

# Don't Say a Word

Forum Theatre about how *not* to get your ass kicked

Directed and Joked by David Diamond  
Created with and performed by students from  
Gladstone and Sir Charles Tupper Secondary Schools



Photo: David Cooper

Left to right: Iliana Bonilla, Derek Kwon, Shaun Omaid, Patricia Alducin, John Walker.  
Qing Jian Zeng foreground

## FINAL REPORT

David Diamond  
Artistic & Managing Director, Joker  
Headlines Theatre  
#323-350 East 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave.  
Vancouver, BC  
Canada V5T 4R8  
604-871-0508 (ph)  
604-871-0209 (fax)  
[david@headlinestheatre.com](mailto:david@headlinestheatre.com)  
[www.headlinestheatre.com](http://www.headlinestheatre.com)

## Community Quotes from Don't Say a Word

As the mainstream press refused to review this project because it was Forum Theatre and the actors were high school students, we do not have press quotes per-se to offer. We do, however, have these responses from people in community who saw the production.

"I was impressed with the way **Don't Say a Word** created a space for people to grapple with issues of violence in very real and meaningful ways. It was fabulous to see the engagement of the audience, particularly the youth, in creating new possibilities. I was struck by the multitude of openings for change highlighted in the production, and it prompted me to consider the opportunities I have in my life to make 'insightful interventions'. I left the production feeling very hopeful and inspired."

**Desiree Sattler, audience member, Feb. 28, 2003**

"**Don't Say a Word** was awesome! I had to leave as soon as it finished otherwise I was going to cry there. I was a very bullied kid - at home and at school - and contemplated suicide a lot -- especially in high school. The setting really worked and the actors did a fantastic job. I also slowly appreciated the genius of the story itself - it's archetypal nature - as the forum unfolded and I got to see the significance of each character and the events that were depicted. Thank you."

**E-mail from anonymous audience member**

"I thoroughly enjoyed the performance of **Don't Say a Word** last night. The high school students were wonderful. They were so confident in dealing with the interventions and improvised brilliantly."

**Dan Blake, BC Teacher's Federation, Feb 17, 2003**

"On Feb. 21, 2003 I saw a powerful and very familiar portrayal of bullying and the effects it has on people involved. **Don't Say a Word** was an excellent tool that used youth involvement to create a powerful and very impacting message about real and important issues, while ensuring the participation and recognition of culturally and socially diverse voices that individual youth represent."

**Monica Lee, Asian Society for the Intervention of AIDS (ASIA), April 3, 2003**

"What a compelling, moving and inspiring evening. I couldn't say enough about **Don't Say a Word**. I know that four more team members went on Friday and were also very moved. What your team is doing is incredible and so very important. You are such an inspiration. THANK YOU!"

**Nadine Marshall, KindActs, Feb 17, 2003**

"The webcast of **Don't Say a Word** was fantastic. What a powerful play! We had 16 people join us for the afternoon. 6 high school students (Gr 9-11), 4 university students (Fine Arts, Education), 2 parents and 4 Facilitators of our ACT program. We were able to take part in some interventions. The discussions which took place before and after the play were tremendous."

**Lori Aitcheson, Consultant, Education Equity, Regina Public Schools**

"Students who participated in the Anti-Bullying Forum Theatre events were significantly more likely to feel that they "know what they can do to stop harassment" than students who did not participate. Students who participated reported more willingness to respond and be responsible than did students who did not participate.

Given that these data were collected only a short time after the Headlines Theatre presentation, these effects are actually most encouraging. In just a few short weeks, this unique theatre effort planted seeds that have already begun to grow in the minds of those students who participated. Over time, the increased awareness that is evident among participants should continue to affect how students think and behave, as students apply what they have learned to their own real-life situations."

Excerpted from the quantitative report: "Impact of Headlines Theatre's Anti-Bullying Forum on Secondary Schools" April 4, 2003, by **Shelley Hymel, Ph.D., UBC Faculty of Education**. The full report is available on our web site at: [www.headlinestheatre.com](http://www.headlinestheatre.com)

Taking into account the live audience of 658 (we had 90 seats at an average of 68% houses) the web cast at 1,122 and the telecasts at a conservative estimate of 15,000, we calculate that 16,780 people saw **Don't Say a Word**.

## A little history about this project



This project grew out of a pilot project we were asked to do in 2000/01 in the Richmond School District. This was a 5 day **THEATRE FOR LIVING** workshop in Charles E. London Secondary that led to a Forum Theatre performance for 300 students on issues of bullying in the school.

In a letter to Headlines dated November 15, 2001, Peter S. Healy, Principal of Charles E. London wrote: "It was wonderful to see how our young actors worked with such difficult topics (as bullying and homophobia) in a manner which obviously struck home with the audience of 300 Grade 9 and 10 students, and in a way that will have lasting impact on those who viewed it." Maureen Reid, the Vice Principal of Sir Charles Tupper has told me anecdotally, that she knows that since the project was in Richmond, the word "fag" has virtually disappeared from the hallways of the school.

After the Richmond workshop, we were approached by Dr. Shelley Hymel, Associate Dean, University of BC. Dr. Hymel was at the performance. She works on anti-bullying issues in schools throughout the Lower Mainland. She was so impressed by what she had witnessed, and the resulting changes in the school, that she expressed interest in replicating the work in Richmond into other School Districts. The dates of these workshops were:

|                    |  |
|--------------------|--|
| Gladstone          | <b>Nov. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 2002</b>            |
| Sir Charles Tupper | <b>Nov. 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, Dec. 2 and 3, 2002</b> |

These two workshops both had the same format: the sessions were seven days, working 6 or 7 hours a day, with 20 students from each school, grades 8 - 12. Through the intensive **THEATRE FOR LIVING** process of issue identification, image creation, play creation and Forum Theatre performance, students created and performed plays about bullying and in their school that were specific to the environment of that school. This was play creation by and about the students in each school. The resulting plays were highly relevant, but also provided safety for the actors. No one was telling their own personal story. We created a collective story that told a truth for that school.<sup>1</sup>

During the course of two extra interactive performances on days 7 and 8, I handed over the facilitation of the Forum Theatre event to two of the students from the group who had self-selected to be trained as Jokers (facilitators). While this was not a long time to do this (only 2 shows) it is the model we used in Prince George to create the highly successful youth company **Street Spirits**, which is still going after almost three years. Each school now owns their plays and are able to keep performing them in classrooms inside their school and school district, peer to peer.

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<sup>1</sup> There are written reports on these workshops, which are themselves long documents.

This is happening at Gladstone. I am not aware at this point that there has been follow-through at Tupper, but our MainStage performance there just closed a few days ago.

We also, as we have been doing with our community projects for a few years now, ran a graphics competition through the Art Departments of the schools. The winner of the competition, Sen Nguyen from John Oliver Secondary was paid for her great graphic and teamed up with our professional graphic arts team, Five Stones Creative. Working together they created the poster and flyer for **Don't Say a Word**.

The validation and skills transfer of this model are, I think, obvious, as is the opportunity for the project to have an "authentic" voice that speaks to youth about bullying and violence.

In setting up the first phase (the school workshops), we made all the players aware that the second phase, **Don't Say a Word**, which was originally known by the working title: **Anti-bullying MainStage project**, was in the works.

During the first phase, I kept my eyes open for 9 students from the two Vancouver schools who "lit on fire"; who understood the nature of taking a moment from real life and theatricalizing it in order to create a pluralized symbol that a larger audience, the community, the school, the public could work on. I gathered a diverse group who I believed could work together as a team.

The creation process was modelled after our very successful **Squeegee** project with street youth a few years ago. The young actors and I treated the previous workshops and performances as research -- the mandate for the play we created together. I videotaped the performances in the schools during phase 1 as a way to archive those plays for research purposes.

Professional designers, a publicist and Headlines' staff and producing expertise were, of course, an integral part of the process. The two students interested in design worked with a professional designer to help create the set, props and costumes. The technical person worked with our Stage manager as did the crew person, who also helped with front of house and box office.

A Youth committee in Gladstone Secondary worked with our publicist, Jen Cressey to create and disseminate media releases, articles, etc., in the Youth Community throughout the Lower Mainland.

A full-time counsellor, Sandra Teves, was attached to the project, on salary to Headlines throughout rehearsals and all performances.

As a member of the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres (PACT) and a signatory to the Canadian Theatre Agreement (CTA) Headlines

secured the permission of PACT and Canadian Actors' Equity Association to mount this non-Equity Production, using high school students.

As in all of Headlines' work of this nature, the reason for this entire project was to orchestrate a process in which the community involved could articulate a true voice about their struggles (in this case youth and the issues of bullying and violence) and then to engage in a dialogue (through interactive Forum Theatre) with their peers and the general public about these issues.

## **The Location**

We did this production on and around the main stairwell at Sir Charles Tupper Secondary School. Why? Well, at the risk of sounding flaky, I had a dream about it. I had a very vivid dream about doing this Forum theatre production on a flight of stairs. In the dream it made so much sense. The incidents happen on the stairs. The level changes inherent to stairs create dramatic power shift in staging. Stairs have railings to play on and with. The, I walked in Sir Charles Tupper for the first time and...there they were! I was dumbfounded by the similarity of these stairs to the ones in my dream.

It was a great choice, not without complication, but well, well worth all the work it created.

## **Starting the creation/rehearsal process <sup>2</sup>**

It took a long time to decide on casting for the play – bringing together a group of personalities who could contain, in my opinion, the subject matter that was explored in the plays. I was not happy with the original idea of five actors and so increased it to six. A simple desire for more bodies to work with.

I tried to balance off personality with an individual's willingness / ability to "play" – to be flexible. They might have done good work in the Forum in the school, but been very difficult to direct, or been good in the play but not displayed an ability to be analytical in the Forum. I have settled on six very different and strong individuals.

Three from Gladstone and three from Tupper; the even split is just chance. The group also consists of 4 guys and 2 girls – odd, because there were more girls than guys in both workshops – I struggled with this but the balance of personality, of energy just didn't work if I brought another one of the girls into the group and eliminated one of the guys. And so we have 4 and 2. I might regret this later.....

The work on the poster / postcard design went very well.<sup>3</sup> Sen is working in a Japanese animé style. Her original graphic was of a girl being harassed by a group of bullies. I asked if the graphic could tell a more complex story: having

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<sup>2</sup> From now on this report is written as a journal entry, in the present tense.

<sup>3</sup> Please see final postcard or graphic attached.

a title now, **Don't Say a Word** -- could the girl not be the object of the bullying, but be walking away from an incident that is happening to someone else....the title resonating in her head and in the viewer's head? Working with Five Stones Creative and Jen Cressey (our publicist) Sen realized this really well. The design is very striking and elegant, and something I am certain we would not have got from an adult professional. This is one of those "true voice" moments that has really paid off. Sen got paid, valued, and also learned new skills, and we got a great graphic.

Dylan Mazur (Headlines' Executive Assistant who is functioning as Production Manager on the project) has also had a good technical meeting with the Engineers and Maureen Reid (Vice Principal) at Tupper – the school where we will be rehearsing / performing. They are being great so far – having us there is going to be complex. Some of the issues include getting power to the foyer for the lighting instruments and board, storage, custodial staff (engineers) being present at all times while we are in the school and the costs associated with this.

My hope is that we will be given the stage in the auditorium as a rehearsal space. One of the reasons I want it is that it is close the foyer where the stairs are, and I know we are going to need to be working there as much as possible. Then there are the other logistical questions of hanging lights, getting chairs in, platforms, creating a theatre space, do we black out the windows? What do we do about heat at night? How much has to come and go every day?

Adam Parboosingh (tech director) and I agreed that we need to think about this production as a touring show. One that plays in the same place every night. Because school is in session during the day, our sense is that anything that CAN get tampered with, will get tampered with, and so is going to have to come and go for each performance.<sup>4</sup>

Over the Xmas break there was high drama with two of the cast members. Some background: in the original workshops I had been very careful to explain that expressions of interest<sup>5</sup> in the larger, main stage project needed to be signed by both the student and a parent. The papers had the dates and times of work for both rehearsal and performance detailed clearly on them. My assumption then, is that the commitment is clear and has been discussed.

Well – during the break, Alan from Five Stones Creative has just walked into my home for final approval on the poster / postcard, as we have a print deadline, and the phone rings. It is one of the guys saying that he thinks he is going to have to drop out (and so will one of the girls) because their drama teacher (someone other than the drama teacher I am already dealing with) won't let them out of their prior commitments. WHAT?!? What prior commitments? It turns out this has been brewing for days and no one has

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<sup>4</sup> In the end we were proved wrong. We hung 40 lighting instruments on a free-standing grid and all the cable that goes with that, and it stayed throughout the run and the students were very respectful of it all.

<sup>5</sup> See appendix for "expression of interest"

called me, Now we are AT a print deadline and the actors' names are on the postcards.

I OK'd the image and asked for an extension on print and got on the phone. It took days of tracking people down – many, many phone calls, until finally the drama teacher called me from Quebec where she was visiting her sister. She was very upset.

It turns out that one of the cast is directing a play, and another is starring in a piece that has been built around her that is headed for the BC Provincial Drama Festival – and, being teenagers – they want to be able to do both. They have now made serious commitments to both of us.

We are in similar situations. I know that if I lose either of them it is going to throw the casting way off balance – and the drama teacher has many other students relying on these two. She agrees that the Headlines project is a great opportunity for them, but warned them from the very beginning that they were not going to be able to do both projects – and here we are.

The teacher has been very flexible. I have agreed to lose a day of rehearsal – she agreed to let them start work right away – over the holidays – and to tech their plays early. Performances are during the day – our rehearsals are in the evening. The Festival is after we close.

So, they are getting their wish, after all, but I am worried that they face burnout, doing all of this AND having to keep up with their classes. I have asked Sandra (the project counsellor who is on salary throughout) to talk with them and their parents to let them know that she is available as a support person. We have a very short two weeks to create and rehearse and my demands on them are going to be big.

January 26, 2003

We start rehearsals in two days.

A lot has happened. The pre-production shoot went very well, thanks mostly to David Cooper who improvised what turned into a wonderful shot of Elvis standing still while the others rush down the stairs. (see cover of report)

We have had numerous production meetings. The design team are very excited by the physical challenges of mounting a show in the foyer of a school, on a stairwell. The School is being truly amazing in its flexibility, providing us with storage, bringing 220 power into the foyer, allowing us to set up trusses to hang the lights from (these will remain throughout the run), giving us the stage in the auditorium for rehearsal space. Dylan is being very organized tracking and initiating a lot of these meetings.

We think we have solved the window problem. During the matinees, the foyer will be flooded with light. We agree that we want to keep the look of the windows, that is not cover them, and most of the performances will be at

night any way. For the matinees we will stow a tarp on the roof and then bring it down the back of the building, eliminating enough of the light (we think) to make the theatrical lighting effective.

The community networking is extensive with the Vancouver School Board transiting a lot of information for us. We had to print **another** 10,000 postcards – that makes 20,000 for a show with 1,000 seats over 10 days!! Part of the task is profile, though, not just filling the house.<sup>6</sup>

Reservations are starting to come in – people booking 15 and 20 seats at a time.

Day 1 January 28, 2003 4PM – 9PM

Dinner  
 Introductions  
 Video and discussion  
 Fear / protector  
 Balancing  
 Complete the image  
 Discussion  
 Circle

Dinner was great. Poached salmon and vegetables and rice. Dylan has spent a huge amount of time working on this and we have ended up spending about \$1,200 on catering dinner for the cast every day. The reasoning is that they are coming straight from school. We need to feed them healthy food, that will fuel them. It was hard to get protein. The cheaper menus are carbo and carbo, so we kept increasing the budget. In the end, though, I believe it will have been worth it.

I asked the whole production team to come for introductions. This was a good thing, as it impressed on the cast that they are now involved in a larger project, that there is all the networking going on, the publicity work, all the tv lining up, radio, the designers, the web cast, and other people who work full days supporting what we do in the evening in the rehearsal hall.

It was great for them to hear about costuming and how the lobby will be turned into a theatre – Adam brought floor plans with seats and the trusses for the lights.

They were really interested by the videos of the first workshops. I wanted them to watch these because I have to find a way to bring us back into the workshops -- into BOTH workshops -- and create a space where these 6 actors (3 from each school), who don't know each other can become comfortable enough with each other quickly to create exciting theatre.

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<sup>6</sup> Jennifer Girard, Outreach Co-ordinator, and Jen Cressey, Publicist, have written her own reports.



Seeing each other's plays – the similarity of issues, and digging down into discussions of this was a good way to start. The level of discussion was impressive. It took a kick-start:

They were, of course, being quite quiet off the top. Why wouldn't they? After we watched the second Gladstone play, a strong piece that Elvis and Shaun were in I said to them, 'so, I want to know what EACH of you is thinking.' Silence wasn't ok. One by one they talked about their own experiences of getting frustrated and not knowing what to do, of blowing up, or pushing people around because they felt they had to; many honest statements. After everyone had spoken, I asked them if they knew what I had just done. "Forced us to think", one said.

I talked with them about how this had to be different than the workshop where they could lay back sometimes. There are six actors. It is their job now, literally, to engage and work on this. It is one of the reasons we are paying them \$400 a week. Above union minimum. And so when I ask them to express opinions, silence isn't going to be ok. A different gear from the larger workshop – but we needed to get into it today, and I think they understood.

Watching the videos and talking about content, we covered a lot of territory: Suicide (at least half of them know someone who has tried), racism, violence, issues of "blood" and family and standing up for "blood", being isolated, the violence of language, war, using violence as a solution, and a hard conversation, attached to the racism conversation, about what a "Canadian" "looks and sounds" like. Its interesting that the kids of colour seem to agree that this definition is controlled by the white society, while the one Caucasian in the cast is a minority in his school and experiences it differently. An interesting point of tension.

I also initiated a conversation about the impending war in Iraq.<sup>7</sup> It strikes me, and I told them this, that we might be opening this show just when the biggest bully on the planet flexes its muscles. One of them said "there's a political statement" and I agreed it was – and we started a conversation about how the issues in the schools connect up with issues in the larger world, in people's homes, nation states, the media.

It was wonderful to see that some of them are quite aware of what is unfolding on the planet. I am not suggesting we make a play about the Iraq war, but I do think we have the opportunity (and the responsibility) to connect up the dots between what is acceptable in US (and others') foreign policy and what happens in the hallways.

We did a lot of talking today. One of the things I have tried to prepare them for is that there could be arguments in the 2 weeks, and that from my perspective, this is part of a creative process. As long as it is respectful. There might be times when we get angry with each other – working passionately on

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<sup>7</sup> This report was written before the US and so-called "Coalition of the Willing" invaded Iraq without UN consent.

this thing that we will all come to care about deeply. There are very different personalities and points of view in the room.

One of the girls is getting sick, and there is a TERRIBLE flu going around. I am going to get homeopathic remedy tomorrow and give it to all of them. If they all get sick we are sunk. I need to find as many ways as possible, within reason, to take care of them.

The evening went very fast. I am going to have to come in with a very clear plan every day, with steps that move us forward each time. Time is going to be the big challenge.

Day 2            January 29, 2003 4 – 9PM

Dinner/media talk  
Fill the empty space  
Hypnosis  
Lead the blind  
Blind busses  
Blind magnets  
Glass bottle  
Image theatre  
Circle

Roasted chicken, vegetables and noodles. They are impressed.

I spent \$100.00 on Oscilloccinum today – a homeopathic cold/flu remedy. I wrote a letter for them to give to their parents, explaining what it is, that it has no side effects, how its taken, at what intervals, why... trying to explain why the theatre director is giving their kid what might appear to be drugs. Another one of them came in sick. Hopefully, this will stop the spread of it – they really liked what it is – little sugary pills that dissolve under your tongue.

We moved onto the stage of the auditorium today: our rehearsal hall. Good to be there. Nice to be working on a stage because of the theatricality that that contains.

Time to play lots of games – start building connections in the group quickly. I didn't give any of them a choice about the trust game and informed them that we will do one every day and that, unlike in a workshop where they can not participate in the trust work, here, I want all of them to do it. This was challenging, in particular for one of the girls – but she did. I know she knew why I was insisting, and I was proud of her that she pushed through that fear.

Actually they all did great work today. I am talking to them / dealing with them much more personally than I would in a workshop. Each of them is a certain personality – this is why I have cast them – and it is this personality

that we must build the play around. The task is to create the play “from them”, not have them fit into an artificial structure that we make.

I asked them today what from yesterday really struck them as being important. Suicide was on the top of the list. Then racism. Then “blood”

I used the structure of Complete the Image to create group images with them. This involved asking if someone could make a shape of their personal relationship to violence / bullying anywhere in the space. John was the first. He came into the middle and pointed off somewhere. Elvis climbed up onto a shelf in response to this, contemplating jumping. Patricia knelt under him, urging him to jump. Derek stood under, trying to help. Shaun turned his back, his head in his hands. “Why did it come to this” is the title.

In discussion, what became apparent, was that none of them, except Derek, wanted to help – get involved. The remorse was that it had got so bad, but even when the jumper was on the bridge -- sadness, confusion, regret was what people felt. Patricia was very honest. She said, ‘if you are going to jump....do it!! Otherwise stop wasting my time.’ An impatient voyeur.

Shaun started the next one. Kneeling, speaking to some unseen person, pleading. Iliana knelt before him, head down, apologetic. John changed the image entirely (or so some of us thought) by laying down in the middle between them -- a continuation from the first image, having splattered off the bridge. Elvis joined in, head in his hands. Derek stood, watching, hands in his pockets. “Listen to me” was the title. Another suicide Image. In this one Iliana is taking the brunt, everyone is talking OVER the dead person. Having wanted them all to notice, he is till somehow invisible.

Derek started the third. He is standing, seemingly talking to a crowd, asking them to listen. Olya (who is one of the design apprentices and has dropped into rehearsals) stands in front of him, back to him. Then Elvis charges in and grabs Derek by the collar, very roughly, and a great little drama unfolds:

I watch Derek panic for a second as he realizes what has happened. Elvis has changed the Image completely and Derek gives in. He becomes the “victim”, when initially he was trying to help. Shaun comes in and makes a gesture that says to Elvis, ‘get off the little guy’ (Derek is grade 8 and quite small)

We talked about this image a lot and it was the first time I started talking with them about really using who they are.

I told Derek what I saw and asked him if that’s what had happened. His eyes got wide and he agreed and then I said, ‘and just for a moment, I think it hurt you. If I am wrong, tell me’. His eyes welled up just a little and he said, ‘yes, it did’. And we talked about how -- here is an image where Derek is starting something where he is trying to help, and suddenly turns into the person who is getting beat up for it. Who thinks that this is real? We all do.

And so, somehow, we are already discovering elements. Also learning that our own emotions “in the moment” are the stuff of acting. And that this is going to be challenging because it is not about pretending, but about being willing to be “seen” on the stage.

I have asked them to all think about what it is that each of them brings; what is it about who they are that they can contribute to the play that we are about to make.

Day 3 January 31, 2003 4 - 9 PM

Dinner  
Interview  
Discussion  
Clap exchange  
The intestine  
Improvisations from auto-sculpting  
Yelling bullies  
Hug tag  
circle

They are all healthy. Even Iliana. They came in RAVING about the remedy.  
☺ money well spent.

Chicken on skewers, greek salad, pita AND Thai noodles with peanuts. There was waaayyyy too much food, although it was great. The caterers had a vat of noodles and decided to give it to us “as extra”. We gave the leftover (the first time there has been any) to the engineers, the vice principal and the principal.

Janet Smith from the Georgia Straight did an interview with me yesterday and an interview with Patricia and John over dinner today. She seemed to have a really good time with them. Jen Cressey sat in and was very happy. I left them alone. Janet is preparing for an issue next week on education. Great timing.

- (postscript) I took the opportunity in this interview to make linkages between the violence we are dealing with in the schools and current US (and Canadian) foreign policy. She was surprised at the time I was doing this, but intrigued, and the references made it into the article. Why *shouldn't* youth be violent? I asked. The role models before us tell us really clearly that the way to solve conflict is violence and even war, and they have been giving us this message for many, many years. Teenagers today have grown up swimming in that message, and it is not just from movies and music. It is from world leaders and those who keep voting them into power.

I had a crisis this morning that resolved. I was panicking because I don't know what the play is and we have SO LITTLE time. On the way in I remembered something fundamental. I don't have to know what the play

is -- they do. I have to create space where they can articulate what they know.

We had a powerful day today. In discussion I asked them what they knew they brought to the project. They had a hard time understanding what I was talking about and so I mentioned that Shaun was a “big guy”. There is no way we are going to pretend he isn’t. This is something we have no choice but to use in the play. Elvis has English as a second language. This is present as soon as he speaks. He brings this to the project and in the context of the subject matter, it has value. They all spoke.

Iliana tries to see the good in everything. This has value; in the context of what we are doing, this can sometimes be exactly the wrong thing to do. If we continually have an expectation that 'everything will work out for the best' and this makes us passive, does our inactivity make us part of the problem? Is she a naïve oppressor in the play?

Derek, as discussed, is this really nice kid -- who sees the value in being tough.

Patricia says she is “two people”: The innocent girl and the bitch. She has been in a place where she has beaten people up. She understands this character, and she understands being trapped in it. Her honesty is shining in the group.

Shaun talks about how he knows what it is to get so, so, so frustrated and angry, but that he has always managed to not blow up. Maybe in the play, he does.

We must develop characters based on who they are – extend who they are. I don’t want them playing themselves, but because it is Forum Theatre they have to really, really understand the characters.

We had a riot doing the intestine<sup>8</sup> with this few people. It was good to do something where we all ended up in a pile, laughing on the floor. There were not enough of us to hold Shaun, and it was OK. These experiences bring us together.

I asked them to make shapes of their experiences to suicide and out of this made two groups. We know that suicide is going to be in the play. Once in the

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<sup>8</sup> Form two lines facing each other standing close together, arms extended out, interspersed, but not linked. The lines form a tube, or conveyer belt. One of the people at that end volunteers to go through the intestine. That person stands with their back to the opening, hands crossed over their chest, body completely stiff but neck relaxed, eyes closed. She lies back into the opening, supported by the first two people in line, as the Joker lifts her feet off the ground. With a horizontal movement of the forearms, always supporting the person’s head, the group moves her through the tube. The Joker receives the person at the other end, coming out head first. Support her head and when her body is about half out of the tube, have the people at this end of the line gently bring her feet underneath her and into a standing position.

groups, I asked them to make improvisations that end with someone killing themselves as a reaction to violence and bullying. They were great.

In the first one, John torments Elvis. He meets him on the street and makes him give him his shoes off his feet. This happens all the time. Those shoes you see hanging over telephone wires? The result of a moment like this. The item has to be something important. Shoes are good, because the person then has to walk home barefoot. There is such cruelty in this. Carlie<sup>9</sup>, who in this improvisation WAS Elvis' girlfriend, then takes up with John, because Elvis is a loser. His girlfriend going to his abuser is too much. He snaps. He pulls a gun, threatens to kill her and then kills himself.

We are not looking to these improvisations for “the play”, but rather for “bits”, insights. The shoes are great.

The other group starts with Shaun pounding the crap out of Derek, because he can. Derek has an asthma attack and ends up in the hospital. Patricia and Iliana berate Shaun for what he has done. He is caught in a loop, and this time it has got out of hand. He slits his wrists. What was powerful in this for me was the sense of the adrenaline rush for the bully, who gets addicted to being able to do this terrible thing and get away with it.

Then I asked the same groups to make improvisations that take place AFTER a suicide. It occurred to me this morning that, yes -- we know there will be a suicide in the play and my first impulse was that this is the end of the play, but it is not. Who is the “victim” in this scenario? Easy to say the person who has killed her/himself – and of course this is a terrible thing, not to be belittled, but that person is then gone. What about the community, the bullies and the people who knew and did nothing who live with it? The community itself is also a “victim” of this action. The play must continue.

There was wonderful richness in the improvisations. Patricia did what turned into a monologue about how the guy who killed himself started giving all his stuff away, came to her and gave her a ring -- a ring that she is wearing. Implied is that she took it without questioning him. He went off and did himself in. No one stopped him. There is the core of a scene here.

Also, Iliana, who sees the positive in everything, is always happy, played the whole scene so drained.

In the other group Carlie has gone to her dead friend's home – the parents have suggested she take something she wants. She finds a suicide letter. She goes to her other friends, who tormented her friend. She tries to get them to see what they have done. In the middle of the scene Elvis, who is a lovely actor, asks John “if he wants a cup of tea”. The question was so full of denial and avoidance. It made me gasp.

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<sup>9</sup> Carlie is the apprentice Stage Manager, and is participating with the cast at this point in development. When we start creating the actual play, she will join Melissa, the Stage Manager.

Near the end of the day I asked them to do something else that was difficult. I want to start to discover the language of violence and how it pertains to the characters they will be. Also to start figuring out who is doing what in the play. I had each of them sit in a chair and the rest of the group hurl bullying, abusive language at them. We need to give ourselves permission to find this. They were brave.

Sandra took notes. (a sample) white ass piece of trash....little blonde boy....gonna fuck your ass up....chink...fuckin' esl bastard....little asian piece of trash....FOB....brace face....piece of shit....fucking around with my time, bitch.....you fuck all of them, ho....gonna slap you fuckin up.....

And so, bits are starting to emerge. We have two eight hour days tomorrow and the next day.

Day 4 February 1, 2003 10 AM – 6PM

Knots  
Clap exchange  
Effective hand  
The fall  
Creation of storyline  
Lunch  
Blocking out of scenes  
Circle

What a day! We got a lot done.

The group did knots (undoing a knot of hands – which sometimes groups are unable to do at all) in about 20 seconds. So I had them do it again with their eyes closed. It took them about 60 seconds. Very impressive. A good sign about how well they may be able to work together.

Everyone did the Fall -- falling off a table into each others arms. Even Shaun who is a big guy and who we couldn't carry yesterday. The group did catch him and it was great.

It took us about two hours to block out a very rough storyline:

- there is a “small incident” on the stairs that is “fun”.
- The “victim” of this gets “bad advice”
- S/he has an encounter with school administration
- Nothing happens from this and so there is a bigger incident that ends with “I will get you later”.
- The friend of the person being harassed abandons him.
- The person is isolated and humiliated (the shoes)
- S/he goes home and does not explain to parents
- Back at school, s/he ‘enters a dream’ where EVERYONE knows what happened, but no one will deal with it.

- S/he writes a suicide note that simply says “why wouldn’t you help me?” this is done on a sheet of paper, in big letters, on the set.
- S/he commits suicide
- There is the aftermath

The story is filled with opportunities to “say something” and no one ever does. We started to discover the actual moments.

My working method has been to ask them how something would happen and then to start trying various things on our feet. I have been piecing together bits of different things I see them do, to create a coherent scene, and then adding my own ideas.

We have delineated some characters, and are waiting for character names. I think this will be important to “distance” the actors a bit from who they are playing:

Elvis gets targeted. He is a recent (1.5 years) immigrant from China, with his parents who are refugees. He is ESL and an “outsider”.

Shaun and Iliana are brother and sister (in the play). They are facing severe difficulty at home with an abusive father (alcohol and violence). Their mother has died of cancer. Iliana sees her older brother, Shaun, becoming like her dad. He is in denial. Shaun thinks he is taking care of his little sister, but in fact she is becoming the parent in the household. It is important that Shaun is likeable.

John is Shaun’s friend. Don’t know too much about him yet.

Derek has tentatively befriended Elvis – but admires Shaun. Derek will also be filled out later.

Patricia and Shaun are a couple (also in the play). She is a very tough girl who also enjoys tormenting people but at the same time, sees Shaun as a possible danger to herself.

10

The play begins with the whole cast off to classes. A scene on the stairs, that is not too far off from what I saw in my dream, really. (!) Derek accidentally bumps Elvis from behind, sending his books flying and is in too much of a hurry to help. Shaun is having a conversation with John, walking backwards up the stairs, and trips over Elvis. Everything stops. Everyone watches as Elvis apologizes and Shaun berates him. John mocks Elvis, pulling on his eyes with a Chinese ‘joke’ that Elvis is not worth the trouble.




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<sup>10</sup> All photos: David Cooper photography



The stairs empty, leaving Elvis and Derek. Derek helps Elvis pick up the books and Elvis asks him why he didn't help. Derek explains that he isn't going to go up against Shaun. Elvis needs to fight back, instead of doing nothing. Elvis isn't going to do that, Sean is too big. Derek quickly gets impatient with Elvis' weakness and says to him that if he won't stand up for himself, then he should go to a teacher. (an insult). And he leaves. Elvis exits.



Shaun and Iliana enter from upstairs and she is asking him why he had to do that to the kid on the stairs. Shaun doesn't think it was a big deal, just some "chink fun". Iliana gets angry and tells him that just because he is having a hard time with their dad, doesn't mean he has the right to take it out on other people and he should get it together. Shaun reacts badly to this and will not discuss what is happening at home with her. He tells her that he isn't someone who will beat someone up for no reason. He isn't their dad. This conversation is interrupted by the arrival of Patricia. (don't understand this scene yet)

Elvis enters, on his way home after school. He sees the three of them and will not walk over Shaun's path and so turns to go the other way and a teacher (John in a 'teacher costume') has entered behind him. Teacher says "hi Elvis". Elvis looks at the teacher. Looks at Shaun. Shaun crosses his arms, as if to warn Elvis. Elvis looks at the teacher, back at Shaun and leaves. As he exits the teacher wishes him a good weekend and then asks the three if they don't have somewhere to go instead of the hall.

We were all really happy with the work we got done today, and the level of detail in the second part of the day. We have another eight hour day tomorrow and my hope is we can make it through to at least around the suicide by the end of the day.

The best parts of the day, I think, were also the hardest. Those moments when none of us knew what to do, and the room got really quiet. Its like the moment when someone is about to fall off the table into the group's arms. We all have to trust each other that we are all processing, thinking, creating. Its helpful when I can constantly remember that sometimes the best thing to do is to get them to do ANYTHING, because it will inevitably lead to something else.

Their creativity was wonderful today. I have also waved a flag with them, though. Elvis and Patricia, in particular were really tired all day. Melissa and I can create breaks, make sure we get fresh air, etc., but it can't be our job to get them in rested or keep them awake during the day. They have to take this on. Derek spoke to this really well when he said he has discovered the best way to "wake up" when he gets tired is to ride the small dolly that is in the theatre, down the aisle, crashing into seats, laughing. He is a constant reminder that we have to have fun.



Derek playing  
(photo: D. Diamond)

Day 5      February 2, 2003 10am – 6pm

Knots  
Blind sculpting  
Group blind sculpting  
Catch me  
Blocking of scenes  
Lunch  
Blocking of scenes  
Circle

Holy shit. What a day.

They really like doing knots, and laughed so much in the blind sculpting<sup>11</sup> work that some of them were crying. This was good, 'cause the day was going to get heavy.

Picking up where we left off, Shaun, who is now named Chris<sup>12</sup> gets rid of his sister (Iliana – who is now named Mary). She wants to have the conversation they were having about Chris' behaviour, but he won't. He sends her home to make dinner. Then, he turns to Patricia (now Joanne) and they agree to go party. He has told John (now called Scott) that he will meet him at the skytrain terminal. They exit.

Scott has bought Smirnoff vodka and is on the stairs at the terminal, pouring it into sprite cans. Chris and Joanne arrive. They are all friends, and they have a good time drinking on the stairs. They make plans to party all weekend.



Elvis (Jack) enters, on his way home. He encounters Derek (Nick). Nick doesn't want to see him, but gets trapped. Jack wants Nick to play video games with him. He is desperate for some friendship. Nick doesn't want to and then Nick sees the three drinking buddies, who have noticed Jack, approaching. Chris targets Jack. First he asks him for money, but Jack doesn't have any, so he makes him kiss Joanne's shoe. It's a lot of fun.

Once Jack has done this, Chris sees he will do anything, so he tells him to take off his shoes. The others back him up. Scott is getting uncomfortable, because it is quickly becoming not funny, and tells Jack that if he does this thing, they will leave him alone. Jack takes them off, fearing violence from Chris.



<sup>11</sup> Make two equal lines, facing each other, about 10 feet apart. Side A and side B. The person opposite is your partner. Side A close their eyes. Side B make shapes, with their own bodies that they can hold for a while. Once everyone is in a shape they start calling their partner's name. The people on side A walk, eyes closed and find their partner. Keeping their eyes closed they feel the shape that their partner has made with their body. Then they make their way back across the room and, using their own body, make a *mirror image* of the shape their partner is in. Then they open their eyes and compare. Change over.

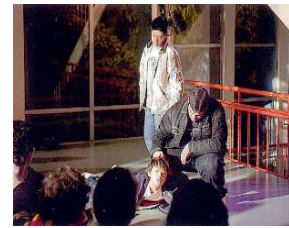
<sup>12</sup> All the actors named their own characters.

Once the shoes are off, Joanne tells him to tie them together. Chris backs her up. Jack does. And then Chris points to some wires, hanging way up there. See them? Throw the shoes up there. Jack pleads, but in the end has no choice.

We enter a ritualized staging now where Jack tries to throw the shoes over the wires, and each time he does, the shoes pass from one cast member to another, including Nick, until each cast member has held them, and then, at the top of the stairs, Mary enters. The shoes go to Mary who hangs them from a hook on the ceiling. It is her earlier silence that makes her complicit.



Now that the shoes are gone, Scott expects that they can leave. Chris and Joanne refuse. Chris orders Jack to take off his socks. Jack refuses. Chris throws Jack to the ground and he and Joanne beat him up. At the last moment, Nick also stomps on Jack. Seeing this, Chris tells Nick to hold Jack, while he strips his socks off him. The final humiliation. Someone he thought might be his friend has joined the violent crowd. Chris pulls Jack up by the hair and says, "If you fuckin' tell anyone..."



During the beating, Scott has decided it has gone too far, and has left. The rest now exit, leaving Jack on the floor. Nick is still there, shocked at what has just happened. Jack calls for him, but Nick leaves. Jack picks himself up and starts to go home, barefoot.

As Jack reaches the stairs, we hear Scott calling for Mary. Interwoven scenes start, one between Mary and Scott, the other between Jack and his mother. Jack's mother will be on tape, and Derek's real mother has agreed to record this, in Cantonese. Jack will speak in English:

Scott: Mary!  
 Mother: Son is that you?  
 Jack: (starts walking up the stairs) Yes, mom it's me  
 Mary: What are you doing here? Where is Chris?  
 Mom: Dinner is ready  
 Jack: Oh! I'm not hungry  
 Scott: There's been a fight. Chris beat up Jack. Its bad.  
 Mom: Come and eat now  
 Mary: What do you want me to do about it?  
 Jack: I need to do my homework  
 Scott: I don't know. He's your fucking brother  
 Mary: Yea..... thanks  
 Mom: Come and eat now or there will be no dinner left  
 Scott: I gotta go  
 Jack: (sitting down at the top of the landing in the corner)I'm ok, If I am hungry I'll make something for my self

The location of these scenes is lovely and, I think, a great use of the space. Jack is above and Mary and Scott below. They both appear behind bars, because of the railings.

Still left to do: Jack goes back to school, and everyone knows this has happened. He is completely isolated. He kills himself. The rest have to deal with what has happened.

They worked so hard today. This is such emotional and detailed work, and requires honesty from them on many levels: a willingness to talk about what is really happening -- the things that people know about, but will not discuss, and as actors, finding their character's relationship to the material.

They (we) are exhausted but happy.

Day 6            February 4, 2003    4 – 8:30

Dinner  
Interviews  
Energy clap  
The journey  
Run so far  
Blocking of scenes  
Circle

We didn't get as much done today as I had hoped, but, still, we did move forward.

Co-op Radio came in to do an interview in Spanish with Iliana – and from what I gather it went really well. A student from Tupper also did an interview with me and then with the cast for the school insert in the Courier.

Played two games with them – an adaptation of Energy Clap that has vocalization in it – I want to get them to start filling space vocally. Also the Journey – a lovely, creative game to get their juices flowing.

Then we ran what we have so far. It was (expectedly) pretty terrible. Huge holes in it, very surface, also very overacted at times. We talked about coming back to it after a day off and did it again. It was more energized, but we have work to do.

I talked with them about authenticity in both the material and the emotions on the stage. Of the seven of them, two have personally experienced being bullies – more of them know people who have been. They have all witnessed a lot, although not all have been targets themselves. I told them that there must be no moment in the play where an audience can point and say “that never happens”. That I am relying on them to keep the content real, and the way the content is expressed real.

Patricia obviously had stuff going on today – she was “somewhere else” for both runs. We have enough honesty between us now that asked her to either tell us what it is or let go of it, but either way, I needed her to be present. She explained about how a girl in school called her a slut today – how hurtful that was. The group were great – processed it with her, and Patricia moved through the moment.

The question then became – what happens next in the play? Well – Jack kills himself. How do we get there? None of us knew. We started at each other for the longest time. Finally a shred of an idea came to me and, grasping at it, I asked them to just start walking around as if it was the next day of school -- self absorbed, doing internal monologues about their relationship to what has



happened, making traffic patterns up and down the stairs and through our “hallway”.

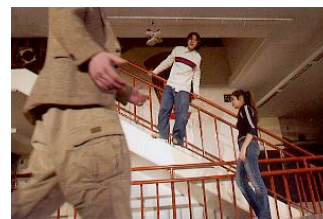
Inside this, I inserted a barefoot Jack, going to them and showing them that he has no shoes. Slowly, doing it again and again and again, physical and vocal patterns started to emerge. It was actually really interesting how this happened and was a lesson for me in “knowing” that they do contain the scenes; that my job is to “massage’ the scenes out of them.

They all play their characters, except John who is the teacher, Mr. Paterson.



It starts slowly, out of a blackout. We hear a school buzzer (which is actually a tone these days). Chris and Joanne enter walking up the stairs, talking about how Jack brought the beating upon himself. They get to the top and disappear. Jack appears at the top, barefoot. Mary appears at the bottom, talking out loud to herself, as she climbs the stairs, Jack goes to her and tries to get her to see he is barefoot. She rejects

him, will not see him. Mr. Paterson appears and it is the same. Chris and Joanne come back down – Jack bounces off of them to Nick, and it is the same. It gets louder, more desperate, until he is pleading with them – there is a cacophony of voices. Jack is now on the rail, yelling at them, "I have no shoes! Can you see me? Can you hear me? Nothing will ever change!" He dives, face first, off the rail and into their arms.



One of the reasons to do this scene is so that we can do Forum on the next one. Kids kill themselves. We wish they didn’t, but they do. Health Canada tells us that Canada has one of the highest teen suicide rates in the industrialized world. Once a suicide has occurred, what do?

Day 7 February 5, 2003 4 – 8:30

We have the full play.

We spent some time at the beginning of the day marking the fight. Building it moment to moment. Its very difficult, though, for them to do it slowly. They just don't have the physical vocabulary. I think it is actually safer for them to rehearse it up to speed.

I started the creation session off asking them what their characters thought about Jack killing himself.

Scott is swimming in guilt. Nick wanted to not care, but I have suggested to him that he is terrified. He thinks the authorities are going to find out and he will be blamed for it. Mary also feels she could have stopped it, but ultimately blames her brother, who, if she had the strength, she would report to the police. He is her brother, though. He is blood..

Joanne is standing with Chris. Together they believe that they didn't do anything wrong. Jack's decision is his own. They didn't tell him to jump off a bridge, all they did was rough him up a little. Its his fault if he couldn't handle it. Privately, she is fearing Chris more and more. Chris knows nothing can touch him, really. All he did was rough the kid up. He did not kill anyone.

I had them do internal monologues for a very long time, to discover their inner workings, and then sat Mary and Scott on the school stairs together. They are in silence for a long time. Nick enters. He sees them, but hopes to be able to walk past them. It is Scott who calls his name and asks him if he has



heard the news. Yes, says Nick. After a long silence, Nick asks: "what's going to happen now?" Scott's answer is "I don't know".

Enter Joanne and Chris, continuing an animated conversation about how Jack killing himself was his won decision, it had nothing to do with them. They get to the bottom of the stairs and see the three others, sitting there. They climb the stairs, Chris tries to greet Scott, who doesn't respond and then Nick, who doesn't respond, either.

Chris knows what's happening. They are all blaming him. He kneels behind his sister and touches her on the back. She moves away. He talks to Scott: "Its not our fault." "Its ALL of our fault" says Scott and there is an exchange that Joanne participates in. She gets more and more intrusive and upset until Chris yells at her to "shut the fuck up". She yells back that she is "on his side", but the threat has been made.

Scott rises and walks to the bottom of the stairs. Chris knows he has lost Scott. He says, "If you fuckin' tell anyone..." Scott is the new Jack.

We ran the whole play twice on the stairs. It is great to have it all. And to have the stairs. I Need to change gears now from creation to rehearsal. Some of the scenes hang together quite well and, of course, some need a lot of work.

Some of the actors are wonderfully focussed and two of them in particular have real focus problems. I knew this casting them, of course. They bring their lives into the play and who they are is invaluable. Part of the package is finding a way to help them be in the moment for more than a moment at a time.

The technical side needs to start coming together quickly now that we know what the play is. There is sound to record. Masking to create. I have suggested to Adam that the masking I am asking for along the doors to the office, could be created by the design assistants.

We need to try to work on the stairs as much as possible now, but its hard because it isn't "our space" out there, and any overtime at all costs more money because of the need to have engineers present.

Day 8            February 6, 2003    4 – 8:30 PM

We really did go into another gear today.

I decided this morning that Shaun should not do CKNW (a province-wide talk show) tomorrow morning. Talked with Jen (publicist) about it and she agreed. We have changed it to Patricia. This is really an interview where, I think, the interviewer will ask the actor to talk about the experiences in his/her life. Of all of them, Patricia has the deepest life experience, both of being bullied and of bullying. It will be terrible to put Shaun in the position of, what, having to invent something? I talked this over with him and he agreed. Patricia is really pumped about doing it.

Started off with CBC Radio over dinner. An interview for North By Northwest. It was great that the interviewer was there. He interviewed John and Shaun and me. I am trying to spread them out amongst the cast.

I wish, though, that I hadn't agreed to give them a scene so early. Kind of like agreeing to let someone air a 'rough cut' of a film. Not happy with what we were able to give him, and am concerned about how its going to sound. It was after he left that we started any detailed work on anything at all, having just finished creation last night. O well. He said he would do editing. We'll see. I feel a need to find a way to control these things more, hard to do that and still give the media something.<sup>13</sup>

The interview in the Straight is out. It's a good article and the kids come off really well in it. I noticed after the fact that Janet (the writer) didn't include anything about dates, tickets, a contact number. That's so too bad. Hopefully

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<sup>13</sup> As it turned out they did a HUGE editing job and took ALL the swearing out. LOL....really a lot of editing, and in the process tightened the roughness of the scene up quite a bit.

people will read the article, though, and do the work to track the show down. Its great to get items off the entertainment pages – it means the project is making the news. The problem with this is that the writers sometimes see no need to publicize the show.

We began at the top of the play and started working scenes a few seconds by few seconds. Now is the time to edit out the stuff that doesn't work. To make certain that each moment is emotionally honest and forwards the story somehow. That it is in no way extraneous and that the action is driven by the needs of the characters.

Some of what needs to happen is simple condensing and creating an urgency in the moments through the clarity of the characters' desires. An interesting example of this came up in the second scene – in between Chris and his sister, Mary. The two of them are coming down the stairs, after school and she is berating him about the way he treated Jack. It had been an accident, Chris just thinks it was a funny "Chink joke" and that nothing was wrong.

Its really easy for Shaun to play Chris angry. He goes there very naturally. But its expected and boring. I started asking the two of them 'what they want' as their characters. Their answers were about the other person: 'I want him to understand', 'I want her to back off'. No, I kept saying, this is what you want the other person to do. What do YOU want? 'I don't want to have the conversation', says Shaun. No, that's what you DON'T want. What do you want???

Finally, we come to the understanding that Mary wants to feel in control. Chris wants some peace and quiet. Good. Play the scene again. Say the SAME words and get what you want. Now Chris is trying to calm her down BECAUSE he wants peace and quiet. He seems like a very gentle, reasonable guy, who happens to be saying terrible things like "it was just some Chink fun, what's the problem". Better. Way better. And more realistic.

And so we continued like this working really minutely. Hard, hard work. We made it to the beginning of the fight and managed to run everything we had on the stairs. I am hoping that tomorrow we will be able to make it to the end of the play, so that on Saturday (we have an invited Forum....YIKES ...our last real rehearsal day), we can do runs and runs and runs.

Day 9            February 7, 2003            4 – 8:30pm

Its hard to believe what we have done in 9 days.

Everyone is very tired and we are starting to "fray" a bit emotionally. Me, too. The group is having trouble focussing – I think it comes from both the emotional intensity of the material and also the long hours they are putting in. It's a testament to their commitment that they are all hanging in.

Patricia was great with CKNW today. Near the end of the interview, the host asked her to talk about her own experiences. 'Had she ever been bullied, or a



bully?' I had told her I thought this might happen and said to her that she had the power in the moment to either answer the question, or not. Or answer it as much as she wanted to, and then say she didn't want to get into it deeper. And also that I would support whatever decision she made on-air, but that I would not coach her or make the decision on her behalf.

She handled it beautifully. She paused for a few seconds, gathered her thoughts, and then she talked about how she had pushed a girl around, taken her cel phone and it had escalated into her and others beating the girl up. At the time they had all thought it was funny. But that was then. And she has understood for herself that it was serious. She talked about her experience in the workshop and about how the things that seem funny sometimes are not. And that she hopes people will see the play and understand that.

We worked solely on the stairs today. This was important, especially for the latter part of the play. It is very set dependant.

First we ran what we had so far from yesterday and a lot of it hung together. There are problem spots that I think we will always have to keep working. Throwing the runners is one of them. The biggest, perhaps. In order for it to work it has to be very stylized. Almost dance. They don't have the physical experience to do this, and with some of them I am having a hard time getting it into their bodies.

We worked the latter part of the play in minute detail today. It is very dense and complex. Jack needs to be able to reach a place of isolation, desperation, where suicide is possible. I have tried to plot this journey moment by moment with the actor. Language is a problem. I find the best way to help him understand is to be physical with him. His understanding comes from a visceral moment.

I have asked Sandra (counsellor) to talk with administration at Gladstone. Elvis failed two tests today. They need to make accommodations for him doing this project. Having thought it was a great idea and opportunity for him, they have to understand that homework is an issue for these four weeks. They can't support him in theory but not in practice.

We did our first uninterrupted run at the end of the day today. It was quite powerful. And I only had two pages of notes. Not bad at all. I realized though, after notes, that although some of the notes had been positive, they were 'bummed' by the negative notes. So I tried to explain that getting this *few* notes was a wonderful thing -- that it meant that a lot of it was working. Its easy to forget they are kids.

We have our invited Forum audience tomorrow. Some of the workshop participants from both schools. Its going to be very interesting. On to the next layer.

Day 10      February 8, 2003      10am – 6PM

We spent this whole day working in the foyer, and it went very, very fast. Our last real day of rehearsal. We had an invited Forum.

In the morning we spent time working some scenes. Detailed work. Still extending some moments and condensing others. Its interesting for me too see the shift that is happening in the cast. The ones who were slow to start are the ones who are becoming really solid, and the ones who have the most experience on stage, and were 'hot' off the mark, are starting to shift around now that we are getting close to opening.

It was great to have an audience. About a dozen kids from the workshops. (Nice to see them again, too) Also the lighting designer, TD, Dylan. After the play was done some of the kids in the audience were crying. (A good sign.)

I talked with them, wanting to know what they thought. They said many times that it was great how real it was and they were surprised, I think, by what they recognized from the plays we had made in the schools.

They also had various impressions of the scene where Jack comes back barefoot and then jumps. Some of them knew he was killing himself, some thought he was jumping off the rail on the stairs in the school. Light will help us define this, but Shane and Adam and I talked about it later and, actually, I think its just fine if, in the next scene, some of the audience is going, 'ohhh, he jumped off a bridge.....omygod'. People also really appreciated the final scene; that the play doesn't end with the suicide, but forces us to deal with what happens after.

And so then we started doing Forum. We had two hours (the time we will have) and it went soooo fast. This was also my first chance to investigate how to Joke this piece. Some insights:

The play is structured to start with what could be an inconsequential incident on the stairs. Interventions at this point are really simple, and solve the whole play. We take the time to help each other; we stay out of the tough guy's way (although this means being on 'red alert' always); we keep track of 'the bully' and make sure he doesn't hurt anyone.

All of these interventions take something for granted (as Shane pointed out) and that is that we know the whole play. We know this small incident is going to lead to the beating, the suicide, but if we *don't* know that – will we still take care of each other? Make the time to stop and help when we 'bump someone in the hall'? Its harder.

Although the interventions off the top are important, I need to find a way to move into the later scenes quickly. The relationships here are very complex. The interventions rich.

The cast were great. Yes, we were in rehearsal and I was stopping and giving them notes in the midst of it in a way I will not in performance. I didn't feel the need to do a lot of this, though. They had a very good run.

They have a real day off tomorrow. While the set goes up in the foyer for the first time.

Day 11          February 9, 2003          10 am – 10pm

This was Adam's (Tech Director/Designer) and Shane's (Lighting designer) day. Crew came in as did the Apprentice Designers. Everything went up, wiring, trusses, seats, platforms, etc.

I arrived at about 3PM and thought, 'why is the school is letting us do this?' We are a very large presence in the foyer. Its huge and also very impressive. Maureen had already been there, though, and given a re-enforced approval for the trusses to stay – although I have to say, if I was a kid in the hall, I would be swinging on them.

We have hung about 40 lights along the trusses and also on stands, and attached to rails. I learned this morning that we have been given the OK to leave some of the platforms out!! Anything that can remain makes set-up and tear down easier, obviously.

Adam had had Olya and Kate (design apprentices) do a 'collage' kind of thing on the flats that create the masking near the doors to the office. We need this for cross-overs. I had approved the idea of using newspapers – but when I saw the finished product – it was so 'busy'. The rest of the set is so clean. I had imagined it would be selective newspapers, things that had to do with the subject matter – but it was incomprehensible without going to it and looking very, very closely. It looked really messy. I cut it. Adam had it painted black. Boring, yes, but unobtrusive. Its what it needs to be. I am mentioning it because the two girls had put a lot of work into it. This happens, though. Ideas get realized and sometimes they don't work. A director comes in and says 'no'. Adam explained to them as did I – and they were fine with it, I think.

A concern for me now is sight lines for the scene under the stairs. Now that we have the chairs in, and the platforms, it turns out that if we put Mary on a platform under there to elevate her a bit, her face is blocked by the horizontal part of the rail. If we elevate her more, the rail turns into a fence that she is looking over – defeating the whole image of her and Jack being behind bars. If we don't elevate her, because she is *lower* than the audience, and the audience is flat on the floor on chairs, she is very, very hard to see beyond the third row.

The solution I can find for this is to remove some chairs, making space between them. At the moment they are tight against each other. We have been playing around with the numbers of chairs – Adam thinks we can remain at 100 and still create space. He is also looking for a small riser, even

a phone book or two, that she can step onto – even if it is bringing her up a few inches. I will do the Forum interventions for this scene on the forestage, though, not down below. (We did find a 6 inch riser, kind of a long wooden box, for her to step up onto that worked really well.)

And so everything went up and whatever needed to come down came down and got put away. Another layer. We have from 3:30 – 10:00 tonight (February 10) to teach set-up, feed everyone, set light levels, cues, tech, runs, teach tear down.

Sandra (project counsellor) called the Vice Principal at Gladstone about the cast member who failed two tests last week. His response to her was that ‘the concessions were given while the youth were in the workshops in the school.’ The schools agreeing that the students doing this project was a very good thing, she and I both feel that they need to accommodate the fact that the kids are working very, very full days. She is continuing to try to sort this out.

February 11, 2003

Its been a full and rough two days.

We have, of course, deconstructed and reconstructed the play, as will happen when tech comes around. The cast have been trying to ‘hold on’ throughout this. Our original plan was that a cue to cue was going to take two hours on Feb. 10. It took all night. Some of the problem was lighting complications, then the sound equipment didn’t work properly, and we have been adjusting platforms and also some of the cues are very dependant on the actors doing their lines and actions the same way each time and some of them (Jack in particular) have a very difficult time with this.

And so I came in on the 11<sup>th</sup> with a very detailed schedule: Set up, do a full tech run so I can see where we are, dinner, interviews (CBC Radio and then CITY TV) and then two hours to work slowly through the play focusing on the actors, because they play is drifting, and then a run and notes, a run and notes, a run and notes.

Working slowly through the play after dinner took most of the rest of the night. The central problem is that two of the cast members have ‘disconnected’ from the emotional reality of what we have made. This happens sometimes even with professional actors, but its harder to deal with when the actors are ‘not actors’. It doesn’t matter how interesting the lights look, how unique it is to be doing the play on a set of stairs. For me, if the play doesn’t work emotionally, it doesn’t work. And so we spent a lot of time back in what felt like an early stage of rehearsal, trying to reconnect to a reality that we had.

- I want to take a moment to write about why I feel that the play has to be the best theatre it can be. There is a sensibility in Community Animation work that whatever the community makes -- at whatever level it is made -

- is OK. I disagree. The project is happening so that the audiences will be deeply affected by the material and participate in a transformational process, both as individuals and as members of a larger living organism: the community.<sup>14</sup> If the play does not work as art, that is as a story that operates on many levels, both factual and symbolic, the audience engagement will not be deep. I feel strongly that it is my responsibility to make as great art as possible under the circumstances in which we are working. In this case it means the actors are high school students, the designers and lead crew are professionals and the other crew are also high school students. Not to push for the best artistry we can achieve at this point would be an abrogation of my responsibility to everyone: to the community organizations involved, to potential audience members, to the original workshop participants, to Headlines staff and Board, to all the funders and, most important, to the six cast members who are on stage and vulnerable.

- In Forum Theatre (as in any style of theatre) there are a number of elements that create a deep audience response:
  1. A compelling story.
  2. The performers' emotional connection to the story.
  3. Their ability to tell the story with clarity.
  4. Innovative ways to tell the story directorially.
- In Forum we want the audience to make interventions. In order to do this, they must see their won story on the stage, certainly, but that is not enough. The above must also happen. It must be good theatre. Otherwise it is 'not good theatre', and the audience will not connect, will not care and will not make interventions.

In the midst of all this rehearsal chaos, John did a really good interview (live) for Catherine Gretsinger on CBC's evening show. Congrats to Jen Cressey for getting it.

We need runs. And I also need to find a way to get the cast centred emotionally again. This might mean convincing them now to 'let go' of everything, so that the journey of the play can be a discovery. They need to let each moment affect them 'new'. It might just be that they need an audience.

February 12, 2003

We had a spectacular preview tonight!

Got to the school at 3:30 and did set-up. All of the cast and two student crew and stage management, and lighting operator managed to do the set up in about 30 minutes. It involved bringing about half the staging in (we can leave the other half), clamping it, stairs, some special lights and the cabling that is

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<sup>14</sup> Isn't this the goal of all art?

attached to that, the sound and light booth and the cabling that is attached to that and of course, the chairs have to come and go, and the speakers and speaker stands and cabling. While this is happening, Headlines' staff is setting up the box office and lobby displays.

We did a final run and notes from 4:15 to 5:00 and then had an hour for media call. SHAW Cable News and Generation Y were booked as was CBC TV news. CBC didn't show. We did interviews and ran the fight scene for television, and the runners kept falling off the ceiling. I asked Mary, who puts them up what the problem was and she (this is a person is so very sweet-natured) hissed, 'look at the way they are tied'!

This moment is an encapsulation of the last few days. We are all fraying at the edges. I spent almost 30 minutes a few days ago just working with Jack, trying to teach him how to tie the shoelaces, which means single-tying them when he puts them on and then *undoing* the shoelaces when he takes them off, so that he can tie them together with one knot. This makes it possible to hang them. He can't (or won't, i don't know) remember to do this. At this moment we have this HUGE mess of knotted laces that is impossible to get around the hook. And there are TV crews filming. I remind him of what we worked out about the laces and he says, you want me to do that every time? Take a breath....take a breath....take a breath. Yes.

We have a very fast dinner. Audience is already arriving.

We have 90 seats and it is almost full. I have some sense of how I am going to introduce this piece, but not really. Going to have to make it up on the spot. Of course, some of it is obvious.



When I get in front of the audience I realize that most of the faces are unknown to me. This is unusual for a preview. Who are these people? Where have they come from? I ask them how many have never been to a

Headlines' Forum event before. At least 80% of the hands go up. This is great. Outreach is working. Also, a large percentage of the audience are Asian families.

We have a good run. The light and sound are off a bit, but the actors really have needed an audience. They are shining. After the play, I am back on stage and the air is thick. The room feels very, very emotional. All of a sudden, I know what to do:

I ask the audience to do me a favour: 'If anyone has ever been to high school, will they stand, please?' Of course this is a joke.

Most of the room will stand -- and it makes them giggle. I am trying to break



the emotional moment, to take them back to the beginning, to unfreeze them so interventions can happen. I just want get them moving a bit. About six of them don't stand. Right! There are elementary school kids in the crowd! I tell them its great they are here, and would they now stand as well, please?

Now I ask them: 'If you yourself, or someone who is close to you, have *never* experienced any of the issues in this play, please sit.' 3 or 4 people sit. The rest of the room remains standing. And all of a sudden, I feel like crying. Is it me? Or am I feeling the emotion in the room. It is a very powerful, emotional moment for me and, I believe, for everyone in the room. Because of it I am able to tell them that we have decided to take this play to the public for a reason: Because the issue demands a community response. It is an issue that exists not just inside the schools, but in all of our lives, and now we are going to start to work on it.

I am (once again) not using language of oppressor and oppressed at all in this Forum. We have created a group of 'oppressed bullies' on purpose. *I am asking the audience to think about the struggles the characters are engaged in and to try to find ways to work though these struggles to create safety in the world we have created.*

This is a continuation of the evolution of **THEATRE FOR LIVING** away from 'Theatre of the Oppressed'. I find that the oppressor/oppressed language creates polarization in a community. Good characters and bad characters. This creates a tendency in the Forum to want to 'save' the oppressed and 'punish' the oppressor. Our prisons are full of oppressors being punished. It isn't working. If we want to find a way to break the cycles of violence, of abuse, in this case of bullying, then we have to find a way to create safety, which means finding ways to protect the bullied while also finding the core reasons for the bullying and deal with it.

The Forum was amazing. Really lively, considered interventions, some very beautiful and some scary moments. There was a huge amount of laughter and applause and many more interventions than we could possibly do.

One of the moments strikes me: a young man got up during the fight and got into a fight with Chris. The audience found it hysterical -- laughed and applauded so much. I turned and said to them: 'isn't it interesting how this violent response got so much applause. It entertained us, (me too), didn't it?' And we all got very quiet. Because this is the problem. It was a wonderful moment, I think. And deepened the investigation that night for ways to try to solve the issue without violence.

At the end of the play, the final scene, we took two interventions, and the sequence of them was interesting to me. The first one was all about making Chris feel guilty. And the next one was about taking responsibility in the group and acknowledging all of our involvement. Maybe coming out of a group denial. Aren't these the first two stages of grieving? Isn't it fascinating that the group consciousness in the room would do this?

Many, many people came to me, many with tears in their eyes and commented at how incredible the event had been. Hopefully they will do publicity for us.

February 13, 2003

God, I hate opening nights.

We sent out over 400 invitations (800 possible people) and had an audience of 45. About 20 of them were not from the invite list. Jackie Crossland (Headlines' Financial Administrator) muses that: "It's almost like you have to convince the 'theatre' audience that dealing with issues could have entertainment as well as educational value and the 'community' audience that theatre could be politically/socially useful as well as entertaining." Not one single person from the theatre community came. Its really depressing.

The make-up of the audience was also very different. Not so multi-cultural as last night. Also, we had encouraged people to bring youth with them on the invitations -- our invite list had a hard time with this, I think. Perhaps part of the reason for the low response.

A few staff commented on how the interventions at preview seemed way more 'considered', people actually trying to solve the problems, whereas last night they were more surface, more of a 'game' being played on the stage. The evening had a more theatre-sports feel to it. I think this is true, but I don't really know what creates the difference. It is, however, a palpable thing.

There was an audience member there – a student from Gladstone – who I recognized from one of the Forums a few months ago. A very large kid with some kind of mental disability. He had done a few interventions at the school, and when I saw him I knew he would do the same here.

He did do two interventions. I want to write about them because these are always really interesting moments in a Forum for me. People who 'see' from an unusual perspective are often in the audience and they often take the opportunity to intervene. They don't censor themselves.

In both interventions his initial impulses were really clear. In the first he tried to use his size, which is something he must deal with every day, but not in an aggressive way. He tried to use it to NOT get in a fight. But just as he was about to get what he wanted, he started pushing, getting aggressive, and it led to violence. The second time, his tactic was to give Chris his shoes and socks -- just give them -- and hope that in doing this he could not get beat up. But again, he didn't know how/when to stop. He started 'pushing' again, escalating the scene into violence. Both these interventions took a lot of time. His thought processes are, I sense, sometimes circular.

I think it is really important to honour whoever walks onto the stage. I can feel the impatience in the room sometimes – and my own – with audience members who take up a lot of time. Time is precious in a Forum. And yet



there are things to learn from in his interventions for all of us. What are the boundaries? How do we create safety? How do we know when we have said enough?

A woman came up and replaced Mary. She wanted to have a real conversation with Chris, her brother. She offered to take him to dinner. He didn't want to go. She offered to take Joanne along with them. They went. She didn't talk to him. Instead she insisted on going on to whatever they were going to do together. She ended up at the fight with them at the skytrain station. And it is here, finally, that she 'acted'. It was impossible for her to do what she initially wanted, and when she did, it was in the context of telling her brother that she was going to follow him around wherever he went. And so we talked about how Mary gets trapped being his parent, but she is his younger sister.

Again, people came to me later, eyes watering, talking about how fantastic it was. I don't know -- I am exhausted at the moment and, perhaps don't have any perspective. When I compare the two nights so far I much prefer the energy of preview. Hopefully we are through that opening night weirdness.

The cast is tired, too, although I think they are doing *great*. They have been in school from 8:30 - 3:30 and then rehearsal from 4 - 9 every day for 2 weeks, and now we are going until 10, including strike.

My main concern right now is that we have 90 seats and it should be full every night. Its not for lack of coverage, or knowledge that we are doing the show. There has been good TV, radio, and nice notices in the Courier, Sun and Georgia Straight. Lots of networking in the schools, the professional theatre-people attached to the project tell me that *everyone* deals with these low numbers now, other companies play to 5 people sometimes (!) theatre is a harder and harder sell in Vancouver.

I just checked the reservations and we are up to 48 for tonight (Friday) – Staff has been on the phone beating the bushes. But Saturday is at 24 for the half price matinee, 10 for the evening and Sunday evening is at 19. Bookings are coming in for the second part of the run. Next Thursday is sold out and Friday is at 50. Interestingly, people are not booking for the Sunday afternoon web cast. We think that the information might be confusing and people think it is only on the web. We will have to deal with this soon.

February 14, 2003

Valentines day. Had about 45 people. For some reason, we are getting almost zero walk-ins. Only the reservations. When we did **THIR\$TY** last year, we could count on 30, 40 or so walk-ins a night. What is the difference? Maybe its because we are doing it in a school, not a theatre.

It was a good show tonight, though. There were some technical glitches in both sound and light – we will do a tech cue to cue tomorrow. But the cast did a good run and they were really good in the Forum. They are doing a

wonderful job of each performance being the first time. This is hard, and one of the things that makes Forum one of the most difficult forms for actors, I think.

We are having a lot of interventions every night and tonight went back (thankfully) to a sense of issue exploration more than last night's 'Theatresports' kind of feeling.

Some interesting moments: a woman replaced Mary when Scott comes to see her, and they agree to wait for Chris to get home. When he does they find a way to talk with him with a great deal of love. Before Chris entered she encouraged Scott to show Chris that he loved him. This got a laugh from the audience. When Chris arrived, during the improvisation, Scott said, 'I love you, man, you don't have to be like that.' Again, it got a laugh. When the improvisation was done, I mentioned to the audience that it would be great to live in a world where it wasn't funny when men expressed their love for each other. Isn't that part of the problem we are facing? There was scattered applause, but mostly a very silent moment. We all know racism is bad, but homophobia runs deep.

A man replaced Jack at the moment he is about to get beat up. And he kned Chris in the gut. And, of course, Chris beat him up. This led to a great conversation about how, of course we wish that Jack wasn't getting beat, but here we are now, and he is. Is it better for him to fight back? If he *does*, even though he gets beat up, will he kill himself later? This man who intervened thinks he will not. Because, although beaten, he will have his self-respect. It is a very interesting thing to think about – not wanting to condone the violence, but -- do we just sit and take it? Is it our Liberal 'want everything to be nice' attitude that says all violence is wrong? I think having this discussion in public is very brave, especially with the build-up into the Iraq war happening now.<sup>15</sup>

Another woman, at the every end, replaced Scott – after the suicide. She broke the silence on the stairs. And she cried. Her crying started Mary crying. I thought Nick was going to start crying, but he didn't. There they were, though, and it was a lovely moment. The tears started a much needed process in the group, that would make thinking, feeling, discussing possible. Sometimes people need to cry together, even if it is in a rehearsal in the theatre. Many in the audience cried with them.

Again, many people came and talked from their hearts about the power of this event. I feel good about what we are doing, about what we have created. It is an odd animal, this play. It was a good decision to do it in the stairwell, even though it is challenging in so many ways. And the cast are strong.

I explained about the situation with reservations this week-end to the audience and boldly asked them to help with tomorrow. We are getting rid of

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<sup>15</sup> On a personal note, I disagree that war creates peace. I also, though, really understood what this man said about the character's self-respect. Where are the boundaries?

lots of postcards after the show, audience members taking them to give out. I hope they are being put to good use.

We have Fairchild TV (Cantonese) and CBC Radio (Early Edition) tomorrow at 12:30, and a show at 2 and a show at 7.

February 19, 2003

A lot has happened.

The performances on Saturday, February 15 went well but were very poorly attended. The march against the war in Iraq was that afternoon – impossible to plan in advance for that, but also the evening had twenty some odd people. It was very demoralizing. Lots of questions come up for me at a time like this about whether or not it's wise to continue. (I mean, at all – not this show.)

Isn't this a signal that no one really wants this kind of work? Isn't the proof in the pudding? With all the best of intentions, good PR, really good networking – there is certainly a buzz on about the production – they just are not walking in the door. At times like these I am riddled with self-doubt.

I understand that other producing companies play to audiences of 5 and 6....WHY??

Its hard on staff for me to go into a spiral. They don't know (I think) how deep my insecurities are. Yes, I am an artist as well as a producer. And so my crisis becomes a crisis for them. Affects their work. I have to find a way to deal with the insecurity myself. Its hard.

The office staff went into overdrive, both working to get people out and also preparing for the upcoming web cast, and closing night! They've done a tremendous job.

Word went out through the community networks (and from the stage every night) encouraging people to start booking tickets. In the last few days the web cast on the 23<sup>rd</sup> has sold out, as has the matinee on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. The 20<sup>th</sup> was sold out some time ago and it looks like Friday the 21<sup>st</sup> and the evening of the 22<sup>nd</sup> are going to go as well.

The web cast is very complicated. So many details. Dylan is co-ordinating as Production Manager on the project, and has written a short report, incorporated into this, on page 44.

February 20, 2003

Full house tonight. This was great. Good work, folks. I, however, got sick with the flu. Curled-up-in-bed-in-a-shivering-ball-sick. I've spent the last two days trying to move it through me quickly. In order to get out of bed the mantra is "Better living through chemicals".

We spent about an hour working the play first, having brought the company together at 3:30 for set-up. We worked each scene, as they had been away from it for three days and the moments were bound to be wandering – and they were. Mostly it was tightening them back up again, finding the focus again, doing a reality check with the characters sometimes.

We fed everyone tonight and then the cast had about an hour to just be together. I thought this might be important to do after having been apart for three days. I think it was a good call.

Really interesting audience tonight. This is the night that had been sold out for a while now. About 85% youth. The play ran well. And the audience was a little stunned when it ended, I think. I got them standing, and asked them to sit if they had never (or a loved one had never) experienced any of these issues. No one sat. Usually 5 or 6 sit. It was an electric moment. It was a raucous evening.

There were some odd interventions off the top, I thought. Odd because we haven't had a lot of interventions that I would call 'magic' in these Forums, but there were tonight. There was certainly a journey in the evening, that deepened tremendously as we progressed.

One intervention in particular from a woman who said she was 'a facilitator' – who created an 'ideal teacher', who magically had all the time and resources in the world. She walked into the 'thick air' after the incident on the stairs and took everyone out for pizza, so they could be together, and then tried to encourage Chris (the bully) and Jack to be friends. The cast dealt with her well, I thought – they ate her food and when they were done they split. Jack waited for her to say something / do something constructive, to actually help him. She never did. It was a lot of good intention but nothing actually happened.

There was a wonderful moment when she was trying to get them all (including herself) to spend time together outside school and Chris said to her: 'Mr. P – you're starting to scare me now'. A signal to her that she was crossing a boundary that, in reality, she cannot cross. I don't know if she really understood, though. Its not OK for teachers to 'hang out' outside class with their students anymore. Was it ever?

So, I asked if there were teachers in the room, and if they had the kind of time in a day to do this – and there were – and they all said no, its impossible. Her desire was strong, though, and certainly we can all wish that teachers could do this – but being practical, living in the world we have, instead of the world we wish for, what *can* we do? <sup>16</sup>

Her intervention did give me the chance (which I got in many performances) to briefly make the connections between current BC Government cuts to

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<sup>16</sup> It occurs to me that this is the example of Friere's: "we cannot get there from there – we can only get there from here" statement.

education and education support services, and our unrealistic desire for teachers to be able to have the time to ‘police’ this issue. The reality is that most teachers are now being asked to do more and more with less and less. Naming this always got applause.

Then there was an intervention to replace Joanne when the fight is starting. What got created was that all of a sudden she is against violence. I stopped and asked the woman who was on stage if she really thought that our character could do what she is doing, and the answer was ‘not really’. And so, what was happening here?

Here’s what I think is a PART of it: we had our first mostly youth audience, and most of them had never been to Forum Theatre. Their experience of improvisational theatre is Theatre Sports and the TV show “What’s My Line?”. Their frame of reference for this kind of an event is play-acting. Not confronting the reality of the world we have created on the stage. And so I urged them (once again) NOT to replace characters who they think are causing the problem and just turn them into nicer people, and solve the problem through magic – but to really take on struggling with the issues. The ‘magic’ interventions stopped.

And there were some lovely ones: a young man stepped in for Nick at the fight and managed to save Jack, and not get beat up himself. He walked that very fine line with Chris of standing up to him and not stepping over the edge and getting hit. (Another did step over the edge and get hit and this was also of value to see, to understand.)

A young woman replaced Scott at the fight and really, really stopped Chris. She was very forceful with him but never touched him physically – actually the audience member was surprised at how deep her engagement was – and this created a lot of ripples. Joanne left the scene, because she heard the truth of what Scott was saying in this moment – and in the theatre you could have heard a pin drop – because what was unfolding was real – and when that happens the audience is riveted.

A woman replaced Jack when he is going up the stairs, and I asked for a mother to come and play the mother. One did. It took a moment to navigate this, because there was a young woman there who wanted to play the mother, but was not a mother, and in this particular moment if we can *have* that experience on the stage its so much more rich – again – its not about pretending. And they were lovely together. Jack found a way to reach out safely to her and she responded – gave him lots of space.

A young man replaced Scott at the end of the play, on the stairs. He didn’t stop Nick. When I asked him about this he said it was because he didn’t think that Nick was really involved, which isn’t quite true in our play – but was his reason. Interestingly, this created space for him and Mary to talk privately. I wondered out loud if it was subconscious. His intervention led to a very stark and emotional scene with Chris – and then a young boy yelled stop and wanted to replace Chris and at this moment I said OK and the first

intervener playing Scott stayed and this new person had Chris take responsibility for what he had done. The inspiration for it, I think, was what the 'new' Scott was doing. His gentleness had opened up a space for this young person (who was very emotional in the moment) to talk about how 'we' had to learn from this and never do it again.

Seemed like a good place to stop the evening. The wonderful thing about this Forum (and all Forum, really, but this night was special) was that we really were using the theatre to rehearse ways to deal with the issue.

There were 90 or so individuals *and* a group consciousness at work in the room, emotionally, psychologically and spiritually engaged – having a theatrical dialogue about very deep things that are hard to get at. This is what it is all about.

Many, many of the youth who were there came to me, these were tough kids tonight and said how awesome it had been. Also some of the teachers who were there were extremely appreciative of how it engaged these kids who they know and have difficulty engaging. Its easier for Headlines. We are not bound by the curriculum in the way teachers are, but its not rocket science. This play is *about* them – *created by* them and *performed by* them -- and they respond to it the way they do because of that.

We also had a difficult chat after this performance. The cast are doing great work during the run and in the Forum, but sometimes they are really noisy backstage or onstage when I am trying to explain things to the audience. It happened tonight again – its kind of like what is happening in the moment when I am explaining the 'rules' isn't important -- but it is -- it sets up how people engage in the event. So – I was very complementary about their work and also told them clearly that in these other moments they are making what I have to do really hard. (Especially right now because I am so sick.) And I took one of them aside privately and told him that jumping up and down behind me during that section (!) had been just plain rude and I had greater expectations from him than that.

February 21, 2003

We did good tonight. Well, we've been doing good every night, but (again) something special happened tonight, I think. Maybe its because there were two very unexpected interventions....

Another almost full house. Must have been 85 or so out of 90. And again, as last night, a VERY mixed audience. Lots of school kids elementary to high school (mostly high school) and also about 30% adults. Very diverse audience. All the outreach has paid off, big time.

An intervention from a young man – a Filipino – he replaced Jack when Jack is about to get beat up. And he pulled a fake knife out of his sleeve. I think it was a pair of chopsticks, wrapped in paper, like you get at a restaurant. And he started yelling about 'Chink power' at Chris, and about how we can't let

ourselves be pushed around anymore. It was an extremely violent response. And the first use of a weapon in the Forums. (It was the only use of a weapon.) It was very brave of him to do, I think, because it was so true.

He talked about how kids carry weapons outside of school, because it's the only way to not get targeted. He talked briefly about the harassment of Filipinos – and I know there is tension in Sir Charles Tupper between groups and the Filipino students. I asked him, what happens if you stab Chris? His response: 'I spend a long time in jail'.

There is a feature article in the Vancouver Sun today. Page A3. A study has found a direct link between current US Foreign policy and the rise of youth violence in the US (and I would suggest, Canada). Side by side are photos of George Bush and Reena Virk (the girl who got killed a few years ago by her school-mates). I referenced the article. He is telling us the truth. What do we do?

His intervention did lead to other ways to get out of that moment – it spurred the audience into seeking non-violent actions like Joanne or Scott disarming Chris, or Nick deciding, when he sees the threesome coming around the corner to just get the two of them the hell out of there.

Later in the evening a girl replaced Mary when Jack is trying to connect with everyone on the stairs, before he jumps. She stopped and talked to him. And then she did something no one else has done in any of these Forums: she got his shoes off the hook (the wire) on the ceiling. They are there, throughout, always in reach; symbol of his humiliation. No one has ever got them. It was very beautiful.

The crowd gave the cast a lengthy standing ovation tonight. They deserved it.

Tomorrow morning we start the 'climb' (another one??) to the web cast. The cameras and remote studio arrive, sound equipment. We put body mikes on the actors from now on, investigate camera angles....here we go!

I am really tired. Something happened to me tonight at the end. I was wrapping up and a wave of emotion, overwhelming, I had to stop two or three times. I was going to just burst into tears. Just 'out there', with all these people trying to figure out the world. When you are Joking there is so much energy flying around. It was scary, and also OK. I think in the end it was OK – to be weighted with the emotion of the night – in front of all these really tough teenagers. OK to be this vulnerable old(er) guy.

Interestingly, after I pulled myself together in the green room and came out, a whole whack of them were waiting there for me. There were lots of gifts tonight.

February 22, 2003

So much today, yet again.

Six television cameras, from Independent Community Television (ICTV) and SHAW CABLE, sound, a mobile studio and all the cabling attached to that, six computers (some from Headlines and some from Indymedia.org) logged into the school's internet system and all the cabling attached to that – and the 20 people it takes to navigate the equipment. We fed them all. There were 36 of us for lunch and it felt great to do that. Productions operate on their bellies. Mike Keeping, who has directed all but one of our tele / web casts, is directing. Mike and I have done a lot of work together. He is very organized. Of course we have been having meetings for months.

Two shows today. Both of them were rehearsals for the television crews, as well as being sold out public performances.

The 2pm show was a bit flat. We are tired. The Forum went well, though, even though there were, once again, some odd interventions. What do people think? A guy yelled stop in the first scene. He had wanted to make a speech during my introduction (!) and I had asked him not to. So when he yelled 'stop' I already had alarm bells. I ask him who he wants to replace, and he says he is 'a motivational speaker and wants to make a point'. I explain to him that we are here to do a particular thing, and that is to take on the struggles of the characters in the play, and through that, to try to create safety in the world we have created onstage. And so he replaces Nick and starts talking about how he is gay (the character we have built is not) and goes on this anti-homophobic rant with Chris. Of course makes the character Chris uncomfortable. He then he starts to insult Chris (calling him fat, greasy-haired.) I stop the intervention and try to understand what he has done. Is he trying to get 'beat up'? It feels like a long time ago now and its hard to remember a lot of what he said clearly. He went on and on about motivational speaking and homophobia until I just cut him off, thanked him, and got him off stage.

Its not that I don't think that homophobia is an important issue. It is and I have done numerous projects and sat on many panels about it. A Forum Theatre event, though, is not a platform for an individual. It is a venue to dialogue. This guy took the stage and wanted to monologue. Part of my responsibility in creating a space where active dialogue can happen is to ensure that people do not do what he did.

About 30 minutes after this encounter he and his son (I believe) who kept wanting to make comments from the house during the afternoon, left. He returned at dinner, (looking for me, evidently) and talked with some of the cast. He was upset that there was no recognition of gay issues in the play. They told him it didn't come up in the workshops. This is true. And a project like this can't be about everything. We wanted to tell a coherent story -- not make a shopping list of issues. When he started to critique their acting skills,



they evidently just all got up and left him standing there. Good for them, I say.

The evening performance was sold out. A very lively crowd – so different again. Lots of ages, races. Again at least 80% were new to Forum Theatre.

We had a wonderful night. I had talked with the cast again about rediscovering the emotional connection to the material and they took it to heart. It brought a lot of the play back to life. And there were some lovely interventions, in particular from a young First Nations man I know from Prince George (who is living here now)

I am going to skip to the end: in the final scene, after Jack has died, he placed Scott on the stairs. In a very loving way he took his own responsibility for what had happened and then, when Chris and Joanne arrived, he did something no one has ever done before. He stood up on the stairs. It was a simple act, which brought him to the same level as Chris. And he started asking if they were going to go to the funeral. (Right, of course, the whole school is going to the funeral.) Chris doesn't want to go because everyone is going to blame him. This young guy tells him that he will have to live through that, they all will. He is healing the group with love.

Now, I know this guy – I know where he has come from and can see who he is turning into. There is more going on for me in this moment than just this intervention. He was a participant in a **THEATRE FOR LIVING** workshop for young offenders in Prince George in 1999. He is completely engaged and 'singing' onstage and the cast and the audience love it. I can tell by how they respond to him – the scene becomes very real.

They did great work tonight throughout.

February 23, 2003

We are done. Another huge day, in a long line of huge days.

We arrived at 10:30 AM and had two hours to work the web actors and clean up a couple of scenes. In the midst of this final tech work around the cameras and sound and getting signal streaming, the chat space up and running, the web actors logged in, etc. etc...

We (Sandra, Melissa, Shannon and I) fed each of the web actors interventions – a chance for them to feel what it is like to try to do something on someone else's behalf. Their challenge is to get their hearts open, able to find the desire to do something they might not agree with. This can happen when you are an intermediary for an intervention from someone else. As a director I can help them figure out how to do this, and so we have some rehearsal time.

Everything was going along well and then, we were at the computers trying to sort out the logistics of how, if a web actor is occupied, do the other people

in the chat space know that and not try to connect with them. The preference was that they would become invisible, but that wasn't possible. We had the idea that they could rename themselves, with 'busy' after their name. This seemed so simple. We did it and the system saw it as 'bot behaviour', robot behaviour, a program pretending to be a person, spamming the chat. It locked us out of our own chat space. Permanently, we thought, 45 minutes before going to air!

Freezing us evidently, also meant that no one else could get into the viewing and chat area up until about 15 minutes before air time when the system did unfreeze on its own. We still don't know why. One of the many mysterious vagaries of trying new technology.

Breathing again, I had a chat with the cast about us all knowing this is the final performance, but cautioned them to just keep doing what they have been doing and not to spend the show saying goodbye to moments. And away we went.

Tele / web casts are always edgy. I started nervous. Strange, because I have become quite comfortable joking this piece. Its knowing that it is going to tape, I think, and that *this one performance* is going to be what we get to show people. It becomes what the project will be remembered as.

As usual there was no shortage of interventions, but not as diverse an audience as we have had through most of the run. Also fewer youth than there have been.

- In fact, now that I have seen the tape I know that all of the audience (non-web) interventions were made by people who were Caucasian. This might seem like an odd thing to bring up, but the project was very diverse and audiences, and interveners were always very diverse. When people see the only taped version of the production, it will not appear that way. I have no idea why this would be the case for this final performance. It would be an interesting thing to figure out.

An elderly woman made an intervention fairly early on (and she also made the final intervention), she seems to have arthritis or something, its hard for her to move, and she also speaks in a kind of loud whisper. She replaced Mary both times. And both times let her emotions surface. Not on the stage to 'act' this woman, she really was there to try to figure out how to deal with the moment, how to engage in the struggle of the character – and of course, the cast can work with this. Both interventions were about Mary being able, not just to speak her mind, but to express herself fully – her outrage, her fear, her pain. To “say words” instead of be silent. They were both very powerful moments.

This woman came to me after and explained that her grandson had committed suicide because of bullying. She really wants the pervasive silence, which she understands too well, to be broken.

Interventions started coming in from the web about a third into the event. The web actors tell me that people wanted to watch it but not necessarily participate. The students in Regina did come on board, and there were some powerful interventions from them.

This is an important element to me. Why try to take it global? Because it really makes it possible to make the larger connections, that the issue is a community issue and demands a community response. That it is possible to track a rise in youth violence that correlates directly to US Foreign Policy and to say it on a global level.

Unfortunately, our contacts in Australia never appeared.<sup>17</sup> I think we need to start creating a 'how to' manual for the web casts – articulate on paper what *does* work and do that again, and target what does *not* work and find solutions. So we don't repeat the same mistakes again.

Indymedia.org reports over 600 requests for streaming signal. According to my own calculations on our web counter, we had 187 hits from a couple of hours before the web cast to when I got home late that night. What this means is that 187 *computers* tried to view and some of them had computer problems and tried to get access multiple times. We are hearing that there were groups around computers of eight (but sometimes up to 30!) people, so we are making a calculation based on 6 people per computer. This would create an approximated web attendance of  $187 * 6 = 1,122$  people in various parts of the world. Because ICTV managed to also get the show broadcast on SHAW Cable (not live), we also estimate another 15,000 saw it on TV.

The web actors were very good. One problem with one intervention, something that, perhaps I was not clear enough about when I was rehearsing with them, was to be *very* precise about exactly where the person wants the intervention to start from. One of the web actors started in the midst of a very violent moment and when I questioned her about it after, it turned out that it could have been 'anywhere around the shoes'. But timing is everything and a live intervener would be forced to select the moment. The web actor should insist in chat that the person do that. In this instance starting before the actual violence began would have changed the outcome tremendously.

Yes, this is a weakness in tele / web casts – the interventions are interpreted. But we reach such a wide audience with a kind of material just doesn't usually make it to TV. Also, the web casts have another important factor: we are claiming our ownership of the internet. The technology is ours for us to use, and we must, we have a responsibility, I think, to use it for work like this. The more we do it, the more we learn about how to do it and inspire others to also do it.

Dylan Mazur, Headlines Executive Assistant who functioned as Production Manager on this project has written a short report of pulling the web cast together:

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<sup>17</sup> We did hear from them. They had their own technical difficulties on their end.

## The Webcast

Discussions about the telecast and webcast for this project began in mid-November. In the past couple of years, Shaw Cable abandoned their commitment to 'community access' television. Therefore, if a telecast was to happen, a new broadcaster had to be found. We approached Patrice Ramsay, Development Officer, at The Knowledge Network about airing **Don't Say a Word** in late February. Although the project fit well within their mandate, they did not have the resources nor the airtime for a late-February broadcast. As MuchMusic had declined<sup>18</sup>, and both CBC and CTV were not a possibility, it was decided that the telecast would not happen.

The next step was to begin the planning for the webcast. We approached Scott Nelson, owner of a webcasting company called Memecast, to coordinate the computer portion of the webcast. Mike Keeping, a television director at Shaw Cable, was brought on to the project on a freelance basis. Mike has been the TV Director for all but one of Headlines' telecasts. His role was to produce and direct the shooting for the webcast. Mike Crowhusrt of Cunning Crow Designs, was asked to create the interface between the webcast and Headlines' website.

Once the personnel were in place, we needed to find the equipment for the webcast, most importantly, the streaming video server. Scott Nelson contacted IndyMedia in Seattle, to see if their streaming server, which had been used for the **THIR\$TY** webcast, was still available. After many attempts to contact them were met with no response, it became clear that another streaming server host needed to be found. We approached a number of service providers including, Telus, Shaw, NetNation, On-line Broadcasting, CBC Radio-Three, The Knowledge Network, UBC Computer Services, about the possibility of an in-kind donation of space on their streaming server. Although many of them were enthusiastic about the project, they simply were not able (or willing, in some cases) to accommodate our request. It was now mid-to-late-January, and we had no means of webcasting the show.

Scott Nelson then suggested using the streaming server located at Simon Fraser University Harbour Centre. This was a server that IndyMedia Vancouver, as well as a number of other community organizations, have used for press conferences and webcasts. Although space on this server wasn't going to be free, it was, however, less than 10% the cost of using a 'commercial' streaming server. Despite the fact that this server would restrict the number of simultaneous viewers to 400, we decided that it was, at that point, the only option.

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<sup>18</sup> Prem Gill at CityTV had tried to broker a relationship with them on the project.

Throughout the period of searching for a streaming server, we continued extensive outreach to schools across Canada and Australia. The idea behind this, was to have the webcast be a forum through which students, teachers, parents etc. could share their thoughts and concerns about violence in their own schools. We encouraged schools to assemble groups of students and teachers at computer terminals to take part in the webcast. We contacted the following educators about participating in the webcast:

- Victor Tanti at the Edmonton School Board
- Lori Aitcheson at the Regina Board of Education
- Mary Hall at Safe Schools Manitoba
- Bill Byrd at Safe Schools at the Toronto District School Board
- Suzanne Humphries at the Newfoundland School Board

All of these contacts were very enthusiastic about the project. They felt that it was a very innovative tool for addressing a number of issues around violence in their schools. They all offered to help us with the webcast by contacting teachers and students, to encourage them to take part. We also hoped to include students and teachers from other parts of the world in the webcast. It turned out that most of Australia would receive the webcast during the school day. We contacted Leona Dolan, Coordinator for the International Program, at the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (BCTF) to gain contacts in Australia. Subsequently, we contacted the Australian Education Union's (AEU) provincial office in Melbourne. The AEU agreed to help us out on the project by contacting a number of secondary schools in the province of Victoria, to see if there would be interest in participating in the webcast. A few days later, we received an email from David Barclay, Principal of Dromana Secondary College, saying that the School was very keen to participate. Mr. Barclay said that the School would dedicate two of their computer rooms for viewing the webcast. This meant that nearly 100 students would participate on 50 computer terminals.

Three weeks before opening, we received an email from Geoff Scott of Independent Community Television (ICTV), asking if we would be interested in having **Don't Say a Word** telecast on Shaw Cable. It turned out that ICTV had recently been awarded a decision by the CRTC, forcing Shaw Cable to grant ICTV, and other community members, access to airtime. Naturally, we said yes, and quickly began to coordinate the logistics with Geoff and Mike Keeping. Geoff and Mike recruited a volunteer crew made up of ICTV members and freelance technicians. Shaw Cable agreed to loan their mobile truck, as well as cameras, tripods, cable etc. for the shoot. When ICTV approached us with the idea of a telecast, we had hoped that the play would go live to air. Unfortunately, the equipment that would allow for a live broadcast, Shaw's LiveEye, was not available. Therefore, we would go live-to-tape for broadcast on Shaw Cable at a later date.

As the webcast drew closer, we continued to work with Mike Crowhurst and Scott Nelson on the interface. In order for web viewers to participate and interact with the play, we needed to create a single web page that contained both a chat window and a streaming video window. It was decided that we

would use IndyMedia's chat interface for our chat space, and use Quicktime as the streaming video software. Having learned from previous webcasts, we knew that it was imperative that the interface for the webcast be simple and user-friendly. Creating a simple interface became incredibly complex. We continued to work diligently with Mike Crowhurst to create a page that would be accessible for those who had little or no computer knowledge. With only four days left before the webcast, Mike completed the interface: a simple two-step procedure. Via Headlines' website, Step One would load the chat space on the left-hand side of ones' screen, and Step Two would load the streaming video on the right-hand side.

Once the interface was completed, we brought in our four Web Actors and Mid-point Joker to discuss how the webcast would work, and review the interface.

After nearly three months of coordination, the weekend of the webcast had arrived. The two performances on Saturday served as test-runs for both the camera and sound crew as well as the webcast team. Over twenty crew showed-up on Saturday morning to set up the mobile, five cameras, eight microphones, six computer terminals, and miles of cable. We had only four hours to set-up before the box office opened. The set-up went like clockwork, and by show time, we were ready.

Throughout the first Saturday performance, we had to address a few technical problems such as audio distortion, video dropouts, and computer failure. By the second performance, most of the glitches were corrected, and we were ready for the next day's webcast. The morning of the webcast, we brought in our Web Actors and Mid-point Joker to practice doing interventions with the cast. Meanwhile, the camera crew and the web crew worked to correct any last-minute problems. With less than a half-hour to show time, as the audience began to fill the theatre, the chat space we were using for the webcast booted all of our computers off its site. This meant that all of our viewers would not be able to participate in the webcast. The mood became tense as the web crew worked frantically to fix the problem. After twenty minutes of panic, with only five minutes left before show time, we were able to re-establish our connection with the chat space.

The webcast went fairly well. The chat space was very active, and we took a number of interventions from across the country. Unfortunately, a few of the groups that we'd been in contact with, including the schools in Australia, did not participate. During the webcast, we received feedback from a number of participants that they could only get the chat space and not the video, or video but no sound, or sound but no video... Periodically, the low bandwidth video signal cut in and out, leaving a number of participants with sporadic coverage.

A post mortem of the webcast leaves us with a number of considerations. For the success of future webcasts, it will be essential to establish a relationship with a communications company who would be willing, based on the merits of our work, to donate space on a streaming video server as well as technical

assistance during the webcast. With **Don't Say a Word**, the time involved in searching for a server could have been better used for promotion and outreach. In terms of outreach for the webcast, we found that it was important to maintain contact with the potential participants. For most of the people we contacted, this was to be the first time viewing a webcast let alone actively participating in one. Because the schools planned to gather a group of students together on a weekend to view the webcast, it took a lot of organizing. In the end, a few of the schools, including those in Australia, were unable to participate due to organizational and technical reasons on their end.

At this point in time, the technology being used for webcasting is in its infancy. It proved to be the biggest stumbling block for participants. Because there is no uniformity in computer hardware or software, each participant is limited by their own computer set-up. This, unfortunately, is beyond our control. Despite the technical barriers, we continue to better understand and overcome them with each webcast.

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Feedback from this last performance has been very, very positive, despite my own sense that I was a little 'fractured', having too many different things to think about.

We had a final circle with the performing company, apprentices, Headlines' staff – this went on for over an hour. In it many of them talked about how the entire project had been so much fun (we did laugh a lot), and also at the same time, one of the most important things they had ever done. I talked with them about being ready, if that is possible, for a hole that is going to open up. I encouraged them to keep talking with each other. We have also alerted their vice-principals to keep an eye on them, and of course they can call any of us.

The people at Independent Community Television have graciously offered to host a screening of the show for all of us next Saturday night. So it will be a chance to get together again, touch base. They all really want to do this.

We did good.

I had a meeting with Sheila James, Headlines' Canada Council Theatre Officer today. She saw the web cast performance live in the theatre and loved it. She commented on the use of space and also the open-ness of the cast, about how it wasn't until after we were done and she could see them as themselves that she understood fully that they had been deep in character for the two hours, and how impressed she was with them as actors, and also how emotionally committed their work had been – so very moving.

She mentioned that she has seen a lot of anti-bullying theatre and that "Don't say a Word" was so realistic and (I would then extrapolate) effective. She recognizes the production's artistic merit. She asked if it could tour.

Of course it doesn't take too long into that conversation to hit the reality that the cast are in school and cannot leave for the kinds of time periods that a tour requires and also that when they *can* leave, school is not in session and so schools cannot host the production.

We also discussed the lack of response from the theatre community (3 people, as far as I know, and I was there every night) came to see it: Stephen Heatley from UBC, Judith Marcuse from DanceArts and Colin Thomas (but not as a reviewer – as a friend). She shares my dismay over this but for reasons I had not considered: when it comes time to jury Headlines' work, this production will be unknown except by the word of mouth about it and the preview press it got (it got zero theatre reviews – not that we didn't try). She can make comment but her opinions do not carry the same weight as the peer jury. With no chance of a jury member having seen the company's *only* mainstage work this year, the discussion becomes theoretical, and contributes to the likelihood of continued zero increases in operating funding.

That said, I am very proud of **Don't Say a Word**. We are getting e-mails from people around the world. One example? This came today:

Mr. Diamond, I am an Assistant Professor of Theater in Jackson Tennessee, originally from Kenya, with a strong interest in Theater for Development. In three weeks time, I will be delivering a colloquium presentation on Theater for Development in California and I would love to include references to your "Don't Say a Word" project. It was fascinating and would undoubtedly enhance my premise that truly meaningful and powerful work is being done through developmental theater. I, therefore, first ask for permission to refer to your project and, secondly, request a detailed account of the experience including audience responses and so on, if such a record exists. I applaud you and your organization on the fine work you are doing and I look forward to hearing back from you. Jonathan Awori, M.F.A.

Yes, I will send him this report, of course.





**Indication of Interest**  
**(return to Headlines NO LATER THAN December 2, 2002)**

YES, I am interested in being considered for Headlines **Theatre's Anti-bullying Mainstage Project** (working title) as: (mark an 'x' for as many as apply). Please select only those positions that truly interest you.

- \_\_\_\_\_ an actor (5 people) (\$400.00/week \* 4 weeks)  
 Creation/rehearsal period @ Tupper Secondary 419 East 24<sup>th</sup> Ave.  
 Jan. 28, 29, 30, 31, Feb. 4, 5, 6, 7, (4:00 PM - 9:30 PM) dinner supplied  
 Feb. 11, 12 (afternoon and evening -- times TBA)  
 Feb 1, 2, 8, 9 (10am - 6pm)  
 Performances: Feb. 13, 14, 16, 20, 21, 23 @ 8pm, Feb. 15, 22 @ 2pm and 8pm.
- \_\_\_\_\_ a stage management apprentice  
 (1 person, working with prof. stage manager) fee, dates and times same as actors
- \_\_\_\_\_ a design apprentice (2 people, \$500/person, working with prof. designer)  
 Jan. 28 - Feb 12 any meetings outside school except possibly Feb 11 and 12
- \_\_\_\_\_ Stage Crew **and/or** Front of House (1 person - \$500)  
 Feb. 11, 12 (afternoon and evening -- times TBA)  
 Performances: Feb. 13, 14, 15, 16, 20, 21, 22, 23 (as above)

I understand that a head and shoulders photo will be taken of me to facilitate the selection process.

I understand and agree that it will be my responsibility to attend all rehearsals and performances, (actors and stage manager only) and that I might be required to do media interviews (print, radio and/or television). I also understand and agree that one performance may be broadcast live on community television and/or the web.

Food allergies/requirements:

\_\_\_\_\_

Student name

\_\_\_\_\_

Parent or Guardian name

\_\_\_\_\_

(print)

\_\_\_\_\_

(print)

\_\_\_\_\_

(signature)

\_\_\_\_\_

(signature)

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(date)

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(date)

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(phone)

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(phone)

If you have questions, please call or e-mail.

Return form to: David Diamond, Artistic and Managing Director  
 Headlines Theatre  
 #323-350 East 2nd Ave.  
 Vancouver, BC Canada V5T 4R8  
 (604) 871-0508 (ph) (604) 871-0209 (fax)  
 e-mail: [david@headlinestheatre.com](mailto:david@headlinestheatre.com)

check out our web site: <http://www.headlinestheatre.com>