

NEW PLAY DEVELOPMENT BREAKOUT ROOM

Part 1: Introductions

- Hello Everyone, my name is Taylor and I'm a playwright, theatre director, am completing a PhD in theatre at the University of Guelph, and teach as a sessional theatre professor at Western University and the University of Waterloo.
- While land acknowledgements are certainly imperfect, I do want to acknowledge I am coming to you in my carbon reality from Galt in Cambridge, Ontario, which is located on Treaty 4, also known as the Haldimand Tract, the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, and Neutral indigenous peoples. As a settler, I am a guest on this territory. For accessibility I also want to offer that I'm a white woman with long brown hair and brown eyes.
- I am deeply curious about new play creation methodology and connections to the environment in a variety of forms.
- I look forward to getting to know you better in just a minute, but before we start with introductions I thought we could start with a short writing prompt and by writing prompt, I mean a prompt for anyone interested in new play creation in any form, so please let this prompt take you where you will. If your exploration manifests in movement, beautiful. If it manifests in a drawing, lovely. If it manifests in a scene, wonderful. If it manifests in something else entirely, that is fabulous too. Just take this where you will and you can make this as individual and personal or as outward and observational as you like. Fiction and non-fiction, if there is a difference for you, are all welcome.
- First we'll start with a little breathing exercise. If available, find your feet flat on the floor. Take a deep breath in and out. Another one in and out. And a third one, in and out. Now close your eyes for a second. Imagine for yourself an important place to you, any place at all is completely fine. Maybe this is somewhere near where you live now. Maybe this is somewhere you grew up around. Maybe this is a place you've only ever read about and want to visit one day. Take a second to notice what you see around you. What does it look like? What do you see around you? What sounds exist in this space? Imagine for a second that your head is a microphone and what do you hear? If you were to reach out and touch this place, what would it feel like? How might the parts of what you see feel in your hands? What does this place smell like? What do you notice in your nose? How does this smell make you feel? If you could safely taste this place, what do you think it would taste like?
- Now before you open your eyes, have one more scan of this place and take another breath in. I want you to use this place and your sensorial experience of this place as your writing prompt. I'm going to set a timer for just three minutes and all you need to do is keep your hands moving, or your body moving if you'd rather incorporate movement, whatever form of play creation comes up for you. And there are no rights and wrongs and you will not be required to share what you are exactly writing, so no fear of that. And here we go, One two and go.
- Time's up! Ok thank you everyone.
- Now, let's take a minute to go around and introduce yourselves. Please feel free to share:
 - Name
 - Position / Affiliation
 - Any questions you are interested in exploring here today with the group
 - If you're comfortable, something about the place you imagined and what you wrote

I'm going to go through some areas that could perhaps find a way to a syllabus on new play creation, but this is to open up conversation and questions. It's certainly not a show and tell, so please share if you have other resources related to these topics or if these topics open up other questions or reflections for you as we go on.

Part 2: Greenturgy Questions

Addressing Environmental Topics in Theatre by Using Greenturgy

02 January 2018

Holly Derr

<https://howlround.com/addressing-environmental-topics-theatre-using-greenturgy>

- What is the broader environment of our works, whether manifested onstage or not?
- What are the parallels between the natural world of the play and where the play is being produced?
- What are the environmental impacts of the choices made by characters, intentional, anticipated or otherwise?
- What are the connections, literal and metaphorical, between the natural world of our plays and the various natural worlds of our audience?

Part 3: Playwrights Invested in Answering Greenturgy Questions

Canadian Theatre Review

Volume 144, Fall 2010

University of Toronto Press

"Yes to Everything"—A Conversation about Theatre and Ecology
with Daniel Brooks, Marie Clements, Kendra Fanconi, and Karen Hines

- Gray: Daniel's *The Eco Show*—another very complex and nuanced play, where, once again, what is under attack is, essentially, a toxic culture. In *The Eco Show*, though, this shows up in the malaise of a curious little family of four: Hamm, Gwen, and their two kids—Fifi and Joe. Daniel, why did you choose to provide such a domestic setting for a play about ecological devastation?
- Brooks: Because, I guess, as I was beginning to try to find a way to address the anxieties that I felt, I was also—as a parent—very interested in the difference between the content of what one says to a child and the tone in which one says it. The difference between information and tone was something that I was really interested in, and I think that this led to the kind of writing that I did around the parenting in that play.
- Gray: On the topic of parenting, Hamm, the father, has been interpreted by some as a man whose focus on irreversible ecological ruin tends to render him insensitive to the members of his own family, as if he's a kind of eco-fascist in his own home. And yet Hamm's longings for ecological balance, and his attempts to rein in his family's carbon footprint are also genuine, aren't they?
- Brooks: Yeah, sure. I was also very interested in exploring a metaphor of an ecosystem, psychologically as well as biologically, and also sociologically. Really, the metaphor that guided me was that of an ecosystem and the interrelationship between organisms in a system and the interrelationships in language—how our language is a kind of ecosystem—and how a family is a kind of ecosystem. I was very captivated by that metaphor.

Part 4: Specific Lessons from the Pandemic

Theatre for a Climate Crisis in a Globalized World
A Model for Local Action
27 April 2020

<https://howlround.com/theatre-climate-crisis-globalized-world>

- What lessons can the theatre draw from the isolation spurred by this pandemic, and how might we emerge prepared to tell the stories of the climate crisis on a local and global scale?
- **Systems of extraction and exploitation are the source of the climate crisis, and while some of these have slowed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the pandemic has also made tangible some of the differential harm caused by environmental degradation.** Carbon emissions may have temporarily fallen, but cumulative air pollution has already weakened the lungs of millions of people around the world, primarily poor people and people of color, increasing their vulnerability to COVID-19. Environmental racism and fossil-fuel capitalism are a deadly combination. But while the pandemic itself is an unmitigated tragedy, there are valuable lessons to be gleaned from our collective response. It is heartening to know that we can extend empathy around the world, retaining a compassionate global outlook while caring for those in physical proximity to us. We can avoid carbon-intensive long distance transportation and limit the globalized exchange of commodities while reinvesting in our physical communities. **In this time of crisis, Mutual Aid Groups have sprung up all over, a local model in which people care for those who are near them. But when this period of isolation ends, where are we to funnel this empathy? How will we maintain these local networks?**

Part 5: Environmentalism and Improvisations

Canadian Theatre Review
Volume 147, Summer 2011
University of Toronto Press
Julia Lane

- "Theatrical improvisation is founded on making and receiving "offers," so this is where the workshop begins . . . When the participants in my workshop included an awareness of their surroundings, it increased the immediacy of their offers. Suddenly, the trees, the ground, the sounds of birds, the water ten feet away all became fodder for initiating scenes."

Part 6: Indigenous Lessons

Yvette Nolan's Unplugging & Medicine Shows

"Medicine, in my community, is not about curing, not even really about healing. Medicine is about connection, about health. Many of the First Nations attach teachings to the Medicine Wheel: a circle that embraces the directions, the seasons, the ages of a human being, the grandfather teachings. The Medicine of the Wheel is that it endeavours to teach us to apprehend the interconnectedness of all things"

"I talk about the fact that many Indigenous people resist calling themselves Canadian because we do not feel a part of the narrative of this land, and even as I am saying it I am thinking about the medicine of telling our stories, in our way, to the others who live here on this land with us. "It's about becoming," I say to my seatmate, "what this place is going to become when our stories become visible."