping to attention and saluting]

[laughter]

But seriously, Officer Thompson, time's running out! Make your choice!

[ticking clock music]

HUGH

All the doors are red . . . !

EMCEE

Look again, Officer.

HUGH

The doors are all red!

EMCEE

At last! Our contestant has chosen the RED door!

HUGH *[simultaneous with Emcee]*

No! Listen to me!!

That's not what I said!

For Christ's sake!

I never chose that!

EMCEE

This is the moment of truth, folks.

Are you ready, Officer?

[increasing laughter, applause]

So let's open the door and see
what's behind it.

Here we go!

[cheers, applause, horns]

HUGH

Wait—Hang on!

EMCEE

Too late to change your mind, chief. Phil? What has the officer chosen?

PHIL

Well Dick, the smoke is clearing, and you can just make it out. Okay.

Looks like a ditch full of bodies, old people, women and children.

Yeah, I see it now, women and children, babies. All dead or about to be, Dick.

HUGH

Stop this! Stop this right now!

EMCEE

Can we stop it, folks?

[laughter and cries of “No!”]

HUGH

You are going to stop this!

EMCEE

That's right. This is how the game is played.

[laughter, applause, rising to include helicopter and gunfire]

EMCEE

This is how the game is played, you candy ass, bleeding heart,
motherfu— . . .

Second Landing Hovering (Track 5)

The ocean is glistening.

The fields shine.

Once you land,

there's no turning back,

not for you,

not for your crew.

The ocean is glistening.
The fields shine.
Once you land,
there's no going back.

You can't just hover.
You have to go down,
down into the madness.
You have to leave your life behind
and dive, dive and dive
into the madness.
And dive, and dive and dive,
Ah!
into the madness.

I'm bringing her down.
I'm landing this bird now.

Bunker (Track 6)

There it is! Over there!
An earthen bunker. No! wait!
A rabbit hole?
Children hiding. Little children hiding . . .
almost caught.
Wait! Wait! My God!
Jesus Christ, what do I do?
What would you do?

My Lord, what a morning.
My Lord, what a morning.
My Lord, what a mor . . .

I'm going to try to stop this!
I'm going to land her there,
right there, between those children and our troops.

[to his gunners]

We're going to stop this madness.

Larry! Man your gun.

Take aim. Take aim!

Aim at our soldiers.

If those bastards . . .

If those bastards open fire
on the children in the bunker,
blow them away,
blow those bastards away.

Ah, blow those bastards away.

My gunners nod,

Larry and Glenn.

They look at me and nod . . .

Incredulous

Angelic

Mortified.

We're caught in this.
How has this happened?

The ocean glistened.
The fields shone.
Here the world is changed,
forever changed.

[to the Captain on the ground.]
Hold your fire, Captain!
Captain, hold your fire!
What's that?
Orders? Orders?
I don't give a fuck about your orders!
For God's sake, hold your fire.

Ah!

I am caught in this.

Ah, I am caught in this.

It will never be over.

I will always be in it,
shouting at the captain.

I'm still shouting.

[T.V. turns on by itself. Game show starts again.]

Game Show Interruption #2

HUGH

I'm not playing this game anymore.

[surprised murmurs and laughter]

EMCEE

What do you say we give Officer Thompson here a round of applause for getting this far?

[applause, whistles, approving laughter]

All right, then! We're in the final round of the game now. Time for our Quiz! Two correct answers—just two!—and you're home free.

HUGH

I'm not answering any more questions. I already told you.
I told everybody everything.

EMCEE

First question:

Confronting American soldiers on the ground,
what did you order your crew to do?

You have 30 seconds.

[ticking clock music]

HUGH

I observed three or four villagers running. Non-combatants, obviously—two were little children. They were under fire. *Our* soldiers—Charlie Company . . . chasing them and—

[a buzzer sounds]

EMCEE

Time's up. So sorry, Officer. What did you order your crew to do? "Blow them away. Blow those bastards away" was the correct answer.

HUGH

No, Sir! Our troops . . . they were NOT soldiers. That is NOT what soldiers do.

EMCEE

Well, Officer Thompson, you didn't get that one, but you still have one more chance.
You're still standing. He's still standing, folks!

[applause, laughter]

HUGH

They weren't soldiers. That was murder. They were animals.
No—Animals wouldn't do that!

EMCEE

Last question—and this is for all the marbles.
Are you ready, Officer?
Are you ready, folks, Congressman Rivers, members of the House
Armed Services Committee, President Nixon?

HUGH

This is a joke.

EMCEE

Are you ready for the last question?

HUGH

This is a fucking circus. I'm not playing! I'm out of this!

EMCEE

He's out of line here, folks. A loose cannon—he's jumping the gun.
Can you blame the boy, though? Can you, folks?
Can we blame him for jumping the gun?

[hoots and whistles, taunting]

HUGH *[simultaneous with Emcee]*

You're not going to prosecute a
goddamned one of 'em—Calley
. . . Medina . . . or any of the
bastards that ordered this. You're
not gonna do a goddamn thing!

EMCEE

What do you say, Mr. President,
Committee members: Can we
blame him? Can we, Congressman
Rivers? Can we finally find a way to
blame him?

Third Landing

Postcard (Track 7)

[Hugh sits, reading a newspaper. He picks up the telephone receiver and dials, holds the phone to his ear.]

Hello, yeah, I . . .

I . . . I just . . . I just . . .

I just wanted

to talk to Larry.

Can I leave him a message?

Tell him I called.

Tell him Hugh called.

Tell him . . . thanks for the postcard.

Maybe I'll see him soon.

Yeah, I'm still in the hospital.
No, it's not looking good,
but you know what they say—
nobody lives forever.

[Hugh hangs up the phone]

Oh Larry, you were just a kid that morning
sitting on top of the world.
You and Glenn courageous,
just boys,
just boys, really, that morning.
(My Lord, what a morning)
Your country gone crazy.

Fishing (Track 8)

Once more the ditch
An ocean of bodies now
Too many to count
Small and smaller
Glistening
in the morning sun . . .

Walking on bodies,
we fish out a little boy.
I hold him by his small shirt.

A little boy—a little boy about Bucky's age—
limp, but breathing.

He looks at us like he's a thousand miles away
on some distant mountain.

He's as light as a leaf.

I take him in my arms.
I fly him out of hell . . . ah!

I bring him to a nun in Quảng Ngãi City.

I always wanted to fly.

*[T.V. comes on for a brief moment. Hugh is asleep in the chair.
Someone turns the T.V. off, and all the lights go out.]*





Kronos Quartet: David Harrington, John Sherba, Hank Dutt, Sunny Yang and Rinde Eckert (left). Vân Anh Vanessa Võ (above).
Photo by Zoran Orlic.

Open Letter

**To Army Lieutenant William Calley
from Mỹ Lai survivor Trần Văn Đức**

(pictured on cover)

In 2009, William Calley, the former U.S. Army lieutenant who led the 1968 massacre of hundreds of Vietnamese civilians in Mỹ Lai, issued his first public apology after decades of silence. “There is not a day that goes by that I do not feel remorse for what happened that day in Mỹ Lai,” Calley said. “I feel remorse for the Vietnamese who were killed, for their families, for the American soldiers involved and their families. I am very sorry.” Upon reading about this apology, Mỹ Lai survivor Trần Văn Đức issued the following statement in response, first published online in *Foreign Policy Journal* (March 6, 2010).

Dear: William Calley

I'm Trần Văn Đức, living here in Germany since 1983. Almost one month ago, I've read from your newspaper about "William Calley." He said, he felt sorry about the "Mỹ Lai massacre," where over 504 People killed.

We are survivors from the "Mỹ Lai massacre" at March 16 1968 in Tháp Canh.

At this time, I was 7, my older sister 9 years old and my youngest sister 14 months. During the gunfire my mother protected me, and my little sister in her fall, by lying beneath us. When the gunfire ended, and the Americans were away, my mother told me to run away immediately.

Despite her injuries in her leg and stomach, my mother has dragged herself to the street to see us running away. So she had to see her other two daughters lying dead on the other roadside. I ran away from this place, carrying my sister. At about 2 km away, I heard a helicopter. I threw myself with my sister on the ground, and we played dead. The helicopter flew so low that I could clearly see the photographer. After the helicopter was gone, I ran with my sister again. Approximately 4 hours later, we arrived Sơn Hội. Interrupted by repeatedly having to hide, every time a helicopter noise was heard, and also having rests from the strain of carrying my 14 months old sister.

The next morning my older sister also arrived there. She survived the massacre by about 15 minutes of waiting under corpses in the rice field.

Only in 1975, I find out that my mother, shortly after I ran away with my sister, was killed by headshot, through the press photograph of my mother in the “Mỹ Lai Memorial.”

It was extremely hard in the following time for us to survive without parents and without any assistance.

I want to write to Mr. William Calley! He must know what his actions did to our families! And what it has done to the village of Mỹ Lai, to murder 504 people, mothers, children and elderly people.

For this few (only a handful) of survivors that continued to live, it was definitely very hard. Especially there were only some children and a few elderly people. A terse “apology,” after over 40 years for the total destruction, not only the people but also their homeland, is simply a disappointment!

Yours sincerely,

Trần Văn Đức

The Diaries of Mỹ Lai Orphan Trần Văn Đức

Translated by David Calleja

Originally published in *Foreign Policy Journal*, March 6, 2010

PART 1

I was born Trần Văn Đức in 1962, the third child and oldest son in my family. My mother had a stall at a local market and my father was a tailor, selling clothes and western medicine. He had previously been held captive by the government, and as a result we were all under constant surveillance, reporting to authorities daily.

We had a large house near Sơn Mỹ market. On one side, our neighbor owned a lot of coconuts and stored them in his yard, and I can still remember how refreshing they used to taste in the heat. On the other side of our house, there was a large pond, where villagers cultivated shrimp and fish. Behind us was Mỹ Khê, where the sea and endless white sand seemed to stretch far into the distance.

During my earliest memories of childhood, when the bombing raids commenced, my family became used to hiding in the ditches. Others were not so lucky, killed by collapsing tunnels as they attempted to emulate us. Many residents made the decision to flee Sơn Mỹ. Some went to neighboring Lý Sơn, some to Bình Đức, others were separated and their whereabouts became unknown. Many children became orphaned and adults lost their homes. Fields and gardens were totally destroyed. Since my

parents were in a fortunate position to provide help to those who had suffered losses, a number of families came to them in desperate need of food and shelter. As everybody left in search of safer grounds, we headed to Bình Đức, which, due to its relative peace, seemed like paradise.

With a population comprised mainly of fishermen and salt producers, Bình Đức seemed like a wonderful place. People here were very friendly and always smiled. Red and green colored boats appeared by the sea, ready for their day's fishing. The shelling in Bình Đức was not as bad as the fighting in Sơn Mỹ. As the war started getting worse, our family lived with Mr. Đồng and Ms. Huệ for two years. My parents continued to operate their business in sewing and the market. I played with other children, waiting until the late afternoon for the sun to cool down, where we would catch crabs by the sea or play football with a plastic ball.

As the bullets rained and bombs fell constantly, the local market in Bình Đức came under heavy attack and we moved again, to Thuận Yên hamlet, where my younger sister, Thị Hà, was born. My family built a small house on the property of Ms. Bộ and my father worked as a nurse in nearby Tịnh Hiệp in the district of Sơn Tịnh.

Even as a child, I understood the threat and impact of war, a reality confirmed when my family was also forced to live apart from each other. It was hard for me to accept that my grandmother, who had lived all of her life in Sơn Hội, lived alone. Her children all had their own families and had since moved. My parents took it upon themselves to

take care of grandmother. I loved my grandmother very much, because she reminded me of my mother in both shape and character. My sister Thị Hồng and I often delivered money for her to buy rice, something that excited me a lot, and I can still remember how warm her hugs were. The idea of running along with my sisters was always such fun, but it would not take long before I got too tired and asked for a piggyback ride.

There was so much to like about travelling on the B24 road through Thuận Yên, which was lined with bamboo trees with a backdrop of the mountains. The villages, surrounded by wheat fields and rice paddies, were often dotted with people toiling hard in the rice fields, planting themselves deep into the mud. This road led to Mỹ Lai, a place where everybody seemed busy working out how to best cope with bombings. The village of Mỹ Lai had become a recent target for gunfire, and the safest time to undertake all activities was early in the morning, which is when farmers tended to their rice and vegetable plantations, and watered and spread fertilizer on their crops. The only other safe time was late at night, as this is when the fewest shots rained over the village. Consequently, daily life was frantic. Every day, residents woke early to greet the sunrise, for this is when family meals were prepared.

Even in such a hostile environment, nobody would have predicted the events that took place on that day, March 16, 1968. American military units fired artillery shots across Thuận Yên, Mỹ Khê, and Mỹ Lai for one hour. They sounded like fireworks. Our village and neighboring hamlets were completely surrounded. At 11 a.m., helicopters started

flying over Mỹ Lai, and some people in the neighborhood heard rockets being fired. My family and I learned that some residents had already been injured by the shots because the rockets were flying low and landed in rice paddies where people were working in the fields. I could hear people scream and cry in a high-pitched wailing sound. Any civilians who were caught were marched into the center of the village. It resembled a makeshift prison yard full of men, women, and children.

My father was not present in the household because he was away working in Tĩnh Hiệp clinic, leaving my mother in charge of the household. Without any hesitation, she prepared an emergency kit for the children, fearing that we would also be taken from our hut. She hurriedly prepared a large brown canvas bag, placed some of my clothes in the bag and gave each of my siblings and myself 10,000 Vietnamese *đồng*, which we hid in our socks. I felt guilty about taking the money because it seemed like a fortune. We were then instructed to hide behind our house, which stored our homemade oils, medicines, textiles, and fabrics. But before anybody had a chance to move, American troops stormed into our house and forced my mother and the children to move onto the streets where everybody else was assembled. The last item my mother grabbed with her one free hand was her traditional straw hat, while desperately holding onto my baby sister, Thị Hà, with the other.

Once we were marched outside and told where to sit, my mother looked around and noticed the chaotic scenes where villagers were being pushed and shoved by soldiers.

She noticed a nearby ditch near a neighboring house owned by Ms. Nhiều and told us all to move quickly, but to our dismay we found that it was already full. Crouching low, we eventually settled on a space near a tunnel opening. American troops were patrolling the area and continued to search tunnels. One old woman was struck on the lower back by a soldier's rifle butt so hard she fell to the ground in agonizing pain and could no longer walk. Horrified by what had just happened, I heard somebody say, "My God, we will all die." This memory still haunts me today.

One attribute I always remember about my mother was that no matter how hopeless the situation looked, she never accepted defeat. From our ditch, she spotted a nearby bamboo bush and hinted to us that we should head towards it immediately. The children went first and she followed behind us. But no sooner had we begun to crawl through the crowd of people than a soldier saw my mother amidst the crowd, stormed into the ditch and grabbed my mother violently, ripping her clothes. I cried loudly in the hope that she would not be shot. Without warning, gun shots were fired into the ditch, hitting a number of bodies. As bullets, blood, and flesh flew everywhere, my mother covered her body with her straw hat while hugging my little sister Hà close to her breast, and with her free hand, pushed me in the direction of a ditch adjacent to neighboring rice fields. She ordered me to protect my sister Hà and pretend to be dead so that the soldiers would leave us alone. We were not to move unless we knew the area was clear. For what seemed like hours, my little sister lay on her stomach and I sheltered her by doing the same.

As soon as the American troops moved out, my older sister and I searched for our mother and found her. She was seriously hurt, having been shot in the head and I knew nothing could be done to save her. However, she still had enough energy to give us one last instruction: “Hug your sister Hà, and take her to Grandma’s house. Don’t stay here any longer or they may come back and shoot you.”

These were the last words I heard my mother speak, and whenever I think about that day, it causes me great pain because I loved her very much. It saddens me to accept that among the numerous dead corpses that littered the path between the village and my Grandma’s house, one of them was my own mother.

There is a famous panoramic picture of corpses amidst a green rice paddy taken by U.S. Army photographer Ronald Haeberle. But it does not include a shot of the dead women and children behind him. This is because of his position inside the helicopter where the photograph was taken.

When we were far away from the tower, a low-flying helicopter appeared, preparing for landing. I was very scared and hugged my sister. We lay down on the ground to escape overhead bullets being fired in our direction. Only when the helicopter disappeared, I embraced my sister, Hà, and headed for Trường An along the main road to Sơn Hội. We came across several dead bodies of local men on their way to work or the market.

From a distance we heard the sound of the American soldiers' heavy gunfire. Houses were also being burned, and thick black smoke rose in the sky. I sensed that the helicopters were still patrolling the region. But all I could think about was why the inhabitants of Sơn Mỹ, especially innocent children, were attacked and killed. Many good friends and relatives of Mỹ Lai had their roots here, yet the village was now destroyed, and what was once a happy village was now gone. In grieving for the people who once lived here, I repeated "Why were they to blame? Why did you kill her?" over and over again.

PART 2

Before my sister Hà and I reached our grandmother's house, we arrived in Gia Hòa to greet my uncle, and asked for drinking water. He saw that we were covered in blood from hiding in between bloodstained bodies in the ditch before our mother directed us to run away. He cried and immediately called over a village nurse, Mr. Hùng. I was wounded in the forehead and my sister Hà in the abdomen.

It was in this time we discovered that my older sister, Mỹ, survived the slaughter by falling into a ditch and covering herself with dead bodies of people shot in rice fields. She too was covered in blood, but none of us knew the other was still alive. In fact, confusion reigned as to the fate of our mother. Although she was laying in the ditch

when I last saw her, another village woman had told Mỹ that my mother had in fact escaped and began looking for her other children in the fields.

We listened to Mỹ's story. She shared with us how she wandered the path of other adults taking a wounded child to the village of Trường An for emergency treatment at a makeshift clinic. The baby was near death, having lost a lot of blood. Seeing a lost child in the village, a local family invited Mỹ to stay with them overnight. This is how Hà and I came into contact with our sole surviving older sister. I was excited to see her, but my first question was about the fate of my other two sisters, Thị Hồng (11 years old) and Thị Huệ (5 years old). Mỹ relayed the news I did not want to hear—they had been shot by American soldiers.

I tried to imagine how my father would react upon hearing all of this. His working commitments in Tịnh Hiệp clinic saved his life on that day, but with Quảng Ngãi province in South Vietnam, not the North, the South Vietnamese government had labelled him “a revolutionary,” meaning that he would be killed on the spot if caught by either American soldiers or members of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam.

It turned out that he had been informed of the massacre the day after it occurred and hurriedly set about returning home but was too late to see his wife and two of his children get buried by his own cadremen. He concentrated on gathering information concerning the day's events which led to their deaths. A few days later, he braved the drizzly conditions to see my grandmother, buoyed by the slim prospect of seeing two

of my sisters and myself. Our reunion was emotional, and every month he returned to visit us and check on our condition. He dedicated his life to ensuring that his surviving offspring could have a better life and a chance at receiving an education. The task would have been impossible if some of his closest friends did not act as our guardians in his absence.

My grandmother's home was poor—very poor. Her bamboo house with painted walls in a village on the Sơn Hội River did not feel like a permanent home. I used to have fond memories of coming here with my sisters and swimming in the river, but something seemed peculiar now. Maybe my soul had died. Grandmother was old and frail, and she relied on buying and selling fish in the market in nearby An Lộc. It was her main source of income, but not enough for all of us to live on. My sisters and I asked Ms. Bồn Thường, a family friend, to stop working at the market and assist with making food. Since we experienced regular food shortages, I grew rice, sweet potatoes, and cassava. For what was left of our family, this was the new life—no school, no fun, just struggle.

Every morning, my sisters and I would rise early to commence working on the farm and would come back late. There were days when we had no food. Our skin was black and broken from toiling in the sun, and we were thin. I wore a torn hat and rags for clothing. My meager possessions included a pickaxe and a discarded Korean-made bag, which I used to hunt and gather food and anything else deemed edible. My aunts

and other locals scavenged for rice, cassava, corn, and tubers. Any payment came in the form of guava or some corn.

When I worked in the fields, my little sister Hà accompanied me. She was undernourished and cried a lot, for she missed breast milk. My grandmother improvised by getting the neighborhood children to find somebody who could provide some breast milk in the village. We struggled to survive and were avoiding starvation, but once again tragedy struck our family.

On December 19, 1969, we were informed that lines of communication with our father had been cut off because the country needed him. All I knew at that stage was that he had “been sacrificed for our nation.” I did not know what to think or do. His financial and emotional support, no matter how infrequent, is what kept our household going. The one message I recall him telling me is to always listen to my grandmother’s teachings, for she educated us in times when we had no money to attend school.

This changed in 1970, for my sister Mỹ and I were accepted to attend the local school. What a bittersweet moment for me—my dream had been achieved, but at a cost. How I longed for my parents to see me attend class, even though our hunger pains became excruciating. The worst times occurred when we literally starved because there was no rice to be found. Eventually, we resorted to stealing cassava and sweet potatoes from the garden of a local resident, Ms. Rân.

Such tactics became more commonplace. My sisters worked harder to get more food because our grandmother was no longer able to travel to the market to buy and sell goods. My two sisters and I shared responsibilities for her well-being. My older sister Mỹ, who by 1972 was in the local high school in Tãng Long, dropped out of classes, something she did reluctantly. Hà and I worked in the fields after school and would bring back some rice and sweet potatoes, but when Hà came home one night, we were shocked by her appearance. She was dirty, looked unhealthy, and often went without meals. By contrast to the amount of rice and other foods that Hà and I consumed, my older sister took very little.

At the end of 1972, Sơn Hội continued to resemble a battlefield, and my entire family had to evacuate to Tĩnh Ấn. When the fighting had temporarily ceased a few weeks later, the signs seemed promising—maybe the war would finally stop. However, a bomb from a U.S. fighter plane destroyed my grandmother's house, with a large crater hole evidence of its destruction. Thankfully we were all safe and accounted for, although it took us two months to erect another bamboo house that yet again seemed far from being a home. War instills a legacy of fear, that nothing is permanent.

My siblings, grandmother, and I ventured towards the coast, looking for rice seeds in the fields along the way as part of returning to a stable routine. In Sơn Hội, I saw my friends enjoy their childhood, laughing together as they flew kites and played football in the fields. This life is one I could have only dreamed of, but I resigned to letting them

go, thus cutting off my communication with them. Survival was my first goal. If I acted in a carefree manner, then neither my family nor myself would have food to eat.

This war had deprived me of many things: half of my family, my childhood, and my innocence. Here I stood, a boy forcefully thrown into the life of an adult possessing only a discolored hat and rags as clothes, a hoe in which to dig the earth, and a Korean-made bag to carry whatever I owned. I had no money to buy even the smallest of items.

In the two years leading up to Vietnam's reunification, I became obsessed with finding any long-lost relatives that may have survived the war. My father's fate was still unclear, but I guessed that having spent so long in the mountains, there must be a chance that he could still be alive, for soldiers were often away for long periods of time. I was excited to see Hồng, a longtime friend and son of a local man, Mr. Hộ. But this feeling of ecstasy was cut short when I received a visit from my father's friend, Mr. Phạm Thế Mạnh, who held a high rank in the resistance unit.

"Your father was a very brave man and sacrificed himself heroically," he said, and immediately consoled me. These few words confirmed my worst fears. My father was shot and killed by American soldiers when his ambulance team attempted to help a wounded fighter. It was a crushing blow for me; I remembered his message about the importance of learning and making the most of every opportunity.

When I learned that I would be elevated from the sixth grade at Sơn Hội school to attend a higher level in nearby Sơn Thành, the pride and joy that I felt was immense. But the teacher turned me away from class on the first day because I did not wear long pants. If only she knew just how difficult life had been for me up until this point, then maybe her heart would have been kinder. When I went home and relayed the news, it must have seemed like just another setback. But this one seemed more significant. My aunt gave me a pair of black khaki pants once owned by her late husband, and for the first time I now possessed my first pair of long pants and could attend school. After three lessons, the teacher who refused to let me into class was reduced to tears when I told her what had become of my family. What more could one do?

PART 3

My pain and anger is not aimed at only those who took the lives of my family members, but at those who have covered up mistakes years after and have refused to say anything to me. Many reporters from around the world have come to Sơn Mỹ. They have worked with the Quảng Ngãi municipal staff in their offices and talked several times about the deceased. But I believe the media has been misled by authorities on certain matters. A number of survivors and their relatives have never been asked about their wishes. These include Ms. Phạm Thị Trợ, Ms. Nhiều and her daughter, Ms. Lê Thị Em, Ms. Phạm Thị Hiền, Ms. Bùi Thị Hà, Mr. Bùi Sánh, and the grandson of Mr. Hương

Thơ. They still live less than 800 meters from the memorial house, each one in dire poverty.

You only need look at photographs of the victims taken by U.S. Army officer Mr. Ronald Haeberle. These include:

Ms. Nhiều and her daughter escaped through the back door of their hut and hid in the rice field. They were lucky to flee, for five members of their family were killed.

Ms. Phạm Thị Thuận lost five people in her family, all killed by gunshots. I estimate that about 20 people who ran from the corner of her house sought shelter in the ditch, or other lay down in the garden. Others were hiding behind the altar where the family burned incense and gave offerings to their ancestors. They were all pulled out and shot by U.S. soldiers.

Ms. Đỗ Thị Tuyết lives in Pleiku. She and her family were pulled out by U.S. soldiers and ordered to sit in front of the house before being instructed to enter the ditch. Of the 170 people, most in the line of fire were women and children. Many of them were killed, but you survived if you were covered by the other bodies.

Mr. Phạm Đạt testified that his wife was shot and injured, while a seven-month-old child crawled out of a burning house and wandered towards the ditch; the child was shot by U.S. soldiers, covered in dry leaves, and burned.

Ms. Trương Thị Lê and her child lived because she lay quiet underneath two dead bodies and pretended to be dead.

Ms. Hà Thị Quý is now 83 years old and was wounded in the hip and lay there quietly, also underneath corpses. She later attempted to crawl home. On the way, she saw many injured persons and bodies of women, some of whom had been raped by U.S. soldiers and then shot.

I saw Phạm Thị Trinh, then 11 years old, try to crawl out of the ditch to the top, just like Ms. Phạm Thị Mười, who was only 14 years old when she was found next to a house, raped and shot dead by a U.S. soldier.

A mother and seven-month-old child were covered in straw and set alight by U.S. soldiers.

The home of Mr. Lê contained 15 hidden people who were found and thrown in the trenches. Nobody was spared.

Ms. Trịnh's eight-year-old daughter Thù was shot by U.S. soldiers when attempting to escape a ditch, her mouth still full of rice.

Mr. Trần Tân Huyền from Khê Thuận hamlet said that his grandparents, his parents, and child were shot dead by U.S. soldiers.

Many people from the international press have come with their camera crews to film stories about Mỹ Lai in the past. Authorities paid members of the press to stay about

800 yards away from areas where the poorest survivors and their families lived, to discourage any contact and prevent details being released. Our testimony and history have been ignored. My family received no help from the community or the state. After Vietnam became a united country, I learned that my mother's tombstone had been issued with the wrong date of birth and, even worse, the incorrect picture. When I raised this with house memorial officials, they did not take up my complaints further. Perhaps my stories of a handful of cold rice and going numerous days without food in my childhood interfered with their seemingly lavish lifestyle.

For any of the 130 American soldiers involved in the massacre, people such as Ernest Medina, William Calley, Oran K. Henderson, Samuel W. Koster, Eugene Kotouc, have you considered what impact your actions had on the children who lost their parents? Some of these children are now adults and they still live with the nightmares of being dragged out of their huts, being thrown into ditches, and watching machine guns and grenades slaughter their family members. After 42 years, you still have not come back to seek redemption. What did the innocent people of Sơn Mỹ and the surrounding hamlets do wrong to deserve being killed? How many screaming children can you recall crawling or lying on the ground in a puddle of blood? When you opened fire, mothers were breastfeeding children. Elderly village women and defenseless and unarmed men died with frightened looks in their eyes.

People that we respected and paid reverence to, you spat in their faces. You raped teenage girls and young women. Before committing your evil deeds, your units slowly encircled us, preventing any chance of escape.

Maybe you do not care, in which case an apology is useless.

However, there were some soldiers who showed compassion and I would publicly like to thank them. These people include Mr. Ronald Haeberle, who took a photo of my mother and other images from his helicopter.

These include the two pictures of the four young children he photographed before they were shot by U.S. soldiers, and another of two children lying on the street. The people of Sơn Mỹ remember him very fondly for his actions to prevent further loss of life.

I also pay my respects to Hugh Thompson, who landed his helicopter to rescue an eight-year-old child and take him to a hospital after receiving a radio call from Glenn Andreotta. Larry Colburn, Ron Ridenhour, Seymour Hersh (the investigative journalist who exposed the Mỹ Lai Massacre to the world in 1969) and William R. Peers all tried to tell the world exactly what took place, but were silenced by the U.S. government.

Although I now reside in Germany, I am speaking up on behalf of the residents who continue to live in Mỹ Lai and remain committed to seeing justice prevail for the deceased and survivors.

The 504 People Killed in the Mỹ Lai Massacre

The names of the deceased are followed by their age and gender. A tally shows that more than 200 of the victims were below the age of 12, and more than two dozen were in their 70s and 80s. The list was provided by the Embassy of Vietnam in Washington, D.C., in response to a request by Trent Angers, author of *The Forgotten Hero of My Lai: The Hugh Thompson Story*.

Phạm Chồi, 59, m	Nguyễn Thị Đạo, 70, f	Phạm Cu Ba, 4, m
Huỳnh Thị Hưng, 39, f	Hoàng Dích, 46, m	Phạm Hoạc (Hược), 60, m
Phạm Thị Câu, 49, f	Võ Thị Tư, 40, f	Phạm Xí, 18, m
Phùng Thị Muông, 29, f	Hoàng Văn Thứ, 7, m	Nguyễn Thị Chác, 40, f
Phạm Thị Hoa, 10, f	Hoàng Văn Đủ, 5, m	Phạm Thị Cầm, 18, f
Phạm Sinh, 5, m	Đỗ Thị Trị, 31, f	Phạm Thị Bảy, 10, f
Phạm Thị Huệ, 5, f	Bùi Thị Sản, 8, f	Phạm Tâm, 8, m
Phạm Thị Hồng, 1, f	Bùi Thị Mán, 6, f	Phạm Thị Chinh, 2, f
Phạm Thị Thái, 39, f	Lý Thị Đồng, 50, f	Phạm Đốc, 40, m
Phạm Thị Dạng, 29, f	Quảng Em (Quặm), 49, m	Nguyễn Thị Thâm, 35, f
Trịnh Thị Thứ, 8, f	Quảng Dũ (Vũ), 49, m	Phạm Tài, 12, m
Dương Thị Chư, 69, f	Quảng Xuất, 50, m	Phạm Xí, 10, m
Phạm Mùi, 43, m	Quảng Thị Lũy, 6, f	Phạm Mẻo, 8, m
Phạm Hường, 13, m	Quảng Thị Bàn, 4, f	Phạm Đức, 6, m
Đỗ Thị Mùi, 67, f	Quảng Cu, 1, m	Võ Thị Mại, 35, f
Đỗ Khanh, 80, m	Phạm Hòe, 30, m	Lương Xí, 14, m

Lương Sáu, 11, m	Tô Giỏi, 10, m	Lương Thành, 8, m
Lương Thị Kiên, 37, f	Tô Một, 6, m	Lương Thị Diệp, 5, f
Phạm Lương, 15, m	Phạm Thị Hiệp, 48, f	Lương Tào, 2, m
Phạm Mục, 13, m	Nguyễn Thị Thanh, 48, f	Ngô Thị Một, 10, f
Phạm Đức, 10, m	Phạm Thị Giàu, 31, f	Lê Tiểu, 11, m
Phạm Thị Bê, 4, f	Lương Thị Hung, 71, f	Lê Thị Họn, 75, f
Dương Thị Khéo, 67, f	Phạm Thị Văn, 61, f	Nguyễn Thị Huệ, 39, f
Phạm Thị Đăng, 17, f	Nguyễn Thị Sang, 29, f	Phạm Thị Chút, 39, f
Phạm Bồi, 8, m	Nguyễn Thị Sáo, 28, f	Đỗ Thị Lắm, 9, f
Phạm Thị Bày, 6, f	Nguyễn Văn Bốn, 27, m	Phạm Thị Rằng, 42, f
Nguyễn Khôi, 50, m	Lương Thị Xanh, 8, f	Lương Văn Hiếu, 10, m
Nguyễn Thị Năm, 43, f	Lương Rừng, 11, m	Võ Cao Phúc, 9, m
Nguyễn Nay, 12, m	Lương Tân, 5, m	Võ Thị Ánh, 7, f
Lê Thị Lệ, 48, f	Ngô Thị Tý, 9, f	Võ Cao Sáu, 4, m
Nguyễn Thị Thú, 32, f	Ngô Thị Mùi, 33, f	Võ Nuôi, 76, m
Trần Thị Diêm, 48, f	Lương Hai, 11, m	Phạm Thị Lịch, 54, f

Từ Thị Y, 26, f	Trần Tư, 3, m	Ngô Xin, 15, m
Võ Cu Tèo, 3, m	Lê Thị Khứu (Lài) 42, f	Phạm Thị Đạo, 48, f
Phạm Thị Hược, 55, f	Võ Thị Phụ, 30, f	Đỗ Thị Kiều, 70, f
Nguyễn Thị Thiết, 20, f	Dương Thị Hà, 1, f	Võ Thị Vai, 49, f
Võ Đức Tô, 2, m	Nguyễn Thị Ba, 5, f	Nguyễn Thị Tỵ, 65, f
Võ Mua (Mãi), 61, m	Cao Thị Em, 61, f	Nguyễn Nhơn, 50, m
Phạm Thị Phán, 59, f	Nguyễn Thị Quyên, 32, f	Nguyễn Thị Bùng, 13, f
Võ Thị Mười, 15, f	Lý Thị Hai, 9, f	Nguyễn Thị Chúa, 10, f
Võ Thị Nhung, 2, f	Lý Văn Sinh, 6, m	Võ Song, 25, m
Ngô Thị Ngon, 31, f	Nguyễn Thị Yên, 29, f	Ngô Ngọ, 55, m
Nguyễn Thị Khi, 9, f	Ngô Thị Cát (Một), 45, f	Ngô Tự, 15, m
Nguyễn Khái, 7, m	Nguyễn Thị Một, 23, f	Ngô Sinh, 63, m
Nguyễn Khố, 3, m	Nguyễn Duy Thanh, 15, m	Ngô Đắc, 40, m
Nguyễn Thị Hóa, 28, f	Trần Thị Bé, 3, f	Ngô Thị Biết, 45, f
Trần Hai, 9, m	Ngô Đề, 6, m	Ngô Các, 46, m
Trần Ba, 7, m	Ngô Lê, 4, m	Phạm Hùng, 78, m

Lê Thị Duyệt, 36, f	Phạm Thị Có, 56, f	Nguyễn Thị Tương, 46, f
Phạm Sản, 12, m	Nguyễn Thị Thắm, 12, f	Trương Thị Châu, 45, f
Phạm Thị Thanh, 6, f	Nguyễn Thị Hồng, 11, f	Lê Thị Tữu, 70, f
Nguyễn Thị Phước, 62, f	Nguyễn Thị Vân, 7, f	Phạm Thị Thơ, 64, f
Nguyễn Thị Ba, 12, f	Đỗ Còn (Ngộ), 65, m	Nguyễn Thị Bi, 17, f
Bùi Thị Biết, 37, f	Đỗ Duy Hạt, 5, m	Nguyễn Thị Thu, 8, f
Nguyễn Thị Muối, 3, f	Đỗ Duy Thành, 11, m	Trương Nhị, 33, m
Bùi Thị Bông, 76, f	Đỗ Thị Nhựt, 7, f	Nguyễn Thị Chấn, 31, f
Nguyễn Thị Chút, 24, f	Nguyễn Nhiều, 47, m	Trương Bốn, 13, m
Nguyễn Văn Chạy, 3, m	Nguyễn Chấn, 68, m	Trương Năm, 6, m
Đinh Thị Hải, 67, f	Nguyễn Toàn, 21, m	Trương Thị Sáu, 4, f
Nguyễn Thị Thông, 38, f	Đỗ Xúc, 61, m	Trương Thị Bầy, 3, f
Nguyễn Thị Dung, 6, f	Nguyễn Thị Đây, 50, f	Nguyễn Thị Chua, 56, f
Nguyễn Kỳ, 14, m	Phạm Thị Thịnh, 3, f	Nguyễn Thị Đào, 8, f
Phạm Quy, 80, m	Phạm Thị Thư, 1, f	Lê Thị Thi, 30, f
Nguyễn Thị Quý, 76, f	Đỗ Thị Bầy, 21, f	Nguyễn Thị Thuyền, 5, f

Nguyễn Cu, 2, m	Trương Thơ, 72, m	Đỗ Thị Lợi, 34, f
Nguyễn Hay, 57, m	Trương Thị Mai, 43, f	Trương Thị Ba, 8, f
Đỗ Thị Hành, 58, f	Lê Thị Bày, 45, f	Trương Thị Khai, 6, f
Nguyễn Hay, 21, m	Trương Thị Sửu, 18, f	Trương Tấn, 14, m
Nguyễn Cường, 3, m	Trương Kiệt, 18, m	Trương Củ, 12, m
Nguyễn Giác, 1, m	Trương Thị Nếp, 9, f	Trương Thị Xĩ, 8, f
Nguyễn Hân, 2, m	Trương Thị Du, 1, f	Trương Thị Bích, 10, f
Nguyễn Thị Bày, 19, f	Trương Sung, 62, m	Trương Kịch, 6, m
Nguyễn Thị Dân, 18, f	Phạm Mục Lai, 70, m	Phạm Thị Nhi, 65, f
Đỗ Thị Sương, 70, m	Nguyễn Đa (Xì), 6, m	Nguyễn Thị Cung, 57, f
Trương Giảng, 55, m	Trần Đầu, 80, m	Đỗ Trợ, 35, m
Đỗ Thị Hiệp, 57, f	Trần Đốc, 48, m	Đỗ Thị Nhanh, 7, f
Nguyễn Thị Tường, 22, f	Lê Thị Tất, 43, f	Đỗ Thị Bé, 9, f
Nguyễn Ca, 2, m	Trần Hùng Sinh, 18, m	Đỗ Cu, 5, m
Đỗ Cu Bày, 9, m	Trần Thế, 5, m	Đỗ Thị Lộc, 7, f
Đỗ Cu, 3, m	Đỗ Thị Xuyên, 68, f	Đỗ Cu, 1, m

Phạm Thị Em, 34, f	Đỗ Thành, 14, m	Nguyễn Hiệp, 40, m
Đỗ Thị Hòa, 23, f	Đỗ Thị Nhựt, 7, f	Đỗ Thị Rí, 70, f
Nguyễn Thị Chúc, 55, f	Đỗ Cu, 1, m	Đỗ Thị Chín, 49, f
Nguyễn Văn Đức, 3, m	Đỗ Thị Bé, 3, f	Đỗ Thị Gái, 42, f
Cao Thị Nhung (Liệu), 62, f	Lê Văn Mỹ, 8, m	Phạm Thị Tình, 70, f
Nguyễn Thị Dẫu, 36, f	Đỗ Thị Cân, 26, f	Phạm Thị Đạo (Lại), 75, f
Phạm Thị Mãi, 12, f	Đỗ Thị Thuộc, 45, f	Nguyễn Đối, 70, m
Phạm Phúc (Đùm), 26, m	Phùng Thị Liễu, 25, f	Nguyễn Thị Núm, 35, f
Phạm Thị Nhò, 24, f	Phùng Thị Tiền, 5, f	Nguyễn Thị Xí, 12, f
Phạm Thị Khánh, 6, f	Đỗ Đình Tư, 4, m	Nguyễn Tại, 72, m
Phạm Hòa, 4, m	Lư Thị Xuân, 34, f	Nguyễn Gặp, 68, m
Phùng Thị Lý, 24, f	Nguyễn Thị Thuận, 60, f	Nguyễn Thị Lãnh, 30, f
Phạm Thị Dư, 1, f	Quảng Thị Vận, 55, f	Nguyễn Thị Thành, 28, f
Nguyễn Thị Sâm, 22, f	Trương Đề, 30, m	Nguyễn Cơ, 28, m
Đỗ Thị Nguyệt, 12, f	Nguyễn Đá (Hòa), 50, m	Trương Thị Huyền, 65, f
Đỗ Dực, 36, m	Phạm Thị Lâu, 47, f	Đỗ ch, 56, m

Đỗ Dũng, 8, m	Nguyễn Hóa, 5, m	Đỗ Phùng, 68, m
Đặng Hãnh, 63, m	Nguyễn Danh, 2, m	Đỗ Đoàn, 20, m
Trương Thị Nho, 61, f	Phùng Thị Hiệp, 30, f	Phùng Cu, 1, m
Đặng Thị Xí, 4, f	Nguyễn Thị Huệ, 12, f	Phạm Thị Tuấn, 28, f
Đặng Đức, 2, m	Nguyễn Thị Bé, 3, f	Nguyễn Thị Huynh, 7, f
Phạm Lâm, 49, m	Lê Thị Bình, 34, f	Nguyễn Chí, 44, m
Lý Thị Ánh, 30, f	Đỗ Thị Nguyệt, 10, f	Ngô Thị Tuyết, 46, f
Phạm Hùng, 14, m	Đỗ Bạch, 8, m	Võ Thị Thìn, 68, f
Phạm Thị Xí, 1, f	Đỗ Cu, 4, m	Nguyễn Thị Bích, 45, f
Nguyễn Thị Dận, 27, f	Phạm Thị Ứng, 45, f	Nguyễn Thị Bướm, 8, f
Phạm Cường, 1, m	Nguyễn Thị Nguyệt, 8, f	Bùi Tá, 60, m
Nguyễn Lưu, 55, m	Nguyễn Cư, 5, m	Phạm Thị Sờ, 50, f
Nguyễn Thị Nguyệt, 8, f	Đỗ Thị Mai, 42, f	Nguyễn Thị Lan, 19, f
Phạm Thị Hoạch, 31, f	Nguyễn Thị Ru, 11, f	Trần Lan (Hậu), 59, m
Nguyễn Thị Liên, 52, f	Nguyễn Rân, 9, m	Đỗ Thị An, 42, f
Nguyễn Thị Trí, 10, f	Nguyễn Cu, 7, m	Trần Thị Hương, 17, f

Trần Văn Khôi, 15, m	Phạm Quới, 39, m	Lê Thị Danh, 9, f
Trần Văn Sánh, 12, m	Nguyễn Thị Bộ (Tẩu), 49, f	Lê Thị Biết, 13, f
Trần Thị Thu, 10, f	Trần Thị Hồng, 11, f	Đỗ Thị Dưóc, 70, f
Trần Thị Hoa, 1, f	Trần Thị Huệ, 7, f	Nguyễn Sương, 45, m
Nguyễn Thị Dương, 12, f	Trần Thị Thông, 55, f	Phạm Nhỏ, 35, m
Nguyễn Mai, 9, m	Ngô Da, 20, m	Lư Thị Quen, 42, f
Nguyễn Đẹp, 7, m	Ngô Thị Quan, 14, f	Đỗ Thị Nguyệt, 9, f
Nguyễn Tinh, 4, m	Ngô Thị Minh, 12, f	Đỗ Cu, 5, m
Nguyễn Tư, 2, m	Ngô Thị Xí, 7, f	Phạm Thị Xí, 20, f
Nguyễn Khương, 25, m	Ngô Thị Hoa, 8, f	Nguyễn Tấn Sanh (Gòi), 75, m
Phạm Thị Tri, 23, f	Ngô Cu, 4, m	Võ Cu Tuấn, 10, m
Nguyễn Thị Bé, 1, f	Lê Lý, 70, m	Võ Phan, 11, m
Phạm Kỳ, 20, m	Võ Thị Bút, 65, f	Trần Ân, 45, m
Phạm Thị Thân, 12, f	Nguyễn Thị Luận, 34, f	Trần Chấn, 20, m
Phạm Thị Lành, 10, f	Lê Cổ, 42, m	Trần Sương Kinh, 28, m
Phạm Cổ, 60, m	Lê Cu, 11, m	

Phạm Nhất, 1, m	Nguyễn Thị Anh, 14, f	Phạm Tuấn, 12, m
Phạm Xí, 9, m	Nguyễn Hoàng, 60, m	Phạm Cổ, 49, m
Phạm Tân, 5, m	Nguyễn Hà, 5, m	Phạm Thị Sính, 19, f
Nguyễn Kỳ, 52, m	Nguyễn Đắc, 10, m	Phạm Thĩ Bé, 1, f
Trương Luyện, 58, m	Đỗ Kỳ, 57, m	Phạm Thị Em, 6, f
Trương Luyện, 12, m	Đỗ Phước, 26, m	Nguyễn Thị Mười, 10, f
Trương Công, 16, m	Đỗ Thị Bình, 12, f	Nguyễn Thị Lùn, 13, f
Trương Sung, 2, m	Đỗ Thụy, 10, m	Nguyễn Một, 50, m
Trương Thị Nhơn, 6, f	Phạm Chúc, 62, m	Nguyễn Dân, 52, m
Nguyễn Quyền, 46, m	Phạm Chánh, 1, m	Nguyễn Cao, 64, m
Nguyễn Đức Huy, 32, m	Phạm Cuộc, 12, m	Nguyễn Thị Hoa, 7, f
Nguyễn Thị Một, 6, f	Phạm Suy, 41, m	Lê Thị Cảnh, 14, f
Đỗ Bồng, 10, m	Phạm Khá, 68, m	Lê Thị Tương, 12, f
Nguyễn Hiệp, 52, m	Phạm Tòng, 38, m	Phạm Thị Kiệt, 26, f
Đỗ Thị Thuần, 60, f	Đào Sơn, 50, m	Phạm Thị Thọ, 16, f
Nguyễn Oanh, 10, m	Phạm A, 6, m	Phạm Thị Hoàng, 40, f

Nguyễn Văn Thanh, 5, m	Nguyễn Cẩm, 19, m	Nguyễn Thị Huỳnh, 15, f
Nguyễn Văn Cu, 1, m	Nguyễn Dưỡng, 39, m	Ngô Ngọ, 5, m
Ngô Thị Thi, 7, m	Đỗ Thị Xí, 2, f	Phạm Chiêm, 45, m
Nguyễn Toán, 13, m	Dương Thị Hàn, 10, f	Đỗ Thích, 6, m
Nguyễn Nhiều, 13, m	Trần Thị Sỏa, 6, f	Phạm Tăng, 59, m
Lê Thị Minh, 2, f	Nguyễn Dương, 55, m	Trương Hiệp, 18, m
Nguyễn Thị Kiên, 16, f	Trần Thị Phượng, 60, f	Nguyễn Thị Ngộ, 45, f
Lê Thị Được, 14, f	Nguyễn Mỹ, 21, m	Nguyễn Thị Một, 22, f
Nguyễn Thị Đạm, 38, f	Nguyễn Quân, 18, m	Nguyễn Vận, 15, m
Nguyễn Thị Hòa, 16, f	Nguyễn Thị Bờm, 12, f	Trương Thị Diễn, 67, f
Nguyễn Thị Nga, 2, f	Nguyễn Thị Phương, 10, f	Dương Thị Nhỏ, 66, f
Phạm Thị Lưỡng, 2, f	Đỗ Hợp, 8, m	Nguyễn Sinh, 19, m
Phạm Thị Toàn, 49, f	Nguyễn Thị Trương, 32, f	Trương Anh, 42, m
Đỗ Ngọc Nền, 50, m	Trương Thị Ri, 2, f	Đỗ Bang, 15, m
Đỗ Thị Nhâm, 33, f	Nguyễn Thị Bình, 6, f	Đỗ Thị Sang, 13, f
Nguyễn Thị Cải, 43, f	Nguyễn Thị Bốn, 10, f	Đỗ Thị Thành, 1, f

Đỗ Tất, 9, m	Nguyễn Cừ, 11, m
Đỗ Thị Thành, 7, f	Phạm Tấn, 9, m
Trần Sơn, 52, m	Trần Kinh, 38, m
Trần Hòa, 38, m	Đỗ Phương, 19, m
Trương Thị Châu, 72, f	Nguyễn Tâm, 48, m
Nguyễn Phương, 12, m	Nguyễn Cươ, 10, m
Phạm Hước, 50, m	Nguyễn Thị Tuất, 46, f
Phạm Thị Mẫn, 10, f	Đỗ Thị Xí, 1, f
Phạm Thị Vọng, 71, f	Ngô Thị Biết, 45, f
Võ Thị Cổ, 72, f	
Nguyễn Thị Thiện, 32, f	
Phạm Thị Mới, 70, f	
Phạm Sơn, 42, m	
Phạm Em, 18, m	
Trương Thị Lân, 38, f	
Đỗ Hạnh, 1, m	

Credits

PRODUCED BY Scott Fraser and Kronos Quartet

RECORDED BY Scott Fraser at Fantasy Studios, Berkeley, California, March 26–30, 2018

ASSISTANT ENGINEER: Robert Kirby

MIXED BY Scott Fraser and Kronos Quartet

MASTERED BY Scott Fraser

EXECUTIVE PRODUCER: Janet Cowperthwaite

PROJECT SUPERVISOR FOR KRONOS: Reshena Liao

ANNOTATED BY Jonathan Berger and Trần Văn Đức

Dedicated to the memory of Larry Colburn

COVER PHOTO BY Ronald Haeberle

PHOTOS OF KRONOS QUARTET, VÂN-ÁNH VANESSA VÕ, AND RINDE ECKERT BY Zoran Orlic

Audio sample of Quảng Ngãi lullaby by Pham Thi Mac used with permission from the Vietnam Institute of Musicology.

Audio sample from J.B. Lenoir's "Vietnam Blues" (1980, L+R Records) courtesy of Bellaphon records GmbH, Germany.

For the Kronos Quartet/Kronos Performing Arts Association: Janet Cowperthwaite, Executive Director; with Mason Dille, Dana Dizon, Sarah Donahue, Reshena Liao, Nikolás McConnie-Saad, and Kären Nagy.

kronosquartet.org

Mỹ Lai (music by Jonathan Berger, libretto by Harriet Scott Chessman) was commissioned for the Kronos Quartet, Rinde Eckert, and Vân-Ánh Vanessa Võ by the Harris Theater for Music and Dance with support from the Laura and Ricardo Rosenkranz Artistic Innovation Fund and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Gerbode-Hewlett Foundations 2013 Music Commissioning Awards initiative, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Mỹ Lai was recorded with support from Donald and Karen Evarts.

Mỹ Lai received its world premiere at the Harris Theater for Music and Dance in Chicago, IL, on January 29, 2016, with Larry Colburn, one of the other two men in Hugh Thompson Jr.'s helicopter crew, in attendance. The production was also presented by Singapore International Festival of Arts in Singapore; BAM's Next Wave Festival in Brooklyn, NY; Cal Performances in Berkeley, CA; Center for the Art of Performance at UCLA in Los Angeles, CA; and Hancher Auditorium in Iowa City, IA.

For the live production of *Mỹ Lai*:

Mark DeChiazza, Rinde Eckert, *directors/set designers*

Mark DeChiazza, *video projections designer*

Brian H. Scott, *lighting designer*

Drew Cameron, *creative consultant*

Janet Cowperthwaite, *producer*

Kronos Performing Arts Association, *production management*

SPECIAL THANKS TO: Mark DeChiazza, Brian H. Scott, Drew Cameron, Scott Fraser, Brian Mohr, Gregory Kuhn; Michael Tiknis, Joe Melillo, Keng Sen Ong, Matías Tarnopolsky, Kristy Edmunds, Jacob Yarrow, Chris Lorway; Pham Minh Huong, Trần Đức Văn, David Calleja, Jeannette Boudreau, Connie Field, Maureen Jules, Trent Angers; Regan Harrington, Mizue, Holland, and Jason Sherba, Greg Dubinsky, and Frédéric Rosselet.

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(top) Composer Jonathan Berger. Photo by Talya Berger.

(bottom) Librettist Harriet Scott Chessman. Photo by Catherine Kiernan.



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Mỹ Lai

On March 16, 1968, the United States Army killed over 500 unarmed civilians in the hamlet of Mỹ Lai, Vietnam. This definitive recording of the new opera *Mỹ Lai* recounts the visceral, phantasmal feelings of grief and horror experienced by US helicopter pilot Hugh Thompson on that day and in haunting memories over the nearly four decades

since. Written by Jonathan Berger (music) and Harriet Scott Chessman (libretto) for Kronos Quartet, Vietnamese multi-instrumentalist Vân-Ánh Vanessa Võ, and vocalist Rinde Eckert, this tense and unforgiving work is “a gripping affair, beginning to end” (*New York Times*). It is presented here alongside recollections by Vietnamese survivor Trần Văn Đức and is a memorial to all the Mỹ Lai villagers killed on that grim day.

Kronos Quartet

David Harrington, *violin*

John Sherba, *violin*

Hank Dutt, *viola*

Sunny Yang, *cello*

Vân-Ánh Vanessa Võ, *t'rung, đàn bầu, đàn tranh*

Rinde Eckert, *vocalist*

MUSIC BY Jonathan Berger

LIBRETTO BY Harriet Scott Chessman

01 Mỹ Lai Lullaby (7:58)

02 First Landing: Flight (9:36)

03 First Landing: Descent (7:04)

04 First Landing: The Ditch (14:16)

05 Second Landing: Hovering (8:26)

06 Second Landing: Bunker (12:31)

07 Third Landing: Postcard (5:16)

08 Third Landing: Fishing (5:45)



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Track 1: (Jonathan Berger-David Harrington-Vân-Ánh Vanessa Võ-J.B. Lenoir/Noga Music, ASCAP-Inner Sunset Publishing, BMI-Vân-Ánh Vanessa Võ, ASCAP-Ghana Music, BMI) Tracks 2-8: (Jonathan Berger-Harriet Scott Chessman/Noga Music, ASCAP-Ariel 100, ASCAP)