

2° of Fear and Desire
Final Report – Publicity
by Jen Cressey
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Overview

2° of Fear and Desire enjoyed excellent grassroots attention from a variety of organizations, networks, and media outlets, from the Carnegie newsletter to an email broadcast to environmentally-minded parishioners at the Anglican church. The broad and enthusiastic response was consistent with Headlines' main stage projects despite the fact that *2°* was significantly scaled back to a more intimate format.

We began receiving reservations more than a month in advance, people were hearing about the project in many different ways. The result was strong attendance numbers and dynamic events.

Unfortunately, there was less high profile mainstream coverage than usual, which is attributable to several factors. A significant number of regular contacts did not cover the project, which was a disappointment after an abundance of coverage in recent years. Due to the shifting nature of the project, I was later off the mark and was therefore unable to approach those who require more lead time. And finally, as with the general public, the media's response to the climate change issue is complex.

Assumptions from Research

My work on this project started with research. It was important for me to understand the issue of climate change more fully, as my knowledge at the time was cursory. In the office, we were all immersed in data and articles, George Monbiot's *Heat* was passed from desk to desk. We quickly became experts in carbon emissions, melted polar ice, guilt and fear. The problem, we learned, is enormous, and potentially cataclysmic.

The Headlines hive was buzzing with talk about climate change, and, to speak for myself, the project took on special importance. Immediate action was, and continues to be, required. Here is an issue that truly affects every human on the planet. It seemed obvious that media and the public would respond to *2° of Fear and Desire*.

What I failed to take into account was that my enthusiasm was new, I had *just learned* about the magnitude of the global warming problem. And I was not alone. The masses were, and continue to be, slowly awakening, people from all walks of life beginning to learn enough to become truly concerned. Meanwhile, a project like *2°* does the very important work at the front of the curve, and public awareness cannot be assumed.

Hustle and Flow

A detailed account of the transition from the main stage project *2° of Adaptation* to the café-style workshop series *2° of Fear and Desire* can be found in David Diamond's report. I will add here that the decision to forge ahead and replicate the success of the November, 2007 Rhizome events meant a flurry of activity, and tight deadlines. We met with the Working Group¹ on December 3 to decide a course of action, and the first public event was scheduled for the third week of February. Accounting for downtime over the Christmas holidays, we had just over two months to coordinate and promote the project in its new incarnation.

The truncated timeline meant that I was unable to pursue many media contacts who require more lead time. National magazines were out, newsletters published on a quarterly basis were missed. There were a number of other tasks and decisions we had to navigate quickly: Could we do a webcast? Live radio? What would we do for a graphic signature for the international Jokers' day?

The graphic signature in particular, was a difficult process. It started very promisingly, with a great brainstorming session between Headlines staff. David Diamond, Dafne Blanco, Adeline Huynh and myself discussed a range of ideas, and came up with one that we felt was powerful and elegant. There was limited time to contract a graphic designer to execute the idea, but after discussing the style we wanted - a bold, loose line drawing - I had someone in mind. It was a person I'd worked with before and trusted to deliver professional quality.

David and I worked with him by email over the holidays. When we returned to the office, our vision of the logo continued to evolve and it became apparent that our idea exceeded his capabilities. In spite of our clearest requests and a long meeting with the artist, changes were not made and we had to cut our losses. In the end, Dafne Blanco, Community Outreach and graphic artist extraordinaire, came to the rescue with a beautiful design. How could this be avoided in the future? Perhaps the artist has to be present at the first brainstorming meeting, to contribute ideas that will mesh with his or her strengths. And of course it is always preferable to have more time to choose the artist, look at proposals, and generate an image in an organic way.

And so: the pre-Christmas schedule was especially intense, but details were quickly sorted. When we returned in January, 2008, the project was up and running on all cylinders, a testament to Headlines' organizational agility.

Challenges and Successes Obtaining Media Coverage

We had some good media hits on this project, but nothing compared to what I had anticipated. The issue of climate change is so important, and this approach so

¹ Alison Bailie, Andrea Reimer, Charley Beresford, Elizabeth Henry, Marion Robinson, Eric Doherty, Linda Bakker, Livia Bizikova, Morag Carter and Sean Nixon.

innovative, I fully expected a large splash of coverage. In fact, it was the lowest during my five-year tenure at Headlines, and disappointing.

As mentioned above, several high profile media people who have consistently covered Headlines' work in the past did not do stories on this project. There were others who said they would discuss the piece and then did not. No-one cited lack of interest or desire, on the contrary, response was very positive. A couple of arts contacts were extremely busy with the *PuSh Festival* in the weeks leading up to 2°, and the day there was supposed to be an article in the Vancouver Sun, I opened the paper to a spread on the *Chutzpah Festival*. With ever-decreasing space for local arts events, it would appear that previews are not always a given, regardless of the magnitude of the project's subject.

With news departments, I received no interest from producers and editors. Again, this is in contrast with responses I have received in the past to the issues of bullying, poverty, gang violence and addiction, all of which generated some news interest. Not so with climate change. I tried finding environmental journalists, only to discover that there are very few. Columnists writing about stylish green living products, yes, but doing hard journalism, not really. The Vancouver Sun used to have someone on the enviro beat, but let them go two years ago.

Throughout the process, I maintained my schedule of sending releases to all my media contacts and hunting for substantial articles. However, as the project dates grew close, it was the grassroots outlets where response was strongest.

On the plus side, Headlines continues to enjoy a very positive relationship with the CBC, especially in radio. Our contacts there are consistently responsive and inquisitive, resulting in interviews and on-air features that show the company in its best light. The CBC has also invited Headlines to collaborate on an experiment in live Forum Theatre radio. The invitation was originally extended in support of 2° of *Adaptation*, but when the project changed, it was postponed until the run of *Meth* in the Fall.

Introducing Web 2.0

The advent of blogs and social networking sites like Facebook brings yet more ways to promote Headlines' work. I created a group for 2° on Facebook, which boasted 92 members at last count. I have also been sending media releases to blogs like *Beyond Robson*, which is widely read, and have begun tracking blogs that write about Headlines' work independent of any promotion by us. I was hoping to create video for Youtube as well, but with a shortened schedule and smaller budget attached to the project as it transformed, it was not possible. Headlines staff did, however, begin logging archival footage for that purpose, using google docs, a wiki-style application that allows several contributors to work on the same document simultaneously.

As the world of hard copy journalism contracts, the web milieu expands. Papers, radio and television have yet to be replaced by blogs, podcasts and Youtube, but there is a creeping trend. In my opinion, it is best to give continued attention to

mainstream media in tandem with increasing, and rendering more dynamically, Headlines' online presence.

Volunteer Publicists

Since my first contract with Headlines in 2003, I have made continued effort to reach out to communities who turn to media in languages besides English for their information. On each project, I send out media releases, and follow up with as many contacts as possible. In the past, there have been two volunteers who worked more extensively on Spanish-language media: Jandreet Totosaus (who participated in the workshop for *Practicing Democracy*), and Amorita Rasgado (who promoted *Here and Now*).

With 2°, I posted a call-out for volunteer publicists in the Headlines newsletter. The newsletter has a broad reach, and we know from experience that it gets re-posted far and wide. The posting read as follows:

Call-out: Publicity Volunteers for Global Warming events

Are you fluent in a language besides English? Interested in learning about publicity? Would you like to talk to the media and your community about 2 Degrees of Fear and Desire?

Headlines Theatre is looking for volunteers to help get the word out, especially to communities who turn to media in other languages for their information. Spanish, Cantonese, Punjabi and French speakers tune in to TV, radio and newspapers in those languages. And many other communities have newspapers, radio programs and networks in their mother tongue.

Headlines Theatre's publicist, Jen Cressey, will work with volunteers, helping them to write a press release, approach media, conduct an interview and do follow-up. We will also look at ideas for grassroots publicity methods. If you are interested, please send a resume and a brief letter about why you would like to be a volunteer publicist, and your take on connecting with people about Climate Change: publicity@headlinestheatre.com. Deadline: January 17, 2008.

I received more than a dozen queries, and seven expressions of interest from people who speak Cantonese, Mandarin, Punjabi, Hindi, French, and Spanish. I met with four potential volunteers, and worked with three.

The meetings began with a comprehensive explanation of Headlines and the project. The volunteers were then asked to watch a DVD and review my media release for the project. If the volunteers were to be discussing 2° with the public, it was extremely important that they be knowledgeable. One volunteer returned for a second meeting, which involved a mock interview, and I was able to determine that she was ready to contact media.

In the end, only one volunteer became a bona fide media contact. Mélanie Béliveau translated my media release and contacted French media, making several contacts at the CBC. However, the other volunteers made important contributions to the awareness of the project. Sukhy Dhillon forwarded our e-bulletin to her networks in the Indo-Canadian community, and phoned personal contacts in the Punjabi and

Hindi-speaking media. Wilma Leung was originally interested in being a media contact, but became too busy with her work in sustainable building. She agreed to share information with her networks. Bjorn Irvine put up posters at BCIT and VCC, and spread the word to his contacts.

Unfortunately, despite great interest from Spanish-speaking community activist Leo Ramirez, I was unable to coordinate schedules with him. He expressed interest in helping in the future, and has been added to the newsletter list. Outreach Coordinator Dafne Blanco was able to arrange coverage in the Vancouver's most prominent Spanish language paper, so we were able to connect with that community after all.

Richmond and North Vancouver

There were two events in the run that happened outside Vancouver, one in Richmond and the other in North Vancouver. This was an opportunity to create more awareness about the work in these nearby cities. It was obvious on first contact with journalists that they had no prior knowledge of the work and their response was very positive. The weekly papers in both cities wrote about the event.

Opening Night Invitations

For every main stage show, approximately 500 invitations are sent to friends of the company. Every year, we discuss whether it is time to switch from hard copy to email. I like the idea of receiving something tangible in mail, but it is becoming increasingly difficult to rationalize as the cost and environmental impact are discouraging factors. Perhaps a survey of invitees by email would help in the decision.

Conclusion

As always with Headlines' productions, the most effective publicity campaign happens in many ways; mainstream media, posters, flyers, ads, grassroots media, social networking and a multitude of other person-to-person avenues. When we asked people how they heard about the show, no one mode of promotion was favoured over another. On the contrary, when reviewing the reservation list where we track this information, I found over three dozen different avenues through which people heard about the project. This is one of Headlines' great strengths, and contributes to the diversity of our audiences.

Media Log

Print

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| Feb 14 | Westender, included in Spring Hot Tickets issue |
| Feb 21 | The Province, E-List, Stuart Derdeyn
The Outlook, North Vancouver, plug and photo |
| Feb 26 | Richmond News, feature by Michelle Hopkins |

Feb 28 Richmond Review, plug

March 6 Georgia Straight, Tom Sandborn article
North Shore News, plug

March 10 Globe and Mail, Listing in Seven Days, Jennifer Van Evra

L'Express du Pacifique, Cecile Lepage
Jewish Independent - preview
The Gleaner (Langara) – preview
SPUD newsletter
Carnegie Newsletter

Radio

CBC, BC Almanac, Nov 8 interview with Mark Forsythe
CBC, On the Coast, Feb 20 interview with Belle Puri, produced by Paul Grant
Radio India, PSA week of event
CJSF, Feb 23 interview with Sylvia Richardson
CITR, PSAs
Co-op, Oct 31 interview with Gunargie O'Sullivan, Nov 1 Interview with Jay
Hamburger, Nov 1 And March 4 interview with Molly Caron, PSAs

Television

CBC, Listing on Living Vancouver, beginning 2.5 weeks before opening
Shaw, profile on The Express
Fairchild (Cantonese/ Mandarin) – community events PSA

Web

Listings: craigslist, rabble.ca, wiserearth.org, Canada.com, dramatool.org, cbc.ca, vancouverplays.com, eventsetter.com, theatreBC, facebook.com, citytv.com, web counterparts of print publications, <http://www.cnv.org/?c=1&i=240>, canadiandimension.com/7days/
Mention: Vancouverplays.com, reviewvancouver.org
Outside Postings (i.e. not by Headlines):
<http://vancouvergreenbusinessjournal.wordpress.com/>,
<http://pluginamp.com/network/node/3865>, <http://designisournature.wordpress.com/>,
<http://www.ccec.bc.ca/default.aspx?PageID=1034>,
<http://www.communityarts.net/conferences/index.php>, Munich Forum Theatre (yahoo group), CHBE Sustainability Club (google group), trans-action (google group), unconformed.blogspot.com, hummingbird.604.blogspot.com, relocalize.net
<http://fr.groups.yahoo.com/group/interforumsudest/message/129>, <http://fritz-letsch.blog.de/?p=3469114&more=1&page=2>, <http://forumtheater.blog.de/>

Email Bulletins

Tom Sandborn, Chris Bouris (alternative energy), Jim Edmondson (BCTF), GVPTA, Aaron Pettigrew (via socialsignal.com)

Listings

GVPTA Theatre Guide, Georgia Straight, Westender, Province, Vancouver Sun

Flyer and Poster Distro

Perry Giguere (paid), Harry Wong (volunteer)

Public libraries and community centres in Vancouver, Richmond, North Vancouver

High schools in Richmond

Display Ads

Georgia Straight, Westender, projected at Fifth Avenue, Park and Ridge cinemas

Programs at for PuSh festival show “Clark and I...” and Vancouver East Cultural

Centre “Satchmo Suite”

Media sponsors

CBC Radio One, Westender