

# V IS FOR VIOLIN STUDY GUIDE

ACU Theatre's Studio Production of 2015

A play by ACU alumna Brittany Taylor

Directed by Junior Directing major David Porter

(Warning: This presentation does contain some graphic images.)

# Playwright: Brittany Taylor

- Brittany is an alum ('12) of the ACU Theatre Department.
- She graduated ACU as a musical theatre major and is currently working toward her MFA in playwriting at the University of Arkansas.
- In addition to *V is for Violin*, Brittany's 10-minute play, *Jars*, will be produced by the Manhattan Repertory Theatre in late March/early April.



# The Play

- This play is a fictional account inspired by the real-life struggle of South African photographer Kevin Carter. Kevin in *V is for Violin* is played by junior acting major, Andrew Koenig.
- Brittany's play takes place in the United States and focuses on the Carter's home life in the aftermath of the Pulitzer Prize-winning photograph he took while visiting Sudan.
- The main differences between Kevin Carter's real life and the character, Kevin, in *V is for Violin* are:
  1. Kevin's wife in real life was named Julia and in the play, she is named Trista.
  2. The directorial concept for this production of *V is for Violin* is being placed in Atlanta, Georgia, while Kevin Carter was obviously from South Africa.
  3. Trista's pregnancy is only in *V is for Violin*. Kevin Carter in real life had a child out of wedlock before he took this picture.
  4. Kevin Carter's life ends tragically, while Kevin's life in *V is for Violin* ends on a note of hope and redemption.

# Kevin Carter Biography

- Kevin Carter grew up in South Africa amongst the violence and tension over racial segregation at the time.
- He struggled to find something he could connect to in his teenage years until he grasped onto photography and journalism.
- He then joined the “Bang Bang Club,” a group that courageously photographed the violence in South Africa to show the injustice to the rest of the world.



# Kevin Carter Biography



Kevin Carter took a picture (seen left) that captured the horrendous nature of famine in Sudan during the 1990s.

- The graphic nature of the picture caused him to spiral into depression and his battle with substance abuse worsened.
- He won the Pulitzer Prize for this picture in 1994, but he received plenty of criticism from people all around the world about whether he acted ethically in photographing this girl instead of saving her.
- Kevin Carter committed suicide just months after receiving the award.

# Photojournalism Ethics

- This is a photo of the violence in South Africa taken by Kevin Carter
- In the play, Kevin battles the thought that even though he did “[his] job” as a “photographer,” he did not do his job as a “human being.”
- Photographers like Kevin Carter often see people in perilous and horrible situations. The question that is often asked is, “Where is the line between documenting the situation and helping the situation?”



# Photojournalism Ethics

- While Carter was in Africa, he was told specifically not to touch the victims of the famine in Sudan for fear of contracting one of the many diseases prevalent in the area.
- However, the code of photojournalism ethics still states that a photographer must do these things:
  1. Be in an ethical position in the discourse of their photograph
  2. Portray an aesthetic representation of such ethical position
  3. Practice ethically in the production of their photographs
  4. Ethically display their work to public

# Other Characters

- **Trista:** Kevin's wife. They have only been married for a short while and reside in Atlanta, Georgia. Before Kevin leaves for Africa, she becomes pregnant. Upon Kevin's arrival, she often fails to understand Kevin and his struggles with adapting to first world life. Trista will be played by sophomore theatre education/directing major, FaithAnn Jones.
- **Nathan:** Kevin's mentor and leader on his trip to Africa. Nathan has been traveling the globe taking pictures for a non-profit for most of his life. Because of this, he is rather lonely and finds it difficult to be artistically satisfied. He is jealous of Kevin's success. Nathan will be played by junior theatre education major, Joseph Burnam.



# Themes of the Play

- PTSD - Kevin is believed to be experiencing “Delayed Onset PTSD,” as ACU psychiatrist Dr. John Casada stated. Because of the child he took the picture of in Africa, Kevin struggles to find the place in his heart to love his own child that his wife, Trista, is carrying when he returns. This drives an “emotional wedge” between the two of them.
- Brittany Taylor said she believes no one character in this play is “purely altruistic” nor is anyone “the bad guy.”
- Christian themes like “The Tree of Life” and “water into wine” are seen. Opposite to the redeeming love of Christ, Brittany also said that she believes most people who don’t understand the love of Christ usually only love conditionally and for separate “selfish purposes” and agendas.

# Thank you for visiting the study guide!



“We at ACU Theatre hope you enjoy our production of *V is for Violin* that has come full circle with Brittany’s return to the department as a playwright. This student performed, student directed, and student written play will not only attempt to pull at your heart strings with gripping images of life and death; it will also stretch your mind with deep musings of the meaning of human responsibility. The show will be performed February 26-28 in the Culp Theatre.”

- Braden Clark, Dramaturge for *V is for Violin*

# Works Cited

- <https://kevincarterpresentation.wordpress.com/>
- <http://moviespictures.org/biography/Prozes, Kevin>
- <http://www.roads.co/S=0/roads-blog/documentary-the-death-of-kevin-carter-by-dan-krauss/>
- Interviews with both Brittany Taylor and ACU psychiatrist Dr. John Casada