

“POWERFUL
TIMELY
ENGAGING
RELEVANT
MEMORABLE”

“*Letters Home* is evocative, emotional, and engaging. We had nothing but positive feedback from our patrons, which comprise a large spectrum of our community: middle, high school and college students; college faculty and staff; senior citizens and veterans. The production values are of the highest quality, arresting in their simplicity, and the actors are wonderfully talented.”

- Sarah Van Buren, Assistant Director of Performing Arts,
Kingsborough Community College, Brooklyn, New York

“*Letters Home* is a powerful, important piece -- timely, fair-minded, thought provoking.”

- Angela Marroy Boerger, Education and Community
Programs Coordinator, Westport Country Playhouse

“It is often challenging to find high quality, relevant theatre to present to Middle and High school audiences. We were so pleased to offer *Letters Home* this season: A gripping performance that engaged the students and provided many opportunities for pre-show and post-show discussion, both in the classroom and at home.”

- Joanna Ferraro-Levy, Arts Education Program Director,
West Hampton Beach Performing Arts Center, New York

“*Letters Home* was one of the most memorable plays that we presented as part of our Educational Performances program. Students, teachers, members of our Board of Directors, City of Cerritos Council Members, as well as our military guests appreciated the accurate portrayal of the human condition that results from war. Griffin Theatre Company provided hundreds of young people the opportunity to deepen their understanding of the soldier's experiences. Following the performance many students became involved in the efforts to support our troops by collecting needed supplies that they sent to Iraq. Others wrote letters and cards.”

- Helene Trudeau, Director of Education, Cerritos Center for
the Performing Arts, Cerritos, California



MISSION

The mission of the Griffin Theatre Company is to create extraordinary and meaningful theatrical experiences for both children and adults by building bridges of understanding between generations that instill in its audience an appreciation of the performing arts. The Griffin achieves this mission and vision through artistic collaboration, produces literary adaptations, original work and classic plays that challenge and inspire, with wit, style and compassion for the audience. The company is supported by an ensemble of Artist in Residence with a range of disciplines include acting, designing, directing and production.

HISTORY

The Griffin Theatre Company originated in Chicago's Logan Square neighborhood in a factory loft the company renovated. In July 1992, the Griffin relocated to the Andersonville neighborhood of Chicago and renovated the historic Calo Theater. In 2011 the Griffin purchased an abandoned police station from the city of Chicago to renovate into a permanent home. The Griffin Arts Center-a two theater arts complex will open in the summer of 2013.

Over the last twenty-five years the Griffin has provided a wide range of work including world and mid-west premieres of acclaimed scripts, critically lauded productions of Shakespeare and original adaptations of novels. Many of the Griffin's 100 plus productions have appeared on Chicago area critics "Best of the Year" lists. These productions included, *Time and the Conway*, *Angus*, *Thongs and Full-Frontal Snogging*, *Ash Can Alley*, *Shakespeare's Dog*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *The Art of Success*, *Women and Wallace*, *The Downside*, *Be More Chill*, *Loving Little Egypt*, *Independence*, *Letters Home* and most recently, *Punk Rock* and the Tony Award-winning musical, *Spring Awakening*. The Griffin is the recipient of 46 Joseph Jefferson Award nominations for theatre excellence in Chicago and numerous other awards and citations for its work.

Children's programming at the Griffin brings young people original productions of award-winning children's literature. Productions have included the world premieres of *The Whipping Boy*, *Sleeping Ugly*, *Frindle*, *Catherine Called Birdy*, *Romeo and Juliet are Alive and Well and Living in Maple Bend*, *There's a Boy in the Girls' Bathroom* and *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales*. The Griffin's national touring company brings its two most popular productions—*The Stinky Cheese Man & Other Fairly Stupid Tales* and *Frindle* to young people throughout the United States each year. Tours have included such prestigious venues as Cleveland Playhouse Square, Kravis Center for the Performing Arts in West Palm Beach Florida, Tennessee Performing Arts Center in Nashville and the Vilar Performing Arts Center in Beaver Creek, Colorado. Last year the Griffin Theatre had the pleasure to perform its touring productions for over 100,000 young people and adults nationwide.

“Extraordinary, Deeply Moving, The emotional impact of this 90-minute journey is profound”

- Chicago Sun Times

LETTERS HOME

Inspired by the *New York Times* article, “The Things They Wrote” and the HBO Documentary *Last Letters Home*

Adapted by William Massolia



(773)769-2228
griffintheatre.com

3711 North Ravenswood Ave. Suite 145 • Chicago, IL 60613

TOURING
PRODUCTION

AUDIENCE RESPONSE

“*Letters Home* was the most compelling, patriotic and moving production we have ever presented. As a proud American, I would say that *Letters Home* is a tribute to our nation, our military, our soldiers and their families that every American should see. *Letters Home* is a timely, intimate and real look at life for the brave men and women who are risking everything to defend our freedom.”

- Alan Jenkins, Founder, Merrimack Hall Performing Arts Center, Huntsville, Alabama

“As a piece of theater that illuminates the humanity behind the Iraq & Afghanistan wars, *Letters Home* eloquently portrays a powerful and convincing look at the people serving are country. It is important regardless to what your position is about the war to understand the experience of those serving and the lives they touch. It’s all too easy to take a position to say that the war is good or bad. *Letters Home* is written and performed with such honesty and conviction it makes taking sides irrelevant. Our audiences were captivated and emotionally moved, leaving the theater with a better understanding and compassion on this complex situation.”

- Tim Sauers, Director of Education and Community Engagement, Overture Center for the Performing Arts, Madison, Wisconsin

“With our proximity to Fort Drum, more than half of our students have had a parent who has been deployed. Experiences such as *Letters Home* remind our students that the celebrations, sacrifices, and complex emotions inherent with military deployments are inspirations to us all. Serving ones country is one of the most noble of undertakings, and we are proud to support our families through positive experiences such as *Letters Home*.”

- Troy Decker, Indian River High School, Philadelphia, New York

“MOVING
INTIMATE
INSPIRING
HONEST
PATRIOTIC”

SYNOPSIS

Letters Home puts the wars in Afghanistan & Iraq front and center by bringing to life actual letters written by soldiers serving in the Middle East. The production is inspired by the *New York Times* Op-Ed Article “*The Things They Wrote*” and the subsequent HBO documentary *Last Letters Home*, and additionally uses letters and correspondences from Frank Schaeffer’s books, *Voices From the Front*, *Letters Home From America’s Military Family*, *Faith of Our Sons*, and *Keeping Faith*. The play without politicizing gives audiences a powerful portrait of the soldier experience in our ongoing wars. The initial production was critically acclaimed and was nominated for a Joseph Jefferson Award for “Outstanding New Play.”

Although the title of the play implies that all the letters are from soldiers, the piece includes a small number of correspondences from parents – their words, being no less important. These letters were written under the most difficult of circumstances; the disorientation of training, deployment, separation from family and loved ones and combat, and occupation duties in Afghanistan and Iraq. One theme seems to unite their diverse voices; the belief that the person standing beside you is more important than you are. They also help define for the audience—patriotism and what it means to serve our country today, through acts of bravery, compassion, social responsibility, sense of community and brotherhood. Collectively the production gives a voice to a generation that went to war against terror in Afghanistan and to war in Iraq, for reasons that are still being debated. More importantly, the play reveals the humanity that lies within the war as seen through the eyes of the men and women who are still fighting and dying in those wars today.

The production uses minimal props and set pieces to dramatize the letters. It employs the use of images and video projected behind the actors as they perform the letters as dramatic monologues. The photos and video used in the production are taken directly from actual soldiers’ blogs and websites such as MYSFACE and FACEBOOK. To enhance the theatrical experience of the play all performances are followed by a post-play discussion. Presenters may also request an in-school residency or workshops for educational performances.

To book **LETTERS HOME** or for more information, contact Bill Massolia at (773) 505-4642 or bill.massolia@ren.com.

SOURCE MATERIALS

VOICES FROM THE FRONT: Letters Home From America’s Military Family
By Frank Schaeffer

KEEPING FAITH: A Father-Son Story About Love and the United States Marine Corps. By John Schaeffer and Frank Schaeffer

FAITH OF OUR SONS: A Father’s Wartime Diary By Frank Schaeffer

OPERATION HOMECOMING: Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Home Front, in the Words of U.S. Troops and Their Families Edited by Andrew Carroll

THE THINGS THEY WROTE. A series of monthly articles published in the *New York Times*. Letters written by U.S. soldiers who were killed in action. 2003 – 2004.

LAST LETTERS HOME, Voices of Americans From the Battlefields of Iraq LIFE Based on the New York Times and HBO Documentary

LAST LETTERS HOME. HBO Documentary

ADDITIONAL READING & SOURCES

THEIR LAST WORDS: A Tribute to Soldiers Who Lost Their Lives in Iraq By George G. Sheldon

LETTERS FROM THE FRONT LINES: Iraq and Afghanistan By Stuart Franklin Platt

AWOL: The Unexcused Absence of America’s Upper Classes From Military Service and How it Hurts our Country By Kathy Roth-Douquet and Frank Schaeffer

THE RECRUITER. HBO Documentary

GENERATION KILL (7-Part Series). HBO Feature Film

TAKING CHANCE. HBO Feature Film

THE HURT LOCKER. Warner Brothers/Summit Entertainment

GRIFFIN THEATRE HAS PERFORMED LETTERS HOME AT:

Van Wezel Performing Arts Hall – Sarasota, Florida
Westport Country Playhouse, Westport, Connecticut
Cleveland Playhouse Square – Cleveland, Ohio
Coral Springs Center for the Arts – Coral Springs, Florida
The Grand Theatre – Wausau, Wisconsin
Clowes Memorial Hall of Butler University – Indianapolis, Indiana
The Bushnell Center for the Arts – Hartford, Connecticut
Paramount Arts Center – Peekskill, New York
Westhampton Beach Performing Arts Center – New York
Cerritos Center for the Performing Arts – Cerritos, California
SUNY Purchase College – Purchase, New York
Overture Center for the Arts – Madison, Wisconsin
Kingsborough College – Brooklyn, New York
Capital Center for the Arts – Concord, New Hampshire
Young Auditorium, University of Wisconsin – Whitewater, Wisconsin
University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire, Wisconsin
Tennessee Center for the Performing Arts – Nashville, Tennessee
Civic Center of Greater Des Moines – Des Moines, Iowa
University of North Carolina – Pembroke, North Carolina
Merrimack Performing Arts Hall – Huntsville, Alabama
Hippodrome Foundation – Baltimore, Maryland
The Peace Center for the Performing Arts – Greenville, South Carolina
Performing Arts Center, Warsaw High School – Warsaw, Indiana
Philadelphia High School – Philadelphia, New York