

# Re-entry embodies Berkeley vets' words as 'verbatim theater'

By Anne Brice, Berkeley News | NOVEMBER 17, 2016



**T**rè Bunker didn't cry at war. He served five tours in the Marines in Iraq and Afghanistan between 2005 and 2012, and says he didn't have time to feel what he was doing; he just had get through each day.

"I compartmentalized a lot," he says. "It's all you can do. The mission goes on. It doesn't stop because you're sad."

One of his jobs was collecting human remains from the battlefield, and sending them home to their families for proper burials. Although the job was dangerous and often heart-wrenching, the hardest part started when he came back home.

"Having to live with everything that happened... it's hard to make that transition, trying to figure out what is normal. What is normal? Who defines normal?" he asks.

When Bunker started at Berkeley in 2015, he didn't tell people he'd served in the military. "There are so many stereotypes," he says. "For a lot of vets, once you leave the military, you want to put it behind you, not keep talking about it."

But now, as a senior in Middle Eastern studies and vice president of the Cal Veterans Group, Bunker is talking about his experiences in a big way. He, along with other veterans on campus, shared their stories of war as raw material for *Re-entry: The process of resilience*, the latest piece by the Department of Theater, Dance and Performance Studies.



**Trè Bunker is the vice president of the Cal Veterans Group on campus. (UC Berkeley photo by Anne Brice)**



**Director Joe Goode wrote *Re-entry* from interviews with UC Berkeley veterans. (Photo by Julia Zave)**

Director Joe Goode, a professor in the department, interviewed veterans and worked with actors to embody their stories of survival and perseverance.

"We all face challenges in our life journey," says Goode. "Having experienced the rigors and the discipline of the military, and then the rigors and discipline of UC Berkeley, these veterans have a lot of maturity and wisdom to share, especially about grit, tenacity, coping and overcoming."

Goode calls the performance style "verbatim theater," where he works with actors to edit, arrange and sculpt the veterans' experiences through text, movement and music, with the words supplied entirely by interviewees. "It is all verbatim from the mouths of real people," he says.

Bunker says not a day goes by that he doesn't think about his time in Iraq and Afghanistan — a smell or a sound, even a word, can trigger memories of his time abroad. And he plans on keeping close ties with the region.

He spent last summer studying Arabic in Morocco, and in a few months, plans to travel to Iraq and Jordan to conduct research for his thesis about Iraq's profitable black market in oil, guns and more than 15,000 stolen museum artifacts following the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

*Re-entry: The process of resilience* opens tonight (Thursday, Nov. 17) and runs through Sunday, Nov. 20, at the Durham Studio on campus. Tickets are \$13-\$20 and can be purchased [online](#) or at the door. The show runs 70 minutes with no intermission.

To learn more about *Re-entry*, visit the Theater, Dance and Performance Studies [website](#).

To be connected with veteran services on campus, join the [Cal Veterans Group](#) — they meet every other Thursday — or stop by the [Cal Veterans Service Center](#) at 102 Hearst Memorial Gym on Bancroft Way.



***Re-entry* opens tonight (Nov. 17) and runs through Nov. 20. (Photo by Julia Zave)**



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