

HEATHER WOODBURY'S SMARTPHONE THEATRE

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LOS ANGELES: Heather Woodbury's solo performance novel *As the Globe Warms* - in which she portrays a cornucopia of characters mostly from the American Southwest - wraps up its third season on April 5, at Bootleg Theater in Los Angeles. The epic story has been presented in 30-minute weekly segments since January 2010. At first it unfolded before a live audience in a storefront art gallery, Echo Curio, on Sunset Boulevard - until the space was raided by the Los Angeles Police Department "for the crime of allowing live performances in an art gallery," Woodbury deadpans. That's when the venue changed to Bootleg and Wordspace. Fortunately for subscribers who may not have kept up with the site changes, each segment is recorded for later viewing at www.heatherwoodbury.com

As the Globe Warms is set in Vane Springs, Nev., a fictional burg gasping in the desert heat between Los Angeles and Las Vegas. There arrives Reed Winston Ferris, a "handsome young herpetologist (that's a reptile and amphibian specialist) trying to save the endangered Butterscotch Frog. Meanwhile, Reed's long-distance girlfriend is writing a book about Emma Goldman. A saga of frogs, fidelity, anarachism and Evangelical Christianity unfolds, largely through Woodbury's aptitude for improvising scenarios on the spot - and on camera. "It's a public development process," she reasons.

Her inspiration for this creative method is Charles Dickens, who would read drafts from his serial novels-to-be in the back of a London pub. Woodbury performs on a stool with minimal props. But her narrative has enough intrigue to overwhelm the desire for more sophisticated technical support, and her performance technique allows her to slip and slide from one idiosyncratic character to the next with barely a hiccup.

"It seems to attract young people online," Woodbury adds with a hint of surprise. "The single camera angle and the low production values don't bother them - maybe because that's what they've come to accept on their cell phones."

Woodbury, who has received grants from the NEA/TCG Theatre Residency Program for Playwrights and the Kennedy Center Fund for New American Plays previously created *Tale of 2Cities* (about the Brooklyn and Los Angeles Dodgers, performed by seven actors in 2006 at UCLA Live in Los Angeles and at P.S. 122 in New York), and *What Ever*, a self-described "100-character American Odyssey performed solo by Woodbury around the world and on NPR. She says her creative process starts with "atmosphere and texture," and that the people come later. "The inspiration for the character of Reed came from seeing those deserted housing developments in the Nevada desert, and wondering what it would be like for somebody living in one of those places and what would bring them there," she muses. "I could picture *myself* living there."