



Integrating science and art to talk about a changing climate

Introduction

In partnership with San Juan Community Theatre, San Juan Island National Historical Park hosted a multi-day Young Playwrights' for Change Workshop in August 2017.

Workshop participants worked together to create an original short play that addressed an aspect of climate change and performed it for a live audience during the Original Works Project in September 2017.

Students who participated in this small, intensive playwriting class wrote and workshopped a short play centered on the concept of climate change. The students decided what aspect of climate change to focus on, what story they wanted to tell, and how they wanted to tell it.



Young Playwrights for Change was presented as part of an island writers workshop, Original Works Project, and allowed students to present their work to a live audience.

Methodology

Guided by playwright and teaching artist, Brian Kettler, students conceived and wrote their own plays through idea generation exercises and in-class writing time.

The workshop took place the last week of August 2017 and was divided into 5 2-hour sessions. Each day of the class emphasized a different narrative tool (status, escalation, mystery, etc.) which was applied to the play the students were writing. At the end of each session, time was set aside to discuss local impacts of climate change, personal feelings towards climate change, and ideas on how to share those with the public.

Students dedicated several hours outside of the scheduled workshop time to write, edit, and rehearse their play. Altogether, students spent more than 80 hours working on their play.

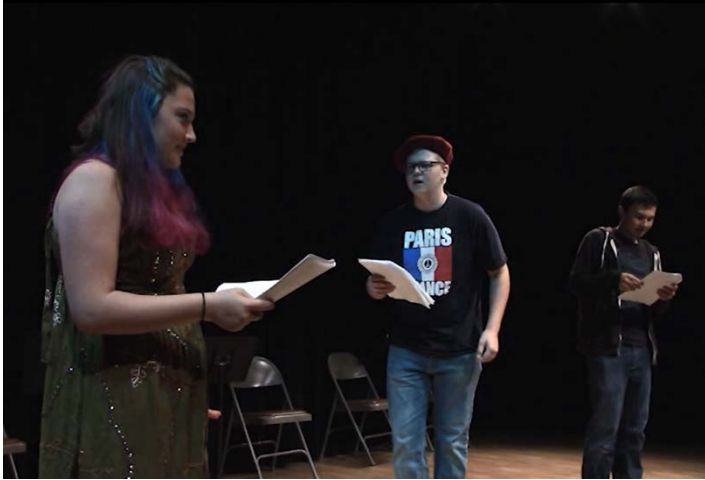
The process culminated in a public presentation of the students' work during the Original Works Project in September 2017.

Results

6 high school students participated in the intensive writing workshop, 5 additional students rehearsed and performed the original work, and 40 people were in attendance during the public performance.

The resulting play, titled *The Most Important Production in Human History* took a comedic look at climate change communication through the lens of rehearsing a play on climate change (it was a play about a play!).

The main character, Melanie, stars in the play as planet earth who is being destroyed by human actions.



Eventually, Melanie decides the play is dumb—declaring climate change a hoax. Her co-star and director try to convince her otherwise but are unsuccessful and she leaves the production. Unbeknownst to Melanie, her co-star, and director, Melanie's little sister was in attendance and may have gone on to make a positive impact in the science of climate change, but because she never sees the full production continues down the high consumption path.

Workshop Instructor



Brian Kettler recently earned his MFA in Playwriting from the University of Texas-Austin, where he studied under Steven Dietz. He is a former recipient of the Oregon Literary Fellowship in Drama. His full-length play, *Lyla School*, received a full production at UT-Austin,

as part of the 2014 UTNT Festival. His short play, *Clown Room*, was selected for the 2014 Theater Masters National MFA Playwrights Festival, with productions in Aspen and New York City. His play, *Iphigenia 3.0*, was commissioned by Orphic and was featured in the 2017 Fertile Ground Festival. In Portland, Brian works as a Teaching Artist with the Literary Arts Writers in the Schools program and works as a Writing Coach for Playwrite Inc. Last summer, Brian's full-length play, *Poor Boys' Chorus*, premiered in New York City as part of the Broadway Bound Theatre Festival.

More Information

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