



Ambitious production to close off Theater Festival

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connection between everyone, from humans to animals to plants, will be explored in the of Theatre's final play of the Alternative Theater Festival, "As The Globe Warms," written by ing stand up novelist Heather Woodbury and directed by Assistant Professor Michael The Globe Warms" will run on July 6-7, 13-14 and 20-21 at 8 p.m. in the Wertheim Performing Admission is free, with a suggested donation of \$10.

a six two-hour installments over three weeks, the play tackles many issues, such as global d its ever-growing consequences by following the work of one scientist who attempts to angered species of frog, leading to unexpected consequences for everyone in the town in es.

endangered species are animals though," explained Yawney. "This is a play about the World is well as the world wide web of life. So often the technological environment that unites us Internet and the ecological environment that unites us through the processes of the d are seen as separate. Heather's brilliance is in seeing how much these two environments mirror each other."

The idea for the play's plot came to Woodbury after picking up "The Weather Makers: The History and Future Impact of Climate Change" by Tim Flannery. While reading, Woodbury saw a photo of the Platypus frog that had given birth to another frog in its mouth; the accompanying text revealed that this species, native to Australia, was now extinct because of global warming.

"It moved me and, at the same time, I could see a lot of people having trouble economically, as well as the changes in the economic climate and the political climate and our relationship to the natural world and our relationship to animals," said Woodbury. "I wanted to make a story that was entertaining, as cable television that tackled these issues."

Woodbury, whose trademark has become "Performance Novels," first with "What Ever" in 1994 and "A Tale of Two Cities" in 2006, will act out at least 200 characters as well as a large number of animals. "It's like an adult game of pretend. This format enables me to play scores and scores of characters and tell lavish, ambitious stories in a minimalist scale. Otherwise, I'd have to have a big, high cost production

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with a cast of thousands,” said Yawney.

“The biggest surprise is that even though Heather’s performances look so spontaneous and even improvised, she is incredibly disciplined in crafting the production; she leaves nothing to chance. Her performance is filled with hilarious details that are well worth looking for. The thrill of watching her on stage is that she does everything, even the sound effects come out of her mouth.”

For Yawney, directing an episodic play is nothing new; however, the sheer ambition of Woodbury’s production has been “exciting.”

“I did a lot of serialized plays back in New York. We wanted to make going to the theater fun, in the same way that tuning into television shows or going to see the latest Star Wars film was fun. Episodic theater tends to do that,” said Yawney.

Having known Woodbury for a long time, Yawney has been exposed to her creativity before, while directing Woodbury’s “Antagonist” play and watching her performances in “What Ever.” “When she decided to develop “As the Globe Warms,” I think she wanted someone who could embrace the insanity of such an ambitious work. I think she knew I would not say no to this,” said Yawney.

While preparing herself for the various roles, Woodbury’s biggest challenge has been memorizing the material. “I make recordings of the dialogue and constantly play them while reading along with it, like you would memorize a song by playing constantly,” said Woodbury.

To keep her voice fresh, Woodbury also uses vocal warm ups and downs as well as the occasional period of vocal rest after the performance, techniques she learned from jazz singers and vocal coaches. “In the final scene, I counted 45 voices that I had to mimic so I had to make an audio glossary for myself and try to establish 45 different vocal timbres; it’s something I’ve developed myself by walking around and imitating people or listening to people being interviewed on the radio,” said Woodbury. “It strains the voice more to talk than to sing, so sometimes I go on vocal rest after a performance.”

The ambitious production, which lasts 12 hours total, has also forced Yawney to stretch his imagination to its utmost limits. “It’s like walking a tightrope. Throughout the play we have to tell an epic story using the simplest of means,” said Yawney. “My job is to make the story thrilling in each and every moment; it is hard enough to do that for 90 minutes.”

Woodbury has made sure, however, that those who watch the installments sparingly can enjoy the play as well. “What we have tried to do is craft each installment, so each evening has its own dramatic arc as well, repeating important elements of the plot in future installments, like a recap, so it makes it more satisfying as a writer and performer because it allows for more drama and comedy in each episode,” said Woodbury.

Once one installment is seen, though, Yawney is sure that the play will captivate audiences, and most people will come back because they want to see what happens next.

“I hope people have a good time. There are lots of laughs and shocking plot turns along the way, but I also hope people will think about the world we all live in and maybe think about how to insure it has a long future,” said Yawney.

“I look forward to helping people feel the connection to their lives and immediate concerns and how that connects to each other and the world wide web of life and to all the beautiful life sustained on it and how their lives are not separate from nature, but a part of it,” added Woodbury.

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