Kickin’ Sand and Tellin’ Lies: Writing a Play

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Abstract

This work is part of the student-faculty collaborative research project “Launching through the Surf: The Dory Fleet of Pacific City.” This facet of the project, which began in the summer of 2011 and continued through the fall of 2012, aimed to collect and preserve the oral histories of the Dory Fleet of Pacific City, Oregon. The team interviewed dory fishers and their families in order to learn about their experiences as commercial and recreational fisherman. Drawing inspiration from the oral history stories and artifacts compiled through the project, the Linfield College Department of Theatre and Communication Arts created an original, fictional theatrical production in November 2012. This presentation focuses on the creative process the playwrights, Dr. Jackson Miller and Chris Forrer, engaged in to compile material from the oral histories, write, and edit the theatrical script that culminated in the multimedia production entitled Kickin' Sand and Tellin' Lies.
Summer 2011: Project Work

- Took part in interview process as primary interviewer & camera operator
- Spent time editing interview audio into 2-5 minute stories
- Attendance at major dory community events: Blessing of the Fleet, Dory Days Festival
- Learned about the Pacific City and dory communities
- Listened for speech patterns and jargon
Summer 2012: Early Stages

- Brainstormed ideas for scenes based on stories from interviews
- Labeled scenes based on emotional content (poignant, humorous, triumphant, etc.)
- Decided the form of the play: chose a linear, fictional plot opposed to episodic, non-linear collection of staged stories
- Created a rough scene outline for review by project team
Summer 2012: Collection of Material

- Created a Google document, “The Boat Barn,” for quotations that could be used as dialogue
- Reviewed source material: audio interviews, interview maps, interview transcripts, and personal notes
- Project team supplied quotations from their notes in the ongoing interviews
Summer 2012: Scripting

- Chose final scene outline and cut extraneous scenes
- Each author chose a scene to draft that we felt we had sufficient material to construct
- Shared notes on how the process felt
- Divided the remaining scenes and set a deadline for a rough draft: the Dory Days Festival in July
- Had a first reading of existing material with project team members on the final day of Dory Days
- Took feedback from project team
Fall 2012: Editing

- Set a deadline for a complete casting draft
- Completed casting draft and held a public reading in the lobby of Ford Hall on September 6th
- Took feedback from audience members, actors, and members of the dory community in attendance
- Completed a final rehearsal draft on September 9th
- After the show was cast, received feedback from production team and continued minor editing
Fall 2012: Other Events

- Participated in “Meet The Playwrights” function in lobby of Ford Hall on opening night of the production
- Received feedback from two respondents acting on behalf of the Kennedy Center American Collegiate Theatre Festival (KCACTF)
- Took part in tour of production to the Kiwanda Community Center in Pacific City, Oregon, where the play was performed free for members of the community
Handy’s Tuna Monologue

“I remember one day when I was fishin’ ‘bout 55 miles out-- We were just catchin’ the heck out of tuna. That was fish all day long, two and three on each wire, it was amazing. They’ll bite anything out there that looks like food. I was the main radio operator, they could hear me from 55 miles out there, hollerin’, “Yeah, we got tuna!” I tell you, there’s nothin’ like a fresh tuna, that’s good eatin’. And the water. If you’ve never been out there where the tuna run, the water is azure blue. It’s just incredible. It’s not the green or grey water we get on the shore, it’s just beautiful. Anyway, we come runnin’ in with all them fish and slide up, and we just sunk right there. Two pickup loads of fish and then we could haul the boat up -- two pickup loads! I was the highliner outta this port that day. Yes sir, I was the highliner.”
Staging Handy’s Tuna Monologue

Photo by Tyrone Marshall
Dialogue Excerpt: Bar Brawl

LOU
What the hell is this? You come in here and do this?

KID
‘Scuse me?

PHIL
You’re in the wrong bar, buddy. This is the Topside Lounge at the Sunset West.

KID
Congrats, you can read. Wouldn’t have guessed from lookin’ at you.

LOU
Oh, comedian! Funny guy! Writin’ in Sunset, Jesus. Gimme that. (*He grabs the pen and throws it.*)

KID
(To DANNY.) These assholes with you? You better tell ‘em to shut up before I put ‘em out the front door with their feet horizontal and put ‘em on top of a car.
Staging the Bar Brawl

Photo by Tyrone Marshall