

**THE GRANDEUR OF MYTH, THE TRANSFORMATION OF A SINGLE MAN** into a movement, and music that can change the very way we hear—these are the elements of *Satyagraha*, Philip Glass’s epic meditation on the legacy of Mohandas K. Gandhi. Known to his followers as Mahatma, or “great soul,” Gandhi was both the father of India’s independence and a political thinker of historic importance. Over the course of the events depicted in Glass’s opera, Gandhi develops his philosophy of *satyagraha*, a Sanskrit term that loosely translates as “truth force”—the conviction that love, not violence, is the strongest means of fighting oppression. As distant as one could imagine from the works of Bizet, Wagner, or Verdi, *Satyagraha* is nevertheless pure opera. Philip Glass explains, “I was interested in rebalancing the elements of opera: text, movement, image, and music.”

This Metropolitan Opera production unites Glass, who is considered one of the most important voices in Western music in the 20th and 21st centuries, with Britain’s ingenious Improbable, a theater company led by Phelim McDermott and Julian Crouch. The result is a theatrical experience unlike any other. With projections, puppetry, extraordinary music, and a set that uses humble materials such as corrugated metal and newsprint, the story of Gandhi’s political awakening unfolds on the Met stage, sung in Sanskrit verses from the central text of the Hindu religion, the *Bhagavad Gita*.

The activities in this guide introduce students to a marvelous, unconventional theatrical event. The main Classroom Activity focuses on Gandhi and Glass, then provides a structural perspective on the opera’s layering of music, narrative, and sacred text. Other activities offer accessible introductions to technical aspects of Glass’s music, the decision to use sacred text rather than traditional dialogue, and the visual textures of this *Live in HD* presentation. *Satyagraha* is an examination of social change in a form that the *Wall Street Journal* praised for its “hypnotic visual and musical magic.” This guide can help your students find their own personal ways into this enthralling, inspiring work.

## THE WORK SATYAGRAHA

Opera in three acts, sung in Sanskrit

Music by Philip Glass (born 1937)

Vocal text by Constance DeJong, adapted from the *Bhagavad Gita*

Book by Philip Glass and Constance DeJong

First performed on September 5, 1980 at the Municipal Theatre, Rotterdam, Netherlands

## PRODUCTION

Dante Anzolini, Conductor

Phelim McDermott, Production

Julian Crouch, Associate Director and Set Designer

Kevin Pollard, Costume Designer

Paule Constable, Lighting Designer

## STARRING

(in order of appearance)

**Richard Croft**

M.K. GANDHI (tenor)

**Rachelle Durkin**

MISS SCHLESEN (soprano)

**Kim Josephson**

MR. KALLENBACH (baritone)

**Alfred Walker**

PARSI RUSTOMJI (bass)



CROFT



DURKIN



JOSEPHSON



WALKER

Production a gift of Agnes Varis and Karl Leichtman

Additional funding from Stanley, Marion, Paul, Sara, and Eddie Bergman; American Express; the National Endowment for the Arts; and Henry Schein, Inc.

Revival a gift of Mr. and Mrs. Vikas Kapoor

Co-production of the Metropolitan Opera and English National Opera in collaboration with Improbable

The guide includes four types of activities. Reproducible student resources for the activities are available at the back of this guide.

**CLASSROOM ACTIVITY:**

a full-length activity, designed to support your ongoing curriculum

**MUSICAL HIGHLIGHTS:**

opportunities to focus on excerpts from *Satyagraha* to enhance familiarity with the work

**PERFORMANCE ACTIVITIES:**

to be used during *The Met: Live in HD* transmission, calling attention to specific aspects of this production

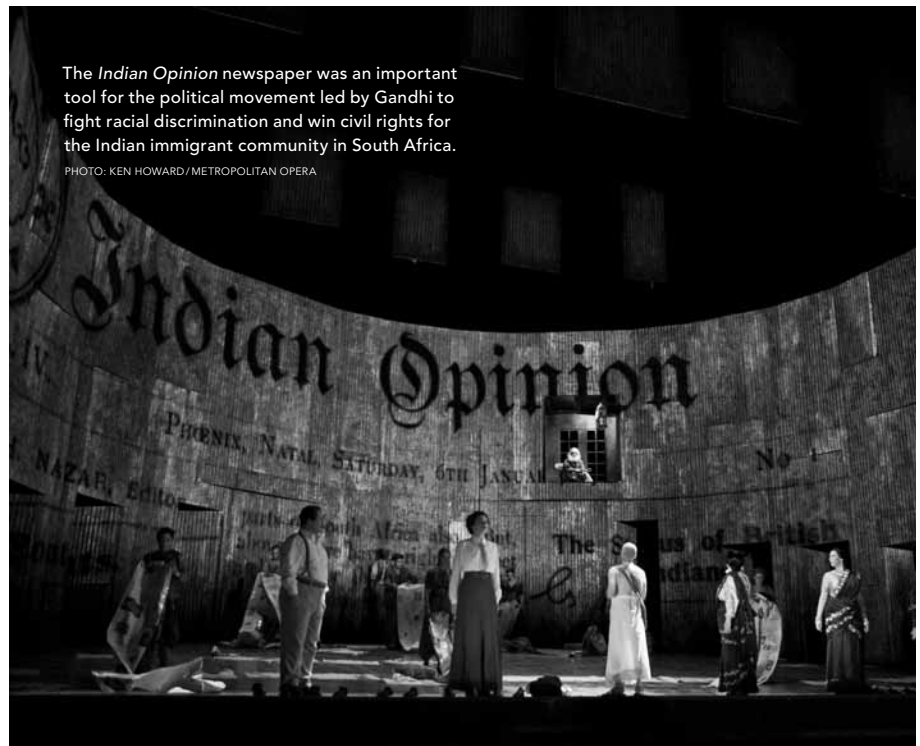
**POST-SHOW DISCUSSION:**

a wrap-up activity, integrating the *Live in HD* experience into students' views of the performing arts and humanities

The activities in this guide address several aspects of *Satyagraha*:

- Philip Glass's compositional approach, the music, non-chronological narrative, and sacred text
- The historical events and figures depicted in the opera
- The sources of Gandhi's philosophy of *satyagraha*
- The structure and patterning of Philip Glass's music
- The production as a unified work of art, involving creative decisions by the artists of the Metropolitan Opera

The guide is intended to cultivate students' interest in *Satyagraha* whether or not they have any prior acquaintance with opera. It includes activities for students with a wide range of musical backgrounds, seeking to encourage them to think about opera—and the performing arts in general—as a medium of entertainment and as creative expression.



Though Mohandas K. Gandhi is generally associated with the history of India, *Satyagraha* focuses on the years he spent in South Africa from 1893 to 1914. The opera unfolds thematically rather than chronologically, depicting the development of Gandhi's philosophy of *satyagraha*, which guided his concept of political struggle through active, loving, non-violent resistance. Each act is dedicated to a "guardian spirit"—a historical figure representing the past, present, and future of *satyagraha* thought. Within each act, each scene has a title specifying its place in Gandhi's biography.

**ACT I** The Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy, a proponent of non-violent protest, is guardian spirit.

**PRELUDE (1893)** Before the opera proper begins, we find Gandhi, recently arrived in South Africa, moments after he has been thrown from the "white people's" compartment of a train because of his darker skin. He picks himself up, gathers his belongings, and prepares for a new life of struggle.

**SCENE 1 *The Kuru Field of Justice*** The story opens with a scene depicting the mythic setting of the *Bhagavad Gita*, the Hindu sacred text central to Gandhi's worldview. With his army poised to attack on a field of battle, the valiant Arjuna has second thoughts about the ethics of war. The driver of his chariot is revealed to be an incarnation of the god Krishna, who expounds upon the ethics of war, faith, and moral duty.

Gandhi narrates this story. He is joined in mid-narration by Arjuna himself, then by Krishna, who offers Gandhi a central ethical principle: maintain equanimity with respect to the material aspects of experience, but "brace yourself for the fight."

**SCENE 2 *Tolstoy Farm*** The setting moves from the mythic plane to the historical settlement established in 1910 outside Johannesburg by Gandhi and his associate, Hermann Kallenbach. Here Gandhi gathers his followers, known as *satyagrahis*, to enact the principles of their movement in daily life. They build, weave, cook, and live in a spirit of self-reliance. Gandhi stresses the need for both theory and practice—the daily enactment of one's beliefs. His wife, Kasturbai, his secretary, Miss Schlesen, and a third follower, Mrs. Naidoo, sing of the dignity of honest work, while Kallenbach emphasizes the importance of work free from greed, desire, or concern about failure.

**SCENE 3 *The Vow*** Jumping back in time to September 1906, the community of Indians living in South Africa gather under Gandhi's leadership to resist the Black Act, a law requiring that they carry registration papers at all times, subject to fines, prison or deportation. Thousands, gathered at a public meeting, swear a solemn vow that they will refuse to register, even at the risk of death.



A news photo of Gandhi

Parsi Rustomji, a satyagrahi, sings to the assembled about the need to overcome doubt with spiritual wisdom, despite the suffering that may be involved. As people raise their hands to affirm their vows, the chorus stresses the importance of sacrifice in a meaningful life.

**ACT II** The Indian poet and activist Rabindranath Tagore, whose work in support of popular self-reliance was contemporary with Gandhi's, serves as guardian spirit.

**SCENE 1** *Confrontation and Rescue* Still farther back in time, in 1896, Gandhi has returned to South Africa from a visit home to India. Already well known, he is the target of anti-Indian resentment. A threatening crowd gathers to chase him as he moves from his ship into the port town. The wife of the police superintendent, Mrs. Alexander, comes to support him and escort him to safety.

Mrs. Alexander sings verses describing cruel, witless "devilish folk," "maddened by pride and hypocrisy." The chorus responds with a song of pride, pleasure, greed, and murder.

**SCENE 2** *Indian Opinion* Essential to the practice of satyagraha was the dissemination of news, information, and ideas. To this end, Gandhi initiated publication of a newspaper called *Indian Opinion*, a forum for dialogue on the progress of South



**NEW SOUNDS** Composer Philip Glass—born during the Great Depression, entering school during World War II, and coming of age in the 1950s—exemplifies the risk-taking spirit of 20th-century American classical music. Classically trained, he came to be influenced by the music of India, and he has worked with pop musicians including David Byrne, David Bowie, and Paul Simon.

But Glass was not the only American pushing the boundaries of classical music in the years after World War II. John Cage found music lurking in what others call ordinary sounds, or even noise. Terry Riley's compositions include sounds looped on audiotape, electronic tonal synthesizers, and microtones—musical intervals smaller than

those conventionally used. Steve Reich experimented with spoken words, electronic feedback, Ghanaian drumming, and what he described as "the human breath as the measure of musical duration." John Adams merged diverse threads of these and other contemporary genres in his complex orchestral and vocal music.

While students may enjoy tracking down more information about these composers, they may also find their ideas and experiments more accessible than the sounds of their music. But as with Glass's music for *Satyagraha*, careful listening and analysis of underlying patterns and purposes can help turn contemporary American classical music into a domain of fascination, inspiration, and even fun.

Africa's Indian community. This scene, again set in 1906, the year of the Black Act, depicts the editing and publication of the newspaper.

Kallenbach and Miss Schlesen sing verses about the need to work for the welfare of others—the mission of *Indian Opinion*. Gandhi's wife Kasturbai, Mrs. Naidoo, and Parsi Rustomji cite verses explaining that God himself is the model for such labor, needing nothing himself, but working to inspire human labor and so maintain his creation.

**SCENE 3 *Protest*** Two years later, the struggle against the Black Act has escalated. The government has proposed that the act will be repealed if Indians register voluntarily. The community has agreed, but the government has gone back on its word, enforcing the act. On August 16, 1908, Gandhi leads a crowd of 3000 in burning their registration documents in protest.

The scene is highlighted by Gandhi's prayer, in which he reflects on Lord Krishna's opposition to hatred, his calls for self-restraint and equanimity, and his love for the righteous.

**ACT III** Martin Luther King, Jr., the U.S. civil rights leader who took inspiration from Gandhi and the idea of satyagraha, is guardian spirit.

*New Castle March* The final scene and act takes place in 1913, on the night before the largest demonstration Gandhi led in South Africa: a cross-country march toward Tolstoy Farm, protesting against a new tax on Indian residents. The protest will begin the next morning in the coal-mining town of New Castle, where Indian miners will go on strike to join the movement. Five thousand have gathered to begin the trek.

Kasturbai and Mrs. Naidoo pass the vigil singing verses comparing self-restraint and serenity to the virtue of wakefulness during a night when most others are asleep. Then Gandhi reflects on the Lord's eternal return—his many rebirths, each in an era when the world needs him to fight evil and restore righteousness.

Across the stage and across the span of time, Martin Luther King silently delivers his "I Have a Dream" speech on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C.

## VOICE TYPE

Since the early 19th century, singing voices have usually been classified in six basic types, three male and three female, according to their range:

### SOPRANO

the highest-pitched type of human voice, normally possessed only by women and boys

### MEZZO-SOPRANO

the female voice whose range lies between the soprano and the contralto (Italian "mezzo" = middle, medium)

### CONTRALTO

the lowest female voice, also called an alto

### TENOR

the highest naturally occurring voice type in adult males

### BARITONE

the male voice lying below the tenor and above the bass

### BASS

the lowest male voice



Costume sketches for members of the chorus

## WHO'S WHO IN SATYAGRAHA

CHARACTER		PRONUNCIATION	VOICE TYPE	THE LOWDOWN
Mohandas K. Gandhi	Leader of the Indian civil rights movement	moe-HAHN-dahss GAHN-dee	Tenor	Gandhi received his legal education in England, then returned to India before being sent to South Africa to fight a legal claim.
Prince Arjuna	A great warrior in the Hindu epic <i>Bhagavad Gita</i>	AR-joo-nah	Tenor	A mythical figure, he sings together with the historical Gandhi in Act I of the opera.
Lord Krishna	The spiritual figure whose words are at the center of the <i>Bhagavad Gita</i>	KREESH-nah	Bass	In Hindu myth, Lord Krishna takes different physical form at different times; he is himself an incarnation of the god Vishnu. He is often depicted with blue skin.
Kasturbai	Gandhi's wife	KAHSS-ter-bye	Alto	Kasturbai married Gandhi at age 14. He was a few months younger, still 13.
Miss Schlesen	Gandhi's secretary	sh-LAY-sen	Soprano	Gandhi's secretary and aide assists Rustomji in rallying the crowd against the British Government.
Mr. Kallenbach	Gandhi's associate	KAH-len-bakh		Gandhi's lifelong friend Hermann Kallenbach both owned and named the settlement Tolstoy Farm.
Mrs. Naidoo	A satyagrahi	NYE-doo	Soprano	An Indian independence activist and poet, Mrs. Naidoo was the first Indian woman to become president of the Indian National Congress.
Mrs. Alexander	Wife of the police superintendent in the port of Durban		Alto	Alexander was a European supporter who shields Gandhi against the Europeans' harassment.
Parsi Rustomji	A satyagrahi	PAHR-see rooss-TOME-jee	Bass	Rustomji was both a confidant and a legal client of Gandhi.



## The Secret of *Satyagraha*: A Close Look at Glass's "Rebalancing" of the Elements of Opera

*Satyagraha* is a complex, multilayered work of art. The music, the text, and the narrative structure add up to a profoundly involving experience. Each of these elements, however, can be challenging to appreciate.

In this activity, students will begin at the most basic level: by thinking about opera as a set of sensory experiences. They'll consider the way our brain perceives or interprets sensations. Then they will examine the sensory elements with which Philip Glass and his co-writer Constance DeJong constructed this opera. Once familiar with its elements and the ways in which they fit together, students will be better equipped to make sense of *Satyagraha*'s unique combination of music, narrative, and text.

During the course of the activity, students will:

- consider how our brain collects and assembles different sensory inputs during an opera performance
- use these brain processes as an analogy to understanding *Satyagraha*, with its unconventional texts, narrative structure, and music
- listen closely to brief selections from the opera in order to develop familiarity with the sound and structure of Philip Glass's music
- place the historical events depicted in the opera into a thematic framework derived from the opera's narrative structure
- match texts from the *Bhagavad Gita* to appropriate moments in the opera
- investigate the relationships between Gandhi and *Satyagraha*'s "guardian spirits," Tolstoy, Tagore, and King

### STEPS

This activity is presented in five parts, including pre-activity and follow-up homework assignments:

**Part A: How the Brain Experiences Art**

**Part B: Music Built Through Patterns**

**Part C: What Narrative Expects You to Know**

**Part D: Text and Meaning**

**Part E: Follow-up**

The parts are designed to be used either in one session or over a number of days.

### IN PREPARATION

For this activity, students will need the reproducible resources available at the back of this guide. The audio selections are available online or on the accompanying CD.

For Step 5 of the activity, you'll need to prepare four large cards with the letters A, B, C, and D on them. You can use a dark marker on white paper or cardboard.

### CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Social Studies (World History, U.S. History, Philosophy, Psychology)

Music (Elements of Music, Musical Styles)

Literature (World Literature: India)

Biology (Sensation and Perception)

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To prepare students for the experience of *Satyagraha* by
  - acquainting students with M.K. Gandhi and Philip Glass
  - analyzing the artistic components of the opera
  - outlining the historical events underlying the opera
  - introducing the aesthetic concepts of form and content
- To locate Gandhi's idea of *satyagraha* in the framework of 19th- and 20th-century political thought
- To acquaint students with the texts from the *Bhagavad Gita* used in the libretto
- To introduce the scientific concepts of sensation and perception as basic to art appreciation

## COMMON CORE ELA

College and Career Readiness  
Anchor Standards for Reading:  
Grades 6–12

### Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.

### Key Ideas and Details

3. Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

### Craft and Structure

6. Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

## NATIONAL CENTER FOR HISTORY IN THE SCHOOLS

Historical Thinking Standards for  
Grades 5–12

### STANDARD 1: Chronological Thinking

E. Interpret data presented in time lines and create time lines.

F. Reconstruct patterns of historical succession and duration; explain historical continuity and change.

### STANDARD 2: Historical Comprehension

F. Appreciate historical perspectives.

## PART A: HOW THE BRAIN EXPERIENCES ART

### Step 1: Pre-Activity/Homework Assignment

The pre-activity assignment has two objectives:

- to give students a general familiarity with the subject of *Satyagraha*, M.K. Gandhi, and its composer, Philip Glass
- to provoke thinking about our brain and what it does in sensation and perception
- to prompt curiosity about *Satyagraha* as a sensory experience

This assignment is based on four numbered reproducibles, titled *Gandhi–Glass Games*.

- Reproducible 1 provides a brief description of Gandhi’s sojourn in South Africa.
- Reproducible 2 provides a brief biography of Philip Glass.
- Reproducible 3 includes six review questions—three about Gandhi, three about Glass—to help make sure students have read the Gandhi and Glass pages.
- Reproducible 4 presents a mini-experiment involving two optical illusions. Accompanying questions will prompt students to consider the difference between what they literally see (sensation) and what they “think they see” (perception).

Reproducible 4 directs students’ attention to the fact that perception generally combines

- what we’ve *actually* seen (sensation) and
- what we *expect* to see (expectation, often involving prior knowledge)

This view of the way our brain works provides a foundation for the rest of the activity, leading up to the multi-sensory experience of *Satyagraha*. Reproducible 4 will be discussed further in Step 3.

**SATYAGRAHA** The Sanskrit term *satyagraha* was invented by Mohandas Gandhi to name the philosophy that underlay the acts of non-violent defiance undertaken by Indians in South Africa, as depicted in Philip Glass’s opera. “*Satyagraha*,” Gandhi wrote, “is a priceless and matchless weapon, and... those who wield it are strangers to disappointment or defeat.”

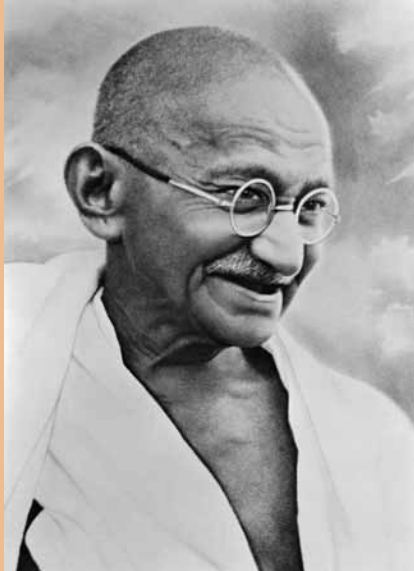
*Satyagraha* has been translated “soul force,” “truth force,” and “truth firmness.” The one translation Gandhi adamantly opposed was “passive resistance.” Passive resistance, he insisted, is a tactic of people with no chance of success through physical force. Its advocates, he noted, would gladly use physical force if they *did* think it might help their cause. On the other hand, Gandhi wrote, “Brute force had absolutely no place in the Indian movement in any circumstance... although there were occasions when [Indians in South Africa] were in a position to use it effectively.”

“In *satyagraha*,” he continued, “there is not the remotest idea of injuring the opponent. *Satyagraha* postulates the conquest of the adversary by suffering in one’s own person.”

Gandhi spoke of “offering *satyagraha*” as an act of the spirit, undertaken from strength, not weakness. “Fostering the idea of strength,” he wrote, “we grow stronger and stronger every day. With the increase in our strength, our *satyagraha* too becomes more effective, and we would never be casting about for an opportunity to give it up...[W]hile there is no scope for love in passive resistance, on the other hand not only has hatred no place in *satyagraha* but is a positive breach of its ruling principle.”

*Satyagraha* would go on to inform Gandhi’s work in the struggle to free India from British colonial rule. To this day, historians debate its influence—whether the *satyagrahis* or their physically violent counterparts were more effective in driving Britain from the Indian subcontinent. Nevertheless Gandhi’s views have influenced political movements all over the world, from Northern Ireland to the Middle East to the American South during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s.





**MOHANDAS K. GANDHI** Gandhi was born in India in 1869. Educated in England and having come of age politically in South Africa, he returned home in 1915 and began to organize working people to fight for their rights in a spirit of non-violence. Gandhi documented India's extraordinary poverty, fought injustices in traditional Indian culture, and worked, above all, toward the goal of replacing British colonial rule with Indian self-government.

His initiatives involved such methods as boycotts of British goods, peaceful marches, and well-publicized fasting. Perhaps the most dramatic example was the "salt march" of 1930. Since the 1880s, the authorities had imposed a tax on salt, making it a daily symbol of British control. Gandhi led a 240-mile march across India to the shores of the Arabian Sea, where thousands broke the British monopoly by extracting their own salt from seawater. The event captured the imagination of the world and

infuriated the British, who arrested tens of thousands in response.

The next year, Britain invited Gandhi to represent Indian nationalists in negotiations that, in the end, failed to advance independence. But Gandhi refused to give up. When England entered World War II, he led his followers in denying support to the fight. He argued that England was hypocritical to oppose Germany's conquests in Europe when the British themselves insisted on controlling faraway India. This "Quit India" campaign lasted barely a year, and Indian soldiers eventually did join the Allied forces. Gandhi was arrested and held in a British prison in Mumbai from 1942 through 1944. Still he had made his point.

Not until after war's end would England agree to leave India. With independence on the horizon, Gandhi turned his attention to the hostility between Hindus and Muslims, seeking national unity. This last campaign proved a failure. When British rule ended in 1947, the subcontinent was divided into two states, the predominantly Hindu India and the much smaller, predominantly Muslim Pakistan—a partition opposed by Gandhi. The new nations immediately went to war and have remained at odds to this day.

Between June 1934 and January 20, 1948, Gandhi survived four assassination attempts. Three involved a Hindu extremist named Nathuram Godse, an opponent of non-violence who believed that Gandhi's approach weakened the Hindus' ability to defend themselves. On January 30, 1948, Godse confronted Gandhi shortly before a prayer service and shot him to death.

The Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore (see sidebar, p. 24) dubbed Gandhi "Mahatma," or "great soul." To this day, many in India refer to him as Bapu, the word for "father" in his native language, Gujarati.

## KEY SANSKRIT TERMS IN SATYAGRAHA

### Satyagraha

("suht-YAA-gruh-huh")  
Gandhi's philosophy of  
active, non-violent resistance;  
literally "truth force"

### Mahatma

("ma-HAHT-ma")  
great soul, name given to  
Gandhi by Rabindranath  
Tagore

### Bhagavad Gita

("BAH-gah-vadd GHEE-tah")  
the central poem of the  
Hindu epic Mahabharata  
("mah-hah-BAH-rah-tah"),  
in which Lord Krishna  
expounds principles of faith  
and morality

### Kuru

("KOO-roo")  
a location in northern India,  
and the name of the tribe  
that lived there, which was  
an ancient center of Hindu  
civilization

## Step 2: Classroom Discussion of Gandhi and Glass (Worksheet 3)

Make copies of the four Glass–Gandhi Games worksheets and distribute them to your class. After your class reads the first two reproducibles, discuss the questions on the worksheet to check students' acquaintance with the basic facts of M.K. Gandhi's and Philip Glass's biographies, since these are essential to the rest of the activity. Here are the answers:

What did Philip Glass's father do for a living? **He owned a record store (paragraph 1)**

Glass has written operas, concertos, symphonies, and string quartets, but his largest audience has probably been for his **film scores (paragraph 6)**

Glass wrote operas about Gandhi and which other historical figures? **Physicist Albert Einstein, the Egyptian pharaoh Akhnaten, and Civil War leaders Ulysses S. Grant, Robert E. Lee, and Abraham Lincoln (paragraph 5)**

How long did Gandhi live in South Africa? **21 years (paragraph 3)**

What did Gandhi do for a living in South Africa? **He was a lawyer (paragraph 2)**

Why did Gandhi want to wear a turban? **As a sign of his nationality (paragraph 3)**

This is a good opportunity to introduce, or to restate, the concept of satyagraha, Gandhi's philosophy of "truth/firmness," in which political activists try to achieve their objectives through active, loving, non-violent resistance.

Next, introduce students to Philip Glass's approach to creating an opera. Write this quotation from Glass on the board:

"I was interested in rebalancing the elements of opera: text, movement, image, and music."

Glass sees opera in terms of these four distinct elements. But what does he mean by "rebalancing" them? Much of the rest of the activity will involve this key to the mysteries of *Satyagraha*. (If you like, you may want to discuss the quote now to let students offer hypotheses about its meaning. However that is not essential, since the rest of the activity is devoted to identifying the "elements" Glass mentions and to discovering what he means by "rebalancing" or changing the balance of, those elements.)

### Step 3: Sensation and Perception: Discussion of Optical Illusions (Worksheet 4)

This mini-experiment involving optical illusions offers a way to think about this process—a process that is at the heart of Philip Glass’s notion of “rebalancing the elements of opera.” At every moment during the course of an opera, the audience receives many different sensations, both visual and auditory. Our brains are working the whole time, pulling these distinct sensations together into the rich experience of opera.

This is actually what the brain does all the time. It takes in bits of information (sensation) and makes sense of them (perception).

The pictures on the worksheet share a characteristic: we literally see something, but *think* we see something else. As our brains try to make sense of each picture, we perceive something that isn’t actually there.

In the first picture, we see six elements: 3 “Pac-Man” shapes—circles with wedges cut out and 3 disconnected angles.

But we *perceive* the three angles as the corners of a triangle. We perceive a second triangle whose corners are the “Pac-Man” wedges. All together, instead of perceiving six free-floating figures, we perceive one larger six-pointed star.

In the second picture, we see a square made up of two black regions and one white region separated by wavy lines.

But we *perceive* either two faces or a vase—or both at the same time.

Notice that in both cases, our perception is based on what we *expect* to see. Visual perception often rests on our having seen something similar before, then expecting to see it again.

Our prior experiences have taught us to expect

- triangles and stars in something that looks kind of like the first picture, and
- faces or a vase in something that looks kind of like the second.

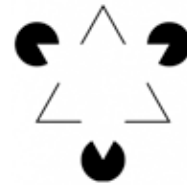
### Step 4: Rebalancing—The Secret of *Satyagraha*

Note: For this step, students will need their completed Worksheet 4.

The little angles, the Pac-Man pieces and the black and white regions and the wavy lines that separate them are all *elements* of both pictures. Because they are balanced in a particular way—drawn at a certain size, placed in a particular location—we perceive them as having larger, cohesive meanings: a star, two faces, a vase.

But what would happen if you changed the balance among the elements—if you *rebalanced* them?

- If you turned each of the angles 90 degrees, one triangle (and the star) would disappear.



- If you colored in the wedges in the Pac-Man shapes, the other triangle would disappear.
- If you modified the curves in the lines between the regions, the faces and vase would disappear.

Your students can use the blank space on Worksheet 4 to draw these “rebalanced” images.

Visual perception combines our actual sensations with what we expect to see—generally something we’re familiar with. But if you turn the angles 90 degrees or color in the Pac-Man wedges, the arrangement doesn’t look familiar anymore. If you modify the curvy lines, the dark regions no longer resemble faces and the white region no longer has the familiar shape of a vase.

Rebalancing can make the familiar *unfamiliar*.

After rebalancing, a set of sensations might no longer add up to something familiar—something the brain has experienced before. The sensations make less sense. They remain raw: little angles floating on a page, instead of the impression of a triangle.

On a bigger scale, this is what happens when Philip Glass rebalances the elements of opera. As students will experience in Parts B, C, and D of this activity, each element is there—music, text, narrative structure—but each is a bit unusual: The

Act I, Scene 1: The Kuru Field of Justice.  
Krishna tells Arjuna and Gandhi that they need to be strong and brave in their fight for justice.

PHOTO: KEN HOWARD/METROPOLITAN OPERA



music works differently from music we might be used to; so do the texts and the narrative structure.

- The music is built up from very short phrases that repeat in patterns with tiny changes, rather than the lines of song we'd hear in an opera by Puccini or Mozart.
- The text is in Sanskrit—a language that Glass expects virtually *no one* in the audience to understand. That's very different from the arias and recitatives Verdi's librettists wrote, in Italian, for audiences in Milan and Rome. It's different from those that Wagner wrote, in German, for his audience at Bayreuth. Glass's characters never literally talk to one another, or respond. Mostly, they repeat a few lines of sacred text again and again, but those lines have been chosen with care; their meanings underscore the theme of the scene.
- *Satyagraha's* narrative doesn't start at one point in time and move forward, the way most stories do. It isn't a series of events and consequences. The narrative jumps back and forth in time—but within a well defined structure of *ideas*.

In other words, Glass and his co-writer Constance DeJong provide their audience with *sensations*, but mix them up in a way that challenges our *perception*. They make the familiar unfamiliar.

The fact that the sights and sounds of *Satyagraha* are unfamiliar doesn't mean they don't make sense. In *Satyagraha*, the elements are rebalanced, not randomly mixed. In the remainder of this activity, students will explore this new balance—first music, then narrative structure, then putting both together with text. They'll develop what psychologists might call a new "perceptual frame." The new balance is the secret of *Satyagraha*.

## PART B: MUSIC BUILT THROUGH PATTERNS

In *Satyagraha*, Philip Glass employs a compositional method he calls "music with repetitive structures." Small units of music build little by little into identifiable patterns that rise and fall in tone and volume as they grow longer or shorter, repeat, cycle, and fade away. As he explains the method, "These larger units or periods are integrated in a cyclical process. Other cycles with different rhythms are added afterwards like in a wheel-work—everything works simultaneously in a continuous transformation."

This may sound complicated, but the idea is simple. Glass does with sound what little children do with blocks. He starts with a tiny strand of sounds—just a few notes. By repeating that "unit," he builds a pattern. By varying it just a little, he creates a slightly different unit. Now he can use the two units to build several different patterns.

Units repeat within patterns, then the patterns themselves repeat in what Glass calls "cycles." It doesn't take long for that original tiny strand of sounds to become an intricate line of music. Glass might change the number of repetitions *within* a

The **BHAGAVAD GITA**, a central text in the Hindu faith, is part of the epic known as the *Mahabharata*, the narrative of the war between the Kauravas and the Pandavas. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, the divine figure Krishna appears on the battlefield, between the two great armies, to counsel the warrior Arjuna on the duties of action, ethics, and belief. According to tradition, Krishna delivered the *Bhagavad Gita* on the battlefield of Kuru around 5,000 years ago, though scholars have traced it only to the first century CE.

**SANSKRIT** is the main language of the Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist faiths. It is also an official language in parts of India, though probably fewer than 15,000 native speakers of Sanskrit are alive today. Sanskrit is to ancient texts from the Indian subcontinent what Latin and Greek are to ancient Christian and philosophical works in the West. It is one of the oldest existing Indo-European languages. Interestingly, Sanskrit has no writing system of its own. It can be written in one of several alphabets from India and Nepal, or even in Latin characters.

In the Hindu religion, **KRISHNA** is an avatar, or earthly embodiment, of the god Vishnu. He is one of the most important and popular of the hundreds of gods and divine figures in Hindu thought. In some traditions, Krishna is held to be the Supreme Being. Stories about him can be found throughout the ancient Sanskrit literature, and his image can be found in religious visual art across India and the Hindu world. In color images, his skin is often blue, a crown of peacock feathers on his head. He is sometimes seen as a boy playing a flute, sometimes as a herdsman surrounded by cows and milkmaids. The central text of many of Krishna's followers is his moral and behavioral pronouncement, the *Bhagavad Gita*, source of all the texts in *Satyagraha*.

pattern, or the number of repetitions of a pattern, and those changes have big consequences. They ripple out, transforming the piece. The tiny strand becomes rich, unexpected music.

Things get even more intricate when a second line of music—based on a whole different unit, again repeated in patterns—is played at the same time as the first. Rich harmonies and startling rhythms emerge. In Step 5, students will hear exactly how strands of 4 or 5 notes turn into the intricate “wheel-work” of *Satyagraha*.

### **Step 5: Listening for Patterns**

This step is essentially a listening exercise. Students will listen to three selections from *Satyagraha*, one at a time, then do their best to identify the musical patterns. No technical knowledge of music is needed. The point is for students to simply describe the sounds they hear and so to become aware of Philip Glass's assembly of musical building blocks.

**Note:** The Sanskrit texts heard in these selections are not important at this point in the activity—only the music. Also, the three selections studied here are *purposely*



not presented in the order in which they are heard during the opera. In Part D/Steps 9 and 10, students will return to the three selections, learn their meanings, and use those meanings to figure out where they fit.

#### STEP 5A (TRACK 1):

Play **Track 1**, then ask students to describe what they hear. The track is three minutes, 10 seconds long, and its two patterns may be difficult to identify with only one listening. Feel free to play the track several times, pausing in between.

The patterns are:

- **PATTERN A:** In the initial flute part, an eight-note phrase repeats—first rising, then falling in tone—four times before the entrance of the vocals. Strings maintain a constant rhythm beneath.
- **PATTERN B:** The tenor (Gandhi) sings a simple, rising, minor-sounding scale three times.

The first student to identify each pattern will be that pattern's "Expert." Have the students who first identify Patterns A and B come up to the front of the class. Give each "Pattern Expert" his or her card, "A" or "B" respectively.

Because other students may not yet be able to distinguish the patterns, play the track once more. This time, as each pattern is heard, the appropriate Pattern Expert should hold up his/her card, giving the rest of the class a visual way to identify the pattern. It may also be helpful for the class to come up with a key word or words that help identify the patterns. You can either write these on the board or directly on the cards. For example, Pattern A's key words could be "flute and strings" and B's "tenor/singing".

When you feel the class as a whole has grasped these two basic patterns, ask them to describe the whole track in terms of Patterns A and B. (You may want to play the track yet again at this point). Write that description on the board:

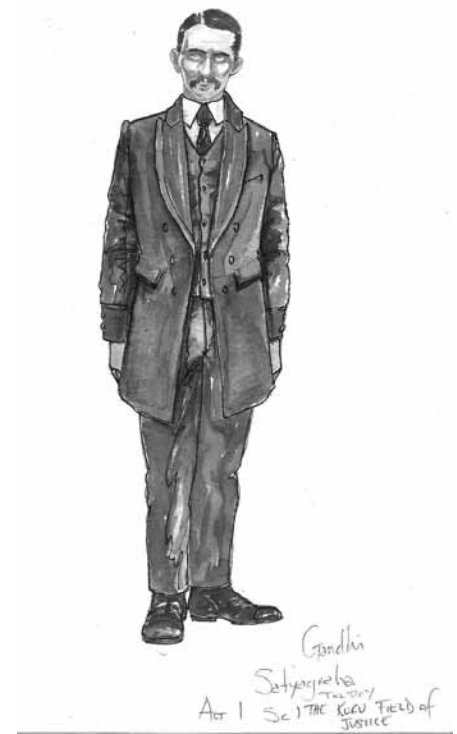
A B A B A

Point out that A B A B A is a pattern, too: a pattern of patterns. That's the principle of Philip Glass's music.

#### STEP 5B (TRACK 2):

In **Track 2**, students will analyze a more complicated pattern. The units here involve not only a set of notes, but the specific instruments that play them and people that sing them.

As in Step 5a (Track 1), play the track and ask students to identify the patterns. This time, there are four, so there will be four Pattern Experts.



Costume sketch for Gandhi in Act I

The patterns are:

- **PATTERN A:** A lilting eight-note flute phrase (the same melody that Gandhi sings in Track 1, only one octave higher and faster), as strings play an even ONE-two, ONE-two beneath. Played three times. (Suggested key word: flute)
- **PATTERN B:** The strings' four-beat phrase all by itself: ONE-two-THREE-four. Played once. (Suggested key word: strings)
- **PATTERN C:** The singers sing a four-beat phrase, the same length as the flute phrase in A. Sung three times. (Suggested key word: singers)
- **PATTERN D:** The singers sing a variation on their four-beat phrase. Sung once. (Suggested key word: different)

These patterns may be more difficult to pick apart than those in Track 1. For instance, even though the strings' phrase is heard in Pattern A, it is *by itself* in Pattern B, which makes the two patterns different from each other. Also, the four-beat phrase in Pattern D is only slightly different from the one in Pattern C—but it's important that students hear the differences and distinguish the patterns.

Again, designate the first student to identify each pattern as its Pattern Expert. (In the cases of Patterns A and C, point out the mini-patterns repeated within each.) As soon as you have Pattern Experts for all four patterns, have them come up to the front of the room. Play the track, with each Expert holding up his or her card as his or her pattern is heard.

Of course, like Track 1, Track 2 is a pattern of patterns. Have the class describe Track 2 in terms of its four patterns. (The presence of the Pattern Experts at the front of the room should help. The other students can jot down the patterns' letters as the Experts hold them up. You may want to restrict the Experts' role to holding up their cards, allowing the other students to identify the larger pattern of patterns.) Write the description on the board:

A B A B C B C D A B

Point out interesting aspects of this pattern:

- A and B don't only repeat, but they sometimes make up a team.
- AB is a kind of super-pattern.
- D is only heard once, but its presence creates a four-part super-pattern with alternating Cs: C B C D.

**STEP 5C (TRACK 3):**

In **Track 3**, The patterns here are not only complicated, but they go by very quickly. The Pattern Experts will need to be careful and diligent in holding up and putting down their cards! The patterns here are:

- **PATTERN A:** Four distinct notes, all the same, sung—not played on instruments. (Suggested key word: four beats)  
Note: The first time you hear Pattern A (at the beginning of Track 3), the four notes are held longer, making them feel slower. Every time after that, Pattern A sounds faster because the notes are shorter in length (double the speed as the first Pattern A). See if your students can distinguish this difference. For the purpose of this activity we're identifying both versions as Pattern A.
- **PATTERN B:** Four triplets of a higher note—that is, 12 very short notes—also sung but not played on instruments. (Suggested key word: sung triplets)
- **PATTERN C:** Four fast sets of six beats each (two triplets each), played by strings. (Suggested key word: strings)
- **PATTERN D:** Four distinct notes, tones alternating high/low, higher/lower, sung. (Suggested key words: high/low)

It may take several listenings to identify these four patterns. A clue for students is that Patterns A and D seem simpler than Patterns B and C, because they include fewer notes. It may also be helpful to beat out the rhythms with your class.

Again, once the four Pattern Experts are at the front of the class, have the rest of the class figure out the pattern of patterns.

At first, students might identify one long set of letters:

A B A B C B A B C D B C D B C D B C

Have them inspect this long set to find super-patterns within it. Look for repeated sets of letters. Before long, they should be able to find this super-super-pattern:

- Pattern A, played once
- Super-pattern B A B C, played twice
- Super-pattern D B C, played three times

That is, the pattern of patterns looks like this:

A  
B A B C  
B A B C  
D B C  
D B C  
D B C

By now students should have a firm sense of the way Philip Glass builds small bits of sound into complicated pieces of music, using simple mathematical patterns. They may be surprised to find just how much math there is in the music!



Richard Croft portrays Gandhi

## PART C: WHAT NARRATIVE EXPECTS YOU TO KNOW

Philip Glass’s highly structured music is only one component of the “rebalancing” in *Satyagraha*. Narrative structure is another. Glass and his librettist, Constance DeJong, chose to tell Gandhi’s story in a cycle of developing concepts, rather than according to chronology. As Glass put it, “If you were looking at a book of photographs—let’s say a family album—you might not look at it in sequential order. We can view history that way. I created the opera that way as well. Since we already know the story, we don’t really need to arrange it in a normal sequence.”

Even though there is not a “normal sequence,” *Satyagraha* does have a narrative structure. This part of the activity will familiarize students with that structure. Then they will have to figure out where three events from the life of Gandhi fit into the structure.

### Step 6: *Satyagraha*’s Thematic Grid

Explain to the class that *Satyagraha* does not have a chronological narrative like most operas, plays, movies, or TV shows. Even though it presents events that really happened, they are organized according to a thematic grid. The grid has seven sections, one for each of the seven scenes of the opera. (This grid appears on the reproducible *Satyagraha Time Worksheet*, with some of the cells filled in. You might want to distribute the reproducible at this point, or you might simply want to draw the grid on the board.)

	SCENE 1: Personal Conviction	SCENE 2: The Larger Community	SCENE 3: Satyagraha Action
ACT I: TOLSTOY Non-violent Action			
ACT II: TAGORE Self-reliance			
ACT III: KING The Future			

Along the left-hand side are three themes. One of these carries through each of the acts. These themes represent the “guardian spirits” of each act. (For more information on Glass’s “guardian spirits,” see *The Story*, p. 3, and the sidebar *What’s In Each Scene—and Why*, p. 20.)

Along the top of the grid is a different set of three themes. These define the sequence of scenes within each act. Within each act, the scenes progress

**PERSONAL CONVICTION >> THE LARGER COMMUNITY >> TAKING SATYAGRAHA ACTION**

(It's actually a bit more complicated than that, since Act III only has one scene—but that scene fits neatly into the Scene 3 theme of *satyagraha* action.)

*Satyagraha* is built around six philosophical themes all together. You may want to pause at this point to discuss the six with students:

- **NON-VIOLENT ACTION** the essence of Gandhi's *satyagraha*, but also a theme in the writings of "guardian spirit" Leo Tolstoy.
- **SELF-RELIANCE** an important part of Gandhi's philosophy, which led him and his followers to spin their own wool, weave their own cloth, and sew their own clothes...as well as grow their own food and take responsibility for their own fate, first in South Africa, then late in India. Both Gandhi and the "guardian spirit" of Act II, Tagore, stressed self-reliance.
- **THE FUTURE** a theme which raises the question of *satyagraha*'s relevance beyond the South Africa experience.
- **PERSONAL CONVICTION** the need for each individual to make a commitment to his or her beliefs, values and/or politics.
- **COMMUNITY** the principle that people are interdependent and need to work together, identifying and advancing their shared interests.
- **TAKING ACTION** the principle that it is not enough to have convictions or to feel a part of community, but that one—and one's community—must be actively involved in improving their situation. In the case of Gandhi and his followers, of course, the action was to be both non-violent and self-reliant—*satyagraha* action.

As noted above, all the events represented in *Satyagraha* really happened. But because Philip Glass chose this unusual, thematic structure, it's a bit of a puzzle to figure out when each one is presented during the course of the opera. In this part of the activity, students will solve that puzzle. To do that, they will

- review the life of M.K. Gandhi in chronological order—a timeline (Step 7)
- analyze four events in Gandhi's life in terms of *Satyagraha*'s thematic grid (Step 8)
- determine when those four events are presented during *Satyagraha* (Step 9)

### **Step 7: The History Behind *Satyagraha***

Distribute the reproducible *Gandhi's Time* (p. 42), a timeline of the life and influence of M.K. Gandhi. Point out that seven events are highlighted on the timeline. These are events depicted in the opera (though not in chronological order). Students should review the reproducible to prepare for Step 8. You can read the timeline aloud as a class or have students read it on their own.

## What's in Each Scene—and Why

As discussed in the Classroom Activity, *Satyagraha* doesn't unfold chronologically but thematically. A thematic grid helps to show why each scene appears when it does. The guardian spirits of each act run down the left-hand side of the grid; the progression of scenes within the act runs across the top.

Following are explanations of the location of each scene, according to this structure.

**ACT I:** Leo Tolstoy, the Russian novelist, is the guardian spirit. Tolstoy influenced Gandhi through his writings on the power of non-violence. In this sense, all three scenes in Act I recall Tolstoy.

### PERSONAL CONVICTION

Scene 1: The argument made to Arjuna by Lord Krishna on the battlefield: One must take action. (It is important to note that Gandhi believed the *Bhagavad Gita's* battlefield to be metaphorical. He did not feel that Krishna was literally defending military violence.)

### THE LARGER COMMUNITY

Scene 2: The building of a cooperative farm named for Tolstoy, where Gandhi's followers would put their philosophy into practice.

### SATYAGRAHA ACTION

Scene 3: The decision to respond to an oppressive law by taking a vow of active, non-violent resistance.

**ACT II:** Rabindranath Tagore, the Indian poet and a contemporary of Gandhi, is the guardian spirit. Tagore advocated self-reliance for the people of India—that they depend on themselves, not on Great Britain, their colonial ruler. All three scenes in Act II recall Tagore and his work.

### PERSONAL CONVICTION

Scene 1: Because Gandhi had encouraged self-reliance in the Indian population of South Africa, he found himself opposed by non-Indian South Africans. This scene demonstrates the confrontation sparked by—and therein the challenges of maintaining—an attitude of self-reliance.

### THE LARGER COMMUNITY

Scene 2: A key feature of Gandhi's program of self-reliance was the publication of a newspaper, *Indian Opinion*, uniting the Indian community and providing a forum for debate and self-education.

### SATYAGRAHA ACTION

Scene 3: When the government in South Africa reneged on its commitment to the Indian community, *satyagrahis* burned their government-issued ID cards—an act of assertive communal self-reliance.

**ACT III:** Martin Luther King, Jr., the U.S. civil rights leader, is the guardian spirit. Dr. King represents the implementation of *satyagraha* beyond Gandhi's Indian community and into the future. Unlike Acts I and II, this act has only one scene, but fits nicely into the *satyagraha* action theme. It looks forward to the challenges *satyagrahis* undertake in years to come.



### **Step 8: Satyagraha's Structure**

Distribute the reproducible *Satyagraha Time*, p. 43. On this worksheet, students will analyze the events highlighted on the timeline to figure out where they fit in *Satyagraha*. You can have students complete this worksheet as independent desk work, in small group discussions, or with the entire group, whichever works best for your class.

Students should have the timeline in front of them in order to complete this exercise.

To provide a model for students, three of the events have been filled in, with explanations. By studying and discussing the chart, students should be able to determine where to place the other four scenes. Feel free to provide them with clues from the key below.

The key includes an explanation for the location of each event. Act I, Scenes 1 and 3 and Act II, Scene 1 are already included on the worksheet *Satyagraha Time*.

TEACHER KEY TO SATYAGRAHA TIME WORKSHEET

	<b>SCENE 1: Personal Conviction</b>	<b>SCENE 2: The Larger Community</b>	<b>SCENE 3: Satyagraha Action</b>
<p>ACT I: TOLSTOY Non-violent Action</p>	<p>The Kuru Field of Justice</p> <p><b>Guardian Spirit and theme of the Act</b> <i>Tolstoy/non-violent action</i></p> <p><b>Why?</b> <i>Because Gandhi understood this myth to be a metaphor for non-violent action, not a literal endorsement of warfare.</i></p> <p><b>Conviction, Community or Action Scene?</b> <i>Conviction</i></p> <p><b>Why?</b> <i>Because the scene shows Krishna telling Arjuna and Gandhi that they need to be strong and brave in their fight for justice.</i></p> <p><b>Therefore, this is Act I, Scene 1.</b></p>	<p>Tolstoy Farm</p> <p><b>Guardian Spirit and theme of the Act</b> <i>Tolstoy/non-violent action</i></p> <p><b>Why?</b> <i>Because the farm, named for Tolstoy, was a place to put the satyagraha philosophy into action.</i></p> <p><b>Conviction, Community or Action Scene?</b> <i>Community</i></p> <p><b>Why?</b> <i>Because the farm was all about building community.</i></p> <p><b>Therefore, this is Act I, Scene 2.</b></p>	<p>The Vow</p> <p><b>Guardian Spirit and theme of the Act</b> <i>Tolstoy/non-violent action</i></p> <p><b>Why?</b> <i>Because the vow was a commitment to resist an oppressive law without resorting to violence.</i></p> <p><b>Conviction, Community or Action Scene?</b> <i>Action</i></p> <p><b>Why?</b> <i>Because it was an important political manifestation of satyagraha—the power of truth.</i></p> <p><b>Therefore, this is Act I, Scene 3.</b></p>
<p>ACT II: TAGORE Self-reliance</p>	<p>Confrontation and Rescue</p> <p><b>Guardian Spirit and theme of the Act</b> <i>Tagore/self-reliance</i></p> <p><b>Why?</b> <i>Because Gandhi is attacked for encouraging self-reliance among the Indians of South Africa.</i></p> <p><b>Conviction, Community or Action Scene?</b> <i>Conviction</i></p> <p><b>Why?</b> <i>Because Gandhi withstands the attack thanks to his deep personal belief in the value of satyagraha.</i></p> <p><b>Therefore, this is Act II, Scene 1.</b></p>	<p>Indian Opinion</p> <p><b>Guardian Spirit and theme of the Act</b> <i>Tagore/self-reliance</i></p> <p><b>Why?</b> <i>Because Indian Opinion was a journal created to help identify and address issues critical to Indians in South Africa.</i></p> <p><b>Conviction, Community or Action Scene?</b> <i>Community</i></p> <p><b>Why?</b> <i>It was both created by and designed to serve the community.</i></p> <p><b>Therefore, this is Act II, Scene 2.</b></p>	<p>Protest</p> <p><b>Guardian Spirit and theme of the Act</b> <i>Tagore/self-reliance</i></p> <p><b>Why?</b> <i>Because this act of satyagraha was prompted by a broken promise of cooperation from the South African government.</i></p> <p><b>Conviction, Community or Action Scene?</b> <i>Action</i></p> <p><b>Why?</b> <i>Because the protest is a form of satyagraha action.</i></p> <p><b>Therefore, this is Act II, Scene 3.</b></p>
<p>ACT III: KING The Future</p>			<p>The March</p> <p><b>Guardian Spirit and theme of the Act</b> <i>King/the future</i></p> <p><b>Why?</b> <i>The scene takes place as the satyagrahis are preparing for the march (the short-term future). Their gathering also anticipates the future work of satyagraha.</i></p> <p><b>Conviction, Community or Action?</b> <i>Action</i></p> <p><b>Why?</b> <i>Because the march is a way of taking action.</i></p> <p><b>Therefore, this is Act III, Scene 1 (but fits into the theme of Scene 3)</b></p>

Now that they have a sense of the sound and narrative structure of *Satyagraha*, students will use texts from the opera to pull all the elements together.

## **PART D: TEXT AND MEANING**

As noted above, Philip Glass’s “rebalancing” of opera’s elements in *Satyagraha* leads to an intriguing distinction between narrative—the actions that unfold on stage—and text—the words that are sung during those actions. Instead of dialogue, which is used in most operas to advance the narrative, the cast sings statements selected from the *Bhagavad Gita*, the sacred Hindu epic (see sidebar on p. 14).

The element of text is broken down even further here—into the *meanings* of each statement and the *sounds* of the words themselves, the sensory experience of hearing those words. The *meaning* of each quotation carries the essential message of the scene in which it is sung. But the *sound* of the words is unlikely to communicate that meaning to Western audiences, because *Satyagraha* is sung in the original language of the sacred texts, Sanskrit.

Note: The standard translation titling is not provided during performances of *Satyagraha* in the Metropolitan Opera House or the *Live in HD* transmission. Certain *Bhagavad Gita* texts will be projected on the set during the performance. The translations of these particular texts will be provided as subtitles during the *Live in HD* transmission.

In this part of the activity, students will be able to associate the three musical selections analyzed in Part 2 with the meanings of their texts, then determine where in the opera each text (and musical selection) belongs.

### **Step 9: The Meanings of the *Bhagavad Gita* Texts**

Distribute the reproducible *Meanings for Sounds*, p. 44. It presents the meanings of the texts heard in Tracks 1, 2, and 3 in English translation. Have the class listen again to the three tracks as they read the respective meanings of the singers’ words.

As noted above, Philip Glass and Constance De Jong did not expect their audience to understand Sanskrit. Nor may students recognize anything in the music of Track 1—or Track 2, or Track 3—that obviously connects it to the meaning presented on the reproducible (This is unlike, say, a Bizet or Donizetti opera, where conventionally sad melodies are generally associated with sad words). The point of Step 9 is for students simply to associate music and meaning, even if the association seems arbitrary. In Step 10, they will use the meanings to figure out where the music fits in *Satyagraha*’s thematic grid.

### Step 10: Which Text Goes Where?

Distribute the reproducible *Incomplete Libretto*, p. 45. On this worksheet, students will match the texts (and, by implication, the music) of Tracks 1, 2, and 3 to the proper scenes in *Satyagraha*. You can have students complete this worksheet as independent desk work, in small group discussions, or with the whole group, whichever works best in your classroom.

Just as students were able in Step 5 to determine when *Satyagraha* depicts certain events from history, here they will apply their understanding of the opera and the texts' meanings to determine the scene in which each of the three text/music selections appears (Tracks 1–3). As in Step 5, the text to four of the scenes are already provided. Students should read these in the process of analyzing where the texts for Tracks 1–3 belong.

It will be helpful to review the historical timeline, *Gandhi's Time* and the *Satyagraha Time* worksheets (pgs 42–43) with your students before completing this part of the activity. The key on p. 25 includes explanations for the placement of all quotations.

Feel free to offer clues from the key. Students might also notice, for example, that Track 1 is about work (therefore fits with Tolstoy Farm), Track 2 looks toward the future (therefore fits with The March), and Track 3 refers to a violent mob (therefore fits with Confrontation and Rescue).



**LEO TOLSTOY** (1828–1910) was one of Russia's greatest writers and is best known as the author of *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*. He was also a devout Christian and a strong advocate of non-violent activity for social change, and uncomfortable with his inherited wealth. At the end of his life and the beginning of Gandhi's career, the two men carried on a correspondence in which Tolstoy made clear his support of Gandhi's evolving ideas of *satyagraha*.



**RABINDRANATH TAGORE** (1861–1941), the Nobel Prize-winning Indian poet, was a fierce fighter for Indian independence. Like Gandhi, he encouraged the people of India to put aside sectarian differences and work together, in a spirit of self-reliance, against British colonial rule. Tagore himself was dubbed a Knight of the British Empire, but renounced his knighthood to protest Britain's violence against Indian civilians. More than a philosopher and writer, he created financial, educational, health, and industrial institutions to help Indian peasants take control of their economic futures.



**MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.** (1929–1968), the American civil rights leader, was powerfully committed to non-violent action as a means of moral and political pressure. Through sit-ins, boycotts, marches, and rallies, King demonstrated that social justice could be advanced without the use of violence. King was an admirer of Gandhi. In 1959, arriving in India, he said, "To other countries, I may go as a tourist, but to India I come as a pilgrim. This is because India means to me Mahatma Gandhi, a truly great man of the age." In 1964, at a massive civil rights rally in Washington, D.C., King delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech, the inspiration for his presence in Act III of *Satyagraha*. King was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1968.

TEACHER KEY TO INCOMPLETE LIBRETTO WORKSHEET

	SCENE 1: Personal Conviction	SCENE 2: The Larger Community	SCENE 3: Satyagraha Action
ACT I: TOLSTOY Non-violent Action	<p>The Kuru Field of Justice</p> <p><i>Hold pleasure and pain, profit and loss, victory and defeat to be the same: then brace yourself ready for the fight.</i></p> <p>[This text is the key message of Lord Krishna: the necessity of moral action].</p>	<p>Tolstoy Farm</p> <p><b>TRACK 1:</b> Such a one is honorable who gives his mortal powers to worthy work not seeking gain. Do the allotted task for which one is fit, for work is more excellent than idleness and the body's life proceeds not, lacking work.</p> <p>[This text connects to the simple, diligent work the satyagrahis undertook at the farm.]</p>	<p>The Vow</p> <p><i>Whoever gives up a deed because it causes pain, or because he shrinks from bodily pain, follows the way of darkness, knowing nothing of self-surrender.</i></p> <p>[This text reflects the danger satyagrahis faced in refusing to accept the Black Act.]</p>
ACT II: TAGORE Self-reliance	<p>Confrontation and Rescue</p> <p><b>TRACK 3:</b> And, thinking this, all those dark minded ones of little wit, embark on cruel and violent deeds, the curses of their kind.</p> <p>[This text was chosen to apply to the mob confronting Gandhi on his return to South Africa.]</p>	<p>Indian Opinion</p> <p><i>Perform unceasingly the works that must be done, for the man detached who labors on to the highest must win through. This is how the saints attained success. Moreover, you should embrace action for the upholding, the welfare of your own kind.</i></p> <p>[This text goes beyond the Tolstoy Farm text, emphasizing not simply work, but work for the benefit of others.]</p>	<p>Protest</p> <p><i>Let a man feel hatred for no being, let him be friendly, compassionate; done with thoughts of "I" and "mine," the same in pleasure as in pain, long suffering.</i></p> <p>[The "thoughts of 'I' and 'mine'" in this text not only express the selflessness of satyagraha, but comment ironically on the identity cards the satyagrahis burn in this scene.]</p>
ACT III: KING The Future			<p>The March</p> <p><b>TRACK 2:</b> I come into being age after age and take a visible shape and move a man with men for the protection of good, thrusting the evil back and setting virtue on her seat again.</p> <p>[This text connects the present of Gandhi's actions in South Africa to the future of his work in India and, beyond that, to the future of satyagraha as promoted by leaders like Dr. King.]</p>

## PART E: FOLLOW-UP

In Part B, students explored Philip Glass’s “music with repetitive structures.” In Part C, they worked with the narrative framework organizing *Satyagraha*. In Part D, they layered the *Bhagavad Gita* texts onto that narrative framework. In each of these tasks, the relationship between sensation and perception worked a bit differently from the usual.

To some, Philip Glass’s music might sound like a repetitive stream of musical notes. But by understanding his compositional method, we change that perception. Patterns come into focus. The music makes more sense.

If we expect the words coming out of performers’ mouths to be traditional dialogue, *Satyagraha* can be frustrating. But if we recognize that the meanings of words have been intentionally decoupled from their sounds, then reconnected to the action on stage in a more general sense (as seen in Part D), the opera’s use of text starts to make sense. Since we don’t expect the auditory sensations to be communicative, we perceive them differently.

Simply put, *Satyagraha* plays with the way our brains work—and invites us to play along. It asks that we recognize the difference between sensations and the meanings we assign them through perception. And it doesn’t do this separately with music, words, text, or structure alone: It asks that we gather up all the sensations—from music that sounds different, words that are used differently, and a time sequence that seems out of time—and with them perceive something new.

Now that students have seen how three of *Satyagraha*’s elements fit together, they can more closely explore a fourth unusual feature: the silent figures Glass and DeJong call “guardian spirits,” one of which is assigned to each act.

For homework, students should pick one of the three, Tolstoy, Tagore, or King, and, after researching the figure online or in a library, prepare a presentation explaining why Philip Glass might have chosen to give this man so prominent a role in an opera about M.K. Gandhi. In the spirit of this main activity, they also might want to reflect on how the physical presence of a guardian spirit on stage might affect the audience’s perception of the performance.

A few clues about Tolstoy, Tagore, and King are available on the timeline reproducible *Gandhi’s Time* and the sidebars, but students will need to do further research to support their interpretations. Some teachers may prefer for students to perform this research independently. Others may want to distribute copies of the sidebars in this guide which discuss the three “guardian spirits.”

On the following two pages you will find an English translation of the complete libretto of *Satyagraha* as it is being handed out at performances at the Met. (The newsprint-style design is meant to evoke both Gandhi’s involvement with the *Indian Opinion* newspaper and the use of the material in this production.)



# Satyagraha

M.K. GANDHI IN SOUTH AFRICA

1893 - 1914

## ACT I

- Scene 1 The Kuru Field of Justice
- Scene 2 Tolstoy Farm
- Scene 3 The Vow

## ACT II

- Scene 1 Confrontation and Rescue
- Scene 2 Indian Opinion
- Scene 3 Protest

## ACT III

- Scene 1 New Castle March

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## ACT I

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SCENE I: A MYTHICAL BATTLEFIELD

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### The Kuru Field of Justice

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#### Gandhi:

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"I SEE them here assembled, ready to fight, seeking to please the King's sinful son by waging war." And thus addressed by Arjuna, Krishna brought that splendid chariot to a halt between the two armies. In front of Bhishma and Drona and all the rulers of the world, he said, "Behold Arjuna, these kinsmen assembled here." And the Prince marked on each hand relatives and friends in both armies. Seeing them, all his kinsmen, thus arrayed, Arjuna was filled with deep compassion and turned to Krishna.

#### Arjuna:

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MY very being is oppressed with compassion's harmful taint. With mind perplexed concerning right and wrong I ask you which is the better course? Tell me and let your words be definite and clear, I am your pupil and put all my trust in you. So teach me.

#### Krishna:

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BE wise in matters of death and duty. See in this war presented by pure chance a door to paradise. For sure is death to all that's born, sure is birth to all that dies and for this, you have no cause to grieve. Likewise, recognize this war as prescribed

by duty. Hold pleasure and pain, profit and loss, victory and defeat to be the same: then brace yourself ready for the fight. So will you bring no evil on yourself.

#### Chorus:

---

TO him thus in compassion plunged, to him responding, Krishna spoke these words: "Whence comes this faintness on you now at this crisis hour? This ill besseems a noble, wins a heavenly state, but brings dishonour, Arjuna. Give up this vile faint heartedness. Stand up, chastiser of your foes!"

#### Gandhi:

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HOLD pleasure and pain, profit and loss, victory and defeat to be the same: then brace yourself ready for the fight. So will you bring no evil on yourself.

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#### SCENE II ~ 1910

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### Tolstoy Farm

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#### Gandhi:

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BETWEEN theory and practice, some talk as they were two — making a separation and a difference between them. Yet wise men know that both can be gained in applying oneself whole heartedly to one. For the high estate attained by men of contemplative theory, that same state achieve the men of action. So act as the ancient of days old, performing works as spiritual exercise.

#### Miss Schlesen, Kasturbai, Mrs. Naidoo:

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SUCH a one is honorable who gives his mortal powers to worthy work not seeking gain. Do the allotted task for which one is fit, for work is more excellent than idleness and the body's life proceeds not, lacking work. Such an earthly task do free from desire, you will perform a high task.

#### Kallenbach:

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WHEN the motives and the fruits of a man's actions are freed from desire, his works are burned clean by wisdom's fire, the white fire of truth. When he casts off attachment to his deeds, a man embarks on his work ever content, on none dependent. With thought and self controlled, giving up all possessions, he cares for his bodily maintenance without excess; taking what chance may bring, surmounting all dualities, the same in success and failure.

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#### SCENE III ~ 1906

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### The Vow

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#### Parsi Rustomji:

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THE world is not for the doubting man. Let a man by wisdom dispel his doubts. For nothing on earth resembles wisdom's power to purify and this a man may find in time within himself, when he is perfected in spiritual exercise. Then thoughts are steadied and come to rest allowing one to see God in the individual. Knowing this, he stands still moving not an inch from reality. Standing firmly unmoved by any suffering, however grievous it may be.

WHOEVER gives up a deed because it causes pain, or because he shrinks from bodily pain, follows the way of darkness, knowing nothing of self-surrender. But if a work is done because it should be done and is enjoined by Scripture and without thought for great benefits, then that is surrender in Goodness. With doubt cut away, suffused with goodness, the self-surrendered man hates neither uncongenial work nor looks only for pleasant work.

#### Chorus:

---

THESE works of sacrifice must be done. From old did the Lord of creatures say that in sacrifice you sustain the gods and the gods sustain you in return. So was the wheel set in motion and who here fails to match his turning living an evil life, the senses his pleasure ground, lives out his life in vain ground, lives out his life in vain.

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## ACT II

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SCENE I ~ 1896

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### Confrontation and Rescue

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**Mrs. Alexander:**

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**THE** devilish folk, in them there is no purity, no morality, no truth. So they say the world has not a law nor order, nor a lord. And, thinking this, all those dark-minded ones of little wit, embark on cruel and violent deeds, the curses of their kind. Maddened by pride and hypocrisy, not caring right up to death, they have no other aim than to satisfy their pleasure, convinced that is all. So speak fools.

**Chorus:**

---

**THIS** I have gained today, this whim I'll satisfy; this wealth is mine and much more too will be mine as time goes on. He was an enemy of mine, I've killed him, and many another I'll kill. I'm master here. I take my pleasure as I will; I'm strong and happy and successful. I'm rich and of good family. Who else can match himself with me?

SCENE 2 ~ 1906

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### Indian Opinion

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**Kallenbach and Miss Schlesen:**

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**WITH** senses freed, the wise man should act, longing to bring about the welfare and coherence of the world. Therefore, perform unceasingly the works that must be done, for the man detached who labors on to the highest must win through. This is how the saints attained success. Moreover, you should embrace action for the upholding, the welfare of your own kind. Whatever the noblest does, that too will others do: the standard that he sets all the world will follow.

**Kasturbai, Mrs. Naidoo  
and Parsi Rustomji:**

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**ACT** as God does, for the sake of others: "In the three worlds there is nothing I need do, nor anything unattained that I need to gain, yet action is the element in which I move. If I were not tirelessly to busy Myself with works, then would men everywhere follow in my footsteps, sinking back. If I were not to do my work these worlds would fall to ruin and I would be a worker in confusion."

SCENE III ~ 1908

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### Protest

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**Gandhi's Prayer:**

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**THE** Lord said:

**LET** a man feel hatred for no being, let him be friendly, compassionate; done with thoughts of "I" and "mine," the same in pleasure as in pain, long suffering.

**HIS** self restrained, his purpose firm, let his mind and soul be steeped in Me, let him worship Me with love, then will I love him in return.

**THAT** man I love from whom the people do not shrink and who does not shrink from them, who is free from exaltation, fear, impatience, and excitement.

**I LOVE** the man who has no expectation, is pure and skilled, indifferent, who has no worries and gives up all selfish enterprise, loyal-devoted to me.

**I LOVE** the man who hates not nor exults, who mourns not nor desires, who puts away both pleasant and unpleasant things, who is loyal-devoted-and-devout.

**I LOVE** the man who is the same to friend and foe, the same whether he be respected or despised, the same in heat and cold, in pleasure as in pain, who has put away attachment and remains unmoved by praise or blame, who is taciturn, content with whatever comes his way, having no home, of steady mind, but loyal-devoted-and-devout.

**BUT** as for those who reverence these deathless words of righteousness which I have just now spoken, putting their faith in them, making Me their goal my loving devotees, these I do love exceedingly.

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## ACT III

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SCENE I ~ 1913

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### New Castle March

---

**Kasturbai and Mrs. Naidoo:**

---

**IN** what for others is night, therein is the man of self-restraint wide awake, separate from passion and hate, self-possessed and drawing near to calm serenity. This is the athlete of the spirit, whose ground remains unmoved, whole soul stands firmly on it. This is the fixed, still state which sustains even at the time of death the athletes of the spirit, who even then set forth, some to return, some never to return. Outstanding is he whose soul views in the selfsame way comrades and enemies, loving all alike.

**Gandhi:**

---

**THE** Lord said, I have passed through many a birth and many have you. I know them all but you do not. Yet by my creative energy, I consort with Nature and come to be in time. Whenever the law of righteousness withers away and lawlessness arises, then do I generate myself on earth. I come into being age after age and take a visible shape and move a man with men for the protection of good, thrusting the evil back and setting virtue on her seat again.

Philip Glass  
**Satyagraha**

Opera in three acts

Vocal text by Constance DeJong  
adapted from the *Bhagavad Gita*

Book by Philip Glass and  
Constance DeJong

## Wheels Within Wheels: A Close Look at the Opening Aria of *Satyagraha*

Philip Glass has compared his work to a “wheel-work” in which relatively short units of music repeat, change slightly, then build into complicated cycles—sequences of repetitions with a filigree of almost undiscernable variation. The opening aria of *Satyagraha* offers an excellent example.

First, have students listen to **Track 4** straight through. What do they think? You may hear words like “monotonous” and “repetitious.” Explain that the music is like a subtle puzzle—and the repetitions are actually the key! You only need to pay attention.

Track 4 consists of units of music that Glass assembles like building blocks. Most are only one measure long and are characterized by the number of notes in that measure—anywhere between four and nine. Play **Track 5**. The tenor (playing Gandhi) sings one word as the track begins. In the middle of this word, a single cello begins to play.

Students should pay close attention to the cello part. It includes four measures. There are five notes in each of the first three measures, then six notes in the fourth. (The tenor begins to sing again in the middle of this six-note measure.) From such tiny variations, Philip Glass will build his wheel-work. Play the track as often as necessary until students can acclimate themselves and successfully count off the four measures: 1,2,3,4,5 1,2,3,4,5 1,2,3,4,5 1,2,3,4,5,6.



**Track 6** goes back to the beginning, repeating Track 5, then continues. Students will hear how the same set of four measures is repeated: five notes, five notes, five notes, six notes, then again 5-5-5-6.

Notice how the tenor begins to sing his same snippet of melody, but with a different word, in the middle of the last measure of the sequence. By offsetting the two simple patterns—the singing line and the cello line—Glass introduces a complex rhythm.

The obvious difference in **Track 7** is a more elaborate tenor part, but students should listen for the “secret code” in the cello line. They will need to listen carefully to hear the variation: The cello line sounds similar, but here none of the eight measures includes five notes. They all include six.



### MUSICAL HIGHLIGHTS ARE BRIEF OPPORTUNITIES TO

- help students make sense of opera
- whet their interest in upcoming transmissions of *The Met: Live in HD*

Each focuses on audio selections from *Satyagraha* available online at [metopera.org/education](http://metopera.org/education) or the accompanying CD. Where noted, certain activities also involve reproducibles, available in the back of this guide.

These “mini-lessons” will in practice take up no more than a few minutes of class time. They’re designed to help you bring opera into your classroom while minimizing interruption of your ongoing curriculum. Feel free to use as many as you like.

So far, Glass has used his one-measure units to form two patterns in the cello line, with each pattern played twice:

5-5-5-6 5-5-5-6 (Track 6)

6-6-6-6 6-6-6-6 (Track 7)

In **Track 8**, as the tenor carries on, that sequence of patterns is repeated. In other words, the whole set of 16 units turns out to be a single long pattern:

5-5-5-6 5-5-5-6 6-6-6-6 6-6-6-6 (Track 6 followed by Track 7)

5-5-5-6 5-5-5-6 6-6-6-6 6-6-6-6 (Track 8)

**Track 9** introduces a new building block: a seven-note unit. As in Tracks 5, 6, and 7, a four-measure pattern is repeated twice.

7-7-7-7 7-7-7-7



**Track 10** includes two changes. First, another new unit: This one adds not one, but two notes to the measure: a nine-note block. Then this unit is played twice as many times as in Track 7 or Track 9 (in which the previous two building blocks were introduced):

9-9-9-9 9-9-9-9 9-9-9-9 9-9-9-9



Above this repetitive bass line Gandhi sings, "I see them ready to right, seeking to please the king's sinful son by wagin war."



In **Track 11**, Glass uses the natural and harmonic minor scale (raised 7th) to double the building block's length. The new unit comprises two eight-note measures, one rising in tone, the other descending. The double unit is repeated eight times—a total of 16 measures:

8+8 8+8 8+8 8+8 8+8 8+8 8+8 8+8



Track 12 returns to nine-note measures, but this nine-note measure is played only 12 times (not 16, as in Track 10).



Then Track 13 returns to eight-note measures played by a flute, again played only 12 times, not 16.

Finally, Track 14, like Track 12, cycles through 12 nine-note measures. The end of the cycle is marked by the entrance of a second tenor, the mythical warrior Arjuna, in the middle of the 12th and last measure. As Arjuna joins Gandhi, Glass moves to the next section of the story—and of the music.

Philip Glass's music is at once simple and complex, but its elaborate patterning can be hard to grasp as the notes flow by in time. A visual display will provide a different perspective. Students can set up a grid with at least 108 increments on one axis, representing the 108 measures in the selection (Tracks 6 and 7, eight measures each; Track 8, 16 measures; Track 9, eight measures; Tracks 10 and 11, 16 each; Tracks 12, 13 and 14, 12 measures each). The other axis should go from 0 to 9, representing the number of notes in a measure. By graphing the number of notes in each of the 108 measures, students will be able to visualize, in part, the way Glass creates a varying musical line through simple repetition.

### Taking It to Heart: A Close Look at the Root of *Satyagraha* (Act I, Scene 1)

In *Satyagraha*, the “repetitive structures” of Philip Glass’s music are more than a musicological abstraction. They are a means of communication. Act I, Scene 1, depicting Gandhi’s integration of a key Hindu teaching into his political awareness provides an example, through two relatively long selections.

In the music heard in **Track 15**, Lord Krishna is imagined standing in the middle of a battlefield, responding to the anxieties of the warrior Arjuna. He counsels Arjuna to be even-keeled in his response to life’s vicissitudes, but unafraid to take action—the philosophical root of *satyagraha*. Krishna, Arjuna, and Gandhi sing boldly as an instrumental whirlwind swirls beneath them, perhaps suggesting the intervention of the divine in human affairs.

A few minutes later, as heard in **Track 16**, Gandhi stands alone, singing essentially the same material. His repetitions flow at first, as if he were rehearsing what he has heard. Before long, they fractionate and stutter—here a couple of syllables, there a fragment of phrase. By a minute and 40 seconds into the selection, the voice of the tenor has given way to an instrumental air with the quality of deep rumination, as if Gandhi were turning the idea over and over again in his mind. Another minute and 40 seconds pass before his voice returns—first two syllables at a time, then one. Words, then bits of word, recur pensively, finally softening into a sound that might even be pre-verbal, a human sound barely distinguishable from an instrument in the orchestra. By this point, Krishna’s words seem no longer to be *on* Gandhi’s mind: They *are* his mind. Through music, Glass has depicted the moment when a man comes to terms with a life-changing thought.

## Again and Again: A Close Look at the Final Aria in *Satyagraha*

*Satyagraha*'s closing aria is a setting of a section of the *Bhagavad Gita* that describes how the Lord Krishna returns to Earth over and over in new incarnations, whenever his presence is needed (see Part D of the Classroom Activity for a translation of the text). The setting embodies not only the text's theme of recurrence, but also the simplicity of Gandhi's message, the purity of his character and the tenacity of his work, all through a straightforward compositional technique: The tenor sings the same rising eight-note phrase 30 (!) times in a row:

- He sings the phrase three times,
- the orchestra plays for four measures,
- he sings the phrase three more times,
- the orchestra plays for 20 measures,
- then the cycle repeats.

After four such cycles, the tenor sings his phrase three times, the orchestra follows for four measures, then he sings three last repetitions before the orchestra carries the work to its quietly dazzling conclusion.

With the silent Martin Luther King Jr. on stage (as if from the future), Gandhi declares, "I come into being age after age and take a visible shape and move a man with men for the protection of good, thrusting the evil back and setting virtue on her seat again." He sings an ascending Phrygian scale, all the white notes on a keyboard from E to E an octave higher.

GANDHI

tan nu - yu - hum va - du sur - va ne  
nu - hum va - thu pu - rum - tu - pu

If you conducted the Classroom Activity *The Secret of Satyagraha*, your students might notice that this melody sounds familiar. Play Track 2. A flute melody emerges above the tremolo strings, played in the Phrygian mode. This scale is the basis for the final moments of the opera, as heard above, but at a much slower tempo.

Track 17 presents the complete, spellbinding aural experience of the final aria.



## Supporting Students During *The Met: Live in HD* Transmission

Thanks to print and audio recording, much about opera can be enjoyed long before a performance. But performance itself brings vital layers of sound and color, pageantry and technology, drama, skill, and craft. Performance activities are designed to help students tease apart different aspects of the experience, consider creative choices that have been made, and sharpen their own critical faculties.

Each Performance Activity incorporates a reproducible activity sheet. Students bring the activity sheet to the transmission to fill out during intermission and/or after the final curtain. The activities direct attention to characteristics of the production that might otherwise go unnoticed. Ratings matrices invite students to express their critique: use these ratings to spark discussions that call upon careful, critical thinking.

The basic activity sheet is called *My Highs & Lows*. Meant to be collected, opera by opera, over the course of the season, this sheet points students toward a consistent set of objects of observation. Its purposes are not only to help students articulate and express their opinions, but to support comparison and contrast, enriching understanding of the art form as a whole.

For *Satyagraha*, the other activity sheet, called *Simple Materials*, directs students' attention to the astonishing materials used for the set and props of this *Live in HD* presentation.

The Performance Activity reproducibles can be found in the back of this guide. Either activity can provide the basis for class discussion after the transmission. On the next page, you'll find an activity created specifically for follow-up after the *Live in HD* transmission.

## Satyagraha's American Roots: An Exploration of H.D. Thoreau's Influence on M.K. Gandhi

Students will enjoy starting the class with an open discussion of the Met performance. What did they like? What didn't they? Did anything surprise them? What would they like to see or hear again? What would they have done differently? This discussion will offer students an opportunity to review the notes on their *My Highs & Lows* sheet—in short, to see themselves as *Satyagraha* experts.

*Satyagraha* was written by Americans, and its third act credits Gandhi's influence on the American Martin Luther King, Jr. But Gandhi acknowledged his own debt to the ideas of an earlier American: Henry David Thoreau. Addressing "American friends," Gandhi once wrote, "You have given me a teacher in Thoreau, who furnished me through his essay on the 'Duty of Civil Disobedience' scientific confirmation of what I was doing in South Africa."

Thoreau published "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience" in 1849. The essay would become a classic not only for its engaging style and its challenging political argument, but for the story Thoreau told there of the night he himself spent in jail in Concord, Massachusetts: he had refused to pay an annual tax. It is sometimes reported that Thoreau was expressing his objection to the United States' war on Mexico; he did oppose that war, but he wrote in "Civil Disobedience," "It is for no particular item in the tax bill that I refuse to pay it. I simply wish to refuse allegiance to the State, to withdraw and stand aloof from it effectually." So where Gandhi acted in response to specific acts of oppression, Thoreau acted on a rather more abstract principle.

To explore Thoreau's position, and to compare it with the idea of *satyagraha*, students can find a highly accessible version of "Civil Disobedience," annotated with conversational study notes, online at [www.vcu.edu](http://www.vcu.edu).

The essay swiftly draws readers into the mind and experience of the personable Thoreau, who raises just the sort of ethical questions appealing to many adolescents.

After reading the essay, students can examine Thoreau's reasoning:

- Is it right for a citizen to "stand aloof" from the country in which he lives?
- Could *satyagraha*, as depicted in the opera, be described as "standing aloof"?
- Would it have made a difference if Thoreau had attributed his tax boycott to opposing the Mexican-American War, rather than the more general intention to "withdraw and stand aloof"?
- What if he had refused to pay taxes as a protest against slavery, which

### IN PREPARATION

This activity requires no preparation other than attendance at the *Live in HD* transmission of *Satyagraha*.

### CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

Social Studies (Philosophy; History of Ideas; U.S. History)

Language Arts (19th-century U.S. literature)

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To support understanding of the philosophy of *satyagraha* by introducing similar ideas in an American context
- To identify continuities in the history of global thought
- To encourage personal reflection on principled non-violent resistance
- To acquaint students with the work and influence of H.D. Thoreau

### COMMON CORE ELA

College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading: Grades 6–12

#### Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

### NATIONAL CENTER FOR HISTORY IN THE SCHOOLS

Historical Thinking Standards for Grades 5–12

#### STANDARD 3: Historical Analysis and Interpretation

- Compare and contrast differing sets of ideas.
- Consider multiple perspectives.
- Analyze cause-and-effect relationships and multiple causation, including the importance of the individual, the influence of ideas.



Henry David Thoreau

was still legal in the U.S. and regulated by its government in 1849?

- Should people today refuse to pay taxes when they disagree with government policies? Why or why not?

Gandhi actually discovered Thoreau during the period depicted in *Satyagraha*—in 1906, the year of Act I, Scene 3 (The Vow) and Act II, Scene 2 (Indian Opinion). In November 1907, Gandhi's *Indian Opinion* announced an essay contest: readers were invited to comment on works that inspired satyagraha. "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience" was singled out.

Having read Thoreau's essay and seen *Satyagraha*, your students may enjoy "entering" the contest that Gandhi's newspaper held more than a century ago. They can write their own essays, responding both to Thoreau's American civil disobedience and to the philosophy embodied in Philip Glass's opera.

## SATYAGRAHA

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### Satyagraha Educator Guide Track List

Met Radio Recording  
April 19, 2008

**M. K. GANDHI**

Richard Croft

**PRINCE ARJUNA**

Bradley Garvin

**LORD KRISHNA**

Richard Bernstein

**MISS SCHLESEN**

Rachelle Durkin

**MRS. NAIDOO**

Ellie Dehn

**KASTURBAI**

Maria Zifchak

**MR. KALLENBACH**

Earle Patriarco

**PARSI RUSTOMJI**

Alfred Walker

**MRS. ALEXANDER**

Mary Phillips

**CONDUCTOR**

Dante Anzolini

Metropolitan Opera  
Orchestra and Chorus

### CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

- 1 ACT III, SCENE 1: New Castle March
- 2 ACT I, SCENE 2: Tolstoy Farm
- 3 ACT II, SCENE 1: Confrontation and Rescue

### MUSICAL HIGHLIGHTS

- 4-14 ACT I, SCENE 1: The Kuru Field of Justice  
*The opening aria of Satyagraha*
- 15-16 ACT I, SCENE 1: The Kuru Field of Justice
- 17 ACT III, SCENE 1: New Castle March  
*Gandhi's final aria*

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

## Gandhi–Glass Games (1)

### GANDHI IN SOUTH AFRICA

Indians first arrived in South Africa in 1860. Most came to labor on Dutch and British farms as indentured servants, others set up as merchants and traders. Limits were set on their rights in various South African states, and as their community flourished, more laws were enacted against them. For instance, free Indians in the British colony of Natal had to get government permission to marry, obtain a special pass to travel, and pay a high yearly tax to remain in the country.

Mohandas K. Gandhi, an unremarkable young lawyer with no political experience, traveled to South Africa in 1893. He had come to work on a legal case for an Indian client. Soon after his arrival, he learned what it meant to live as an Indian in South Africa. On a long train journey, he was thrown out of a first-class sleeping car reserved for whites despite having a valid first-class ticket, then ejected from the train for protesting. He spent that night in a freezing cold station waiting room. A decision was before him: retreat to India or stay and fight his case. He decided to stay. Years later, Gandhi said, “My active non-violence began from that day.”

Gandhi electrified the Indian community. Ordered by a judge to remove his turban in court, Gandhi petitioned for the right to wear it as a sign of his nationality—and won. When his case was over, the Indian community begged him to stay and help fight a new law designed to rob them of the vote. Gandhi agreed to stay for a month. He ended up staying 21 years. During those years, he fought anti-Indian laws. He founded institutions, including a newspaper, *Indian Opinion*. He created settlements where Indians could experience self-sufficient, cooperative communal living—first Phoenix Farm in 1904, then Tolstoy Farm in 1910.

Gandhi used many political tools that he would later bring back to India for its struggle for independence from Great Britain: marches, strikes, demonstrations, filling the jails with protestors, and disarming the enemy by cooperation. He discovered the power of sacred vows to bolster political commitment. He learned the strength of symbolic acts. He identified a new political principle: *satyagraha*, the overwhelming force of truth and love. *Satyagrahis* would accept suffering rather than inflict it, and inspire rather than force their opponents to change.

After accomplishing his goals in South Africa, Gandhi returned to India. His movement eventually secured India’s independence. Today Gandhi is celebrated as the father of his country, and his birthday is honored with a national holiday in India.

Adapted from *operainfo.org*

## CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

## Gandhi–Glass Games (2)

Philip Glass was born in Baltimore in 1937. The son of a record store owner, he became familiar with classical music early in life, studied violin and flute as a child, and began composing in his early teens. He went on to study musical composition in New York City, then in Paris, France. A turning point came when he was hired to work on a film score by the celebrated Indian musician Ravi Shankar. Glass became fascinated by the complex rhythms of Indian classical music.

He traveled to India and North Africa and upon his return to New York City became part of a community of young composers who were experimenting with the parameters of pure sound, duration, repetition, and structure. Glass found innovative ways to get his music performed and listened to. In 1968, he formed the Philip Glass Ensemble, which forged a unique sound ideally suited to his compositions. His hypnotic, driving music appealed to young people; the ensemble even performed in rock clubs. Eventually Glass became one of the first classical composers to start his own record label.

Though he was building a large audience for his music, Glass was still unable to make a living from it. He worked as a plumber, an artist's assistant, and a cab driver. For a brief time he even started a moving company with fellow composer Steve Reich. Much of Glass's income went back into his work: In 1974 he rented New York's prestigious Town Hall to perform the evening-length *Music in Twelve Parts*.

Glass's first opera, *Einstein on the Beach*, which premiered in France in July 1976, caused a sensation during two special performances at the Metropolitan Opera later that year. Glass's score utilized unconventional instruments and non-operatic voices. The opera was five hours long with no intermission: audience members were free to wander in and out.

Glass followed this work about Albert Einstein with two more operas about historical figures, creating a loosely related trilogy. *Satyagraha* (1980) takes its starting point from Mohandas Gandhi's time in South Africa. *Akhmaten* (1983) is about the Egyptian pharaoh. Since then Glass has composed a number of other operas, including *The Juniper Tree* (1985), *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1988), and *The Voyage* (1992), commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera and written in honor of the 500th anniversary of Columbus's arrival in the New World. *Appomattox*, an opera framing the events at the end of the American Civil War, was commissioned by the San Francisco Opera and premiered in 2007. The opera focuses on Civil War leaders Ulysses S. Grant, Robert E. Lee, and Abraham Lincoln.

More people have probably heard Philip Glass's music in films than anywhere else. His scores for *Kundun* (1997), *The Hours* (2002), and *Notes on a Scandal* (2006) were nominated for Academy Awards. Perhaps his most famous score was for the abstract film *Koyaanisqatsi* (1983). Glass has continued to write purely instrumental works, including eight symphonies, numerous concertos, and string quartets. An enthusiastic collaborator, Glass has worked with artists as diverse as Ravi Shankar, David Bowie, Laurie Anderson, David Byrne, Allen Ginsberg, Twyla Tharp, Yo-Yo Ma, Doris Lessing, and Paul Simon.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

## Gandhi–Glass Games Worksheet (3)

### Review Questions:

What did Philip Glass's father do for a living?

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Glass has written operas, concertos, symphonies, and string quartets, but his largest audience has probably been for his

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Glass wrote operas about Gandhi and two other historical figures. Who are they?

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How long did Gandhi live in South Africa?

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What did Gandhi do for a living in South Africa?

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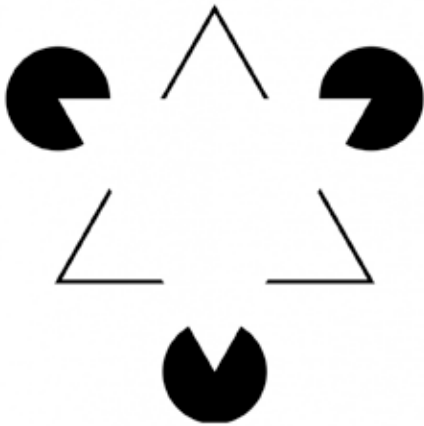
Why did Gandhi want to wear a turban?

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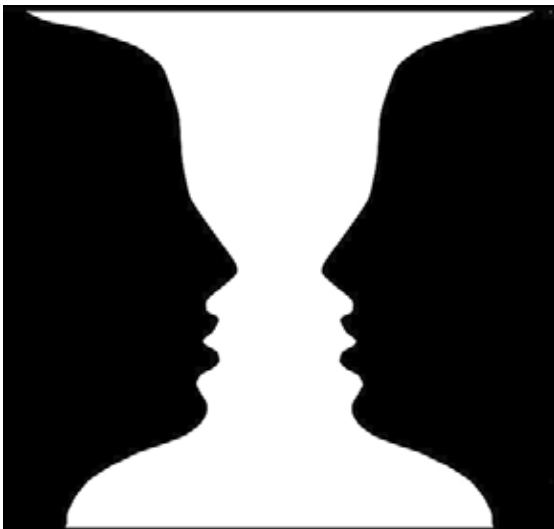


CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Gandhi–Glass Games Worksheet (4)  
Looking at Pictures: A Mini-Experiment



1. What do you see here?
2. How do you know?



1. What do you see here?
2. How do you know?



1896  
**CONFRONTATION AND RESCUE** Returning from a visit home to India, Gandhi is met by a violent South African mob, angry at his work organizing the Indian community. With the aid of the wife of a local police official, he makes his way safely through the crowd.

1903  
Gandhi first publishes *Indian Opinion*, a newspaper for the Indian community in South Africa.

1904  
Gandhi establishes Phoenix Farm, near Johannesburg, South Africa. It is the first experiment in building a community based on the principles of simplicity and satyagraha.

1893  
Mohandas K. Gandhi first travels from India to South Africa.

1894  
Leo Tolstoy publishes his doctrine of Christian non-violent social action.

1905  
Back in India, which is under the rule of Great Britain, writer Rabindranath Tagore starts a movement for local self-reliance. He helps poor farmers set up a cooperative bank.

1906  
**INDIAN OPINION** As conditions worsen for Indians in South Africa, *Indian Opinion* is a crucial forum in which members of the community can express their feelings and develop strategies to address common problems.

1906  
**THE VOW** The government of South Africa passes the Black Act, requiring all Indian residents to carry ID cards. In September, Gandhi and several thousand followers vow to resist the new law, even at the risk of death.

1908  
**PROTEST** During negotiations with Gandhi, the government agrees not to require registration if Indians will register voluntarily, but the government breaks its promise. Gandhi and his followers recognize this as an example of the need for self-reliance, as opposed to depending on someone else's good will. On August 16, 3,000 South African Indians burn their government ID cards in a public ceremony.

1908  
Tolstoy publishes "A Letter to a Hindu," his call for India to use non-violence to gain independence from England.

1909  
Gandhi and Tolstoy begin a correspondence.

1910  
**TOLSTOY FARM**, a new community dedicated to satyagraha, opens near Johannesburg. Here, satyagrahis work together in the spirit of self-reliance, building, gathering food, cooking, making their clothes, and all their necessities with their own hands.

1910  
Tolstoy dies in Russia.

1913  
**THE MARCH** When the South African government imposes a new tax on Indian residents, Gandhi organizes a massive cross-country march.

The night before, with the march itself still hours in the future, Gandhi addresses a huge rally in the town of New Castle, where Indian coal miners have gone on strike at the risk of imprisonment.

1914  
Gandhi returns to India to lead the struggle for independence.

1929  
Martin Luther King, Jr. is born in Atlanta, Georgia.

1930  
Gandhi organizes a 24-day march across India to the sea, protesting a British tax on salt. Millions engage in acts of satyagraha resistance. 80,000 supporters are jailed.

1947  
India declares independence from Great Britain.

1948  
Gandhi is assassinated by a religious extremist in Delhi, India.

1963  
Martin Luther King, Jr. leads a "March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom." Hundreds of thousands hear his "I Have a Dream" speech on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

1968  
Martin Luther King, Jr. is assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee.

SATYAGRAHA

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Satyagraha Time Worksheet

<p>ACT I: TOLSTOY Non-violent Action</p>	<p><b>SCENE 1: Personal Conviction</b></p> <p>The Kuru Field of Justice <b>Guardian Spirit and theme of the Act:</b> <i>Tolstoy/non-violent action</i> <b>Why?</b> <i>Because Gandhi understood this myth to be a metaphor for non-violent action, not a literal endorsement of warfare.</i> <b>Conviction, Community or Action Scene?</b> <i>Conviction</i> <b>Why?</b> <i>Because the scene shows Krishna telling Arjuna and Gandhi that they need to be strong and brave in their fight for justice.</i> <b>Therefore, this is Act I, Scene 1.</b></p>	<p><b>SCENE 2: The Larger Community</b></p> <p>Tolstoy Farm <b>Guardian Spirit and theme of the Act:</b> _____ <b>Why?</b> _____ <b>Conviction, Community or Action Scene?</b> _____ <b>Why?</b> _____ <b>Therefore, this is Act __, Scene __.</b></p>	<p><b>SCENE 3: Satyagraha Action</b></p> <p>The Vow <b>Guardian Spirit and theme of the Act:</b> _____ <b>Why?</b> _____ <b>Conviction, Community or Action Scene?</b> _____ <b>Why?</b> _____ <b>Therefore, this is Act __, Scene __.</b></p>
<p>ACT II: TAGORE Self-reliance</p>	<p><b>Confrontation and Rescue Guardian Spirit and theme of the Act:</b> <i>Tagore/self-reliance</i> <b>Why?</b> <i>Because Gandhi is attacked for encouraging self-reliance among the Indians of South Africa.</i> <b>Conviction, Community or Action Scene?</b> <i>Conviction</i> <b>Why?</b> <i>Because Gandhi withstands the attack thanks to his deep personal belief in the value of satyagraha.</i> <b>Therefore, this is Act II, Scene 1.</b></p>	<p><b>Indian Opinion Guardian Spirit and theme of the Act:</b> _____ <b>Why?</b> _____ <b>Conviction, Community or Action Scene?</b> _____ <b>Why?</b> _____ <b>Therefore, this is Act __, Scene __.</b></p>	<p><b>Protest Guardian Spirit and theme of the Act:</b> _____ <b>Why?</b> _____ <b>Conviction, Community or Action Scene?</b> _____ <b>Why?</b> _____ <b>Therefore, this is Act __, Scene __.</b></p>
<p>ACT III: KING The Future</p>		<p><b>The March Guardian Spirit and theme of the Act:</b> _____ <b>Why?</b> _____ <b>Conviction, Community or Action Scene?</b> _____ <b>Why?</b> _____ <b>Therefore, this is Act __, Scene __.</b></p>	

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

## Meanings for Sounds

### TRACK 1

Such a one is honorable who gives his mortal powers to worthy work not seeking gain. Do the allotted task for which one is fit, for work is more excellent than idleness and the body's life proceeds not, lacking work. Such an earthly task do free from desire, you will perform a high task.

### TRACK 2

I come into being age after age and take a visible shape and move a man with men for the protection of good, thrusting the evil back and setting virtue on her seat again.

### TRACK 3

And, thinking this, all those dark-minded ones of little wit, embark on cruel and violent deeds, the curses of their kind.

SATYAGRAHA

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Incomplete Libretto

	<b>SCENE 1: Personal Conviction</b>	<b>SCENE 2: The Larger Community</b>	<b>SCENE 3: Satyagraha Action</b>
<p>ACT I: TOLSTOY Non-violent Action</p>	<p>The Kuru Field of Justice</p> <p><i>Hold pleasure and pain, profit and loss, victory and defeat to be the same: then brace yourself ready for the fight.</i></p> <p><b>Explain why this quotation goes with this scene in the act</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Tolstoy Farm</p> <p><b>THE QUOTATION IN TRACK ___</b></p> <p><b>Explain why this quotation goes with this scene in the act</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>The Vow</p> <p><i>Whoever gives up a deed because it causes pain, or because he shrinks from bodily pain, follows the way of darkness, knowing nothing of self-surrender.</i></p> <p><b>Explain why this quotation goes with this scene in the act</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
<p>ACT II: TAGORE Self-reliance</p>	<p>Confrontation and Rescue</p> <p><b>THE QUOTATION IN TRACK ___</b></p> <p><b>Explain why this quotation goes with this scene in the act</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p><i>Indian Opinion</i></p> <p><i>Perform unceasingly the works that must be done, for the man detached who labors on to the highest must win through. This is how the saints attained success. Moreover, you should embrace action for the upholding, the welfare of your own kind.</i></p> <p><b>Explain why this quotation goes with this scene in the act</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Protest</p> <p><i>Let a man feel hatred for no being, let him be friendly, compassionate; done with thoughts of "I" and "mine," the same in pleasure as in pain, long suffering.</i></p> <p><b>Explain why this quotation goes with this scene in the act</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
<p>ACT III: KING The Future</p>			<p>The March</p> <p><b>THE QUOTATION IN TRACK ___</b></p> <p><b>Explain why this quotation goes with this scene in the act</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>

SATYAGRAHA

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NOVEMBER 19, 2011

## Performance Activity: Simple Materials

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Name

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Class

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Teacher

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Date

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In bringing the story of Gandhi’s work in South Africa to the stage of the Metropolitan Opera, director Phelim McDermott and designer Julian Crouch tried to communicate the sense of humble, functional, handmade beauty they associated with Gandhi. They decided to work with the kinds of materials that even self-reliant satyagrahis could get their hand on. See if you can find where each of these materials shows up in the opera, how it’s used, and what effect it creates.

NEWSPAPERS

When are they used? What are they used for? What’s your opinion?

STICKY TAPE

When is it used? What is it used for? What’s your opinion?

CORRUGATED METAL

When is it used? What is it used for? What’s your opinion?

**BOLTS OF COTTON**

When are they used? What are they used for? What's your opinion?

**FIBERGLASS POLES**

When are they used? What are they used for? What's your opinion?

**SHOES**

When are they used? What are they used for? What's your opinion?

**COAT HANGERS**

When are they used? What are they used for? What's your opinion?



# Satyagraha: My Highs & Lows

NOVEMBER 19, 2011

CONDUCTED BY DANTE ANZOLINI

REVIEWED BY \_\_\_\_\_

<b>THE STARS</b>	<b>STAR POWER</b>	<b>MY COMMENTS</b>
RICHARD CROFT AS GANDHI	* * * * *	
RACHELLE DURKIN AS MISS SCHLESEN	* * * * *	
KIM JOSEPHSON AS MR. KALLENBACH	* * * * *	
ALFRED WALKER AS PARSİ RUSTOMJI	* * * * *	

<b>THE SHOW, SCENE BY SCENE</b>	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>MUSIC</b>	<b>SET DESIGN/STAGING</b>
ACT 1, SCENE 1, THE KURU FIELD OF JUSTICE MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
ACT 1, SCENE 2, TOLSTOY FARM MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
ACT 1, SCENE 3, THE VOW MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
ACT 2, SCENE 1, CONFRONTATION AND RESCUE MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
ACT 2, SCENE 2, INDIAN OPINION MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
ACT 2, SCENE 3, PROTEST MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5
ACT 3, THE MARCH MY OPINION	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5	1-2-3-4-5