

Stories of Windsor: mapping and mining narratives of place through interdisciplinary performance

**Terry Sefton, Windsor
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This project examines the potency of shared stories provoked by specificity of place, and how these stories can be mined for new meanings through re-creative performance.

Description

This project investigates the primacy of place in memory, and how the stories we tell are rooted in those places of fascination. Terry Sefton (cellist) and I (dancer) translate and re-create stories, using improvised music and dance. We collect stories from volunteers, using *carto-elicitation*; the act of locating a spot on a map that triggers a personal narrative. These stories may be tales of personal experience, identity, or family history, that are connected to a specific location, either a 'real' place of daily life, or the 'imaginary' terrain of memory – streets or houses or fields that may no longer exist. This project examines the potency of shared stories provoked by specificity of place, and how these stories can be mined for new meanings through re-creative performance. The gallery visitors of this exhibition can contribute their own story. To take part, they simply target a place that holds a potent memory and submit a short story of something that happened there. A 'Windsor Story' does not need to have happened in Windsor. Windsor may be where they are today, but their story may escape city limits, connecting Windsor to the world. These contributed mapped locations and stories create a 'bank' of narratives that Kathryn and Terry use to create improvised, collaborative, performances. Each performance is video recorded and uploaded to the gallery at regular intervals and I will perform Windsor Stories live. 2017 Art Gallery of Windsor's Triennial of Contemporary Art, (October 21, 2017 – January 28, 2018).

History

During several residencies at the University of Regina and The University of Windsor, Terry and I have used maps, images, text, improvised sound and movement, to develop strategies of asynchronous, polyphonic, and parallel storytelling. We have worked with students, faculty and community members during workshops and performances to elicit stories and create a poetics of sound and dance/theatre. This will now extend to the exhibition context which will embrace a technological component as a partner in this creative capture of narratives. Throughout the period that the exhibition is open, we will continue to collect stories and images via an online platform that will allow visitors to 'pin' their stories to a map of Windsor. In this way we are exploring both personal and collective narratives that are linked to place, time and memory. This opportunity to create multiple renderings through a variety of performances, video captures and written word, will allow Terry and I to deeply refine this method of *carto-elicitation* and will give us the knowledge and practice to extend this exhibition/performance to other cities in Canada.

Impacts and Benefits

Through this process of mapping and mining stories we participate as anthropological performers in celebrating the social fabric of Windsor.

By collecting and creatively retelling these stories both in live performance and through video capture we will remind both the residents and the visitors of Windsor that narratives are embedded in place and surface in the sharing. We propose that this is not only a celebratory event within the context of Windsor's Triennial initiatives but also a community building event as we understand the potency of stories as a trigger to ignite and share more stories. This is built into both the dynamic structure of the exhibition and the performance as the length of this exhibition allows for the stories to accrue and be archived. 5 performances in addition to many open rehearsals and pop up performances will ensure a dynamic aspect of growth and accumulation of narratives for Terry Sefton and myself to perform and archive in the form of video capture displayed in the Windsor Contemporary Art Gallery.

Future Prospects

Terry and I hope to be able to extend this form of capturing and igniting a community through improvisational interdisciplinary performance to other locations. Windsor will provide us with the knowledge and expertise in both transferring the local stories through performance as well as capturing them and presenting in the form of video capture. This Form will then be easily transferrable to other locations and we hope to continue this work as we explore a variety of cities and towns in Canada with stories yet to be told in this unique way.

Community Building

Being Part of this project will allow us to interface with many other artists who are also participating in the triennial exhibition and to interface with gallery visitors over an extended period of time. Within the range of contexts: open rehearsals, pop up performances, durational performances, Art Talks and formal captured performances we will develop and extend our performative language. We will also be contributing to the formal catalogue to be published during the exhibition by way of a co authored essay which will lay bare our processes and our thoughts around the power of narratives embedded in place.

Practicalities

The exhibition component of this project will comprise of two video screens, one that will collect stories offered by visitors in the gallery which are 'pinned' to a digital map. The second screen will play the recorded performances of these stories re interpreted through improvisational dance/theatre and cello.

I will be visiting Windsor 4 times throughout the Fall and Winter and will work with Terry in the Studio to record performed stories to upload onto video screen number two as well as to perform live in the gallery where we couple our performances with conversations with audience members around our process and the power of shared stories as triggers, and the re telling of stories through creative and performative languages. The budget will reflect these 4 visits in the form of airfare.

Bios:

Terry Sefton began playing professionally with the Regina Symphony while still in her teens, and worked with the BBC Welsh Orchestra, the Canadian Opera Company, and Orchestra London Canada for over 30 years. She has performed as a chamber musician in Canada, the US, Britain, and France. Over many years, she has worked with contemporary composers, developing and performing new works, at a number of new music venues including Concerts de Musique Contemporaine in Montreal, the Music Gallery in Toronto, and Aeolian Hall and Museum London in London, Ontario, and the Listening Lab in Regina, Saskatchewan. Terry most recently commissioned new works by composers Martin Kutnowski (St. Thomas University, 2016) and Bentley Jarvis (Ontario College of Art and Design University, 2015), and developed improvised performances of *carto-elicitation* with Kathryn Ricketts (University of Regina, 2016; University of Windsor, 2017). Terry Sefton holds a Bachelor of Music in Performance from McGill University, a Master of Education from University of Western Ontario, and a PhD from University of Toronto. Dr. Sefton is Associate Professor at the University of Windsor.

Kathryn Ricketts has been working for the past 35 years in the field of movement, theatre and visual arts, presenting throughout Europe, South America, Africa and Canada. Her work in schools, galleries and community centers focuses on social /political issues with movement, theatre, creative writing and visual art as the languages. Her Doctoral research furthered this into areas of literacy, embodiment and cultural studies with a method she has coined Embodied Poetic Narrative. She is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Education in the University of Regina as the chair of the Dance area. She runs The Listening Lab, a visual and performing arts 'incubator' and presents exhibitions and performances in her loft in the John Deere Tractor Building.