

2° of Fear and Desire

Final Report

Headlines Theatre invites you to

2° of fear and desire

Joked by David Diamond

An intimate evening of theatre (without a play) about global warming

February 21 to March 16
Please see date and venue details listed below
Events at 7:00pm

Admission by donation • Reservations recommended • 604.871.0508

Painting by: Art Eco / Layout: Dafne Blanco



The Melusine Foundation



The McLean Foundation



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The short version

This turned into a very large undertaking, considering it was a main stage project that we cancelled.

Headlines Theatre had been planning a project on global warming issues for two years. We were calling it **2° of adaptation**. The focus was, from the very start, going to be our own internal blockages around making core behavioural change.

We had built up a real head of steam with our Working Group¹, many community organizations and 106+ individuals who were working with us on the project and wanting very much to be an active part of something that was about the human dynamics of the issue. This aspect of the process is written about in detail by Dafne Blanco, Headlines' Outreach Coordinator, in her Outreach Report.

For the first time in Headlines' 27 year history, we were unable to raise the funds for a main stage project. There were many rejections but the two that hurt the most were from Arts Partners in Creative Development (Olympics money) and the Climate Action Secretariat of the Province of BC.

We believe that part of the difficulty we encountered was a sense from some funders that the environment is something “out there” that we can go and fix, and that the solutions are “top down”. What this missed was an understanding that *we are the environment*. The adaptations and mitigations that are necessary in the face of climate change lie inside us.

During the build-up to this, we had done three **2° of Fear and Desire** events at the Rhizome Café. These were intended to be small, “human research” workshops in the public realm. The response to them was fantastic, as indicated in the quotes from November, 2007 in the Quotes Sheet, below.

When we cancelled **2° of adaptation** for lack of funds to be able to do the project, there was a great outcry from the many people and organizations who wanted the project to happen. After a day or two of mourning in Headlines' office, it became apparent to us that an evolution of the project was possible, and that the issue was so vitally important, that we had to find a way to continue.

The events really were “an intimate evening of theatre (without a play)”. No actors, no script, no set to speak of (3 chairs or stools), or lights – just me and an audience and our fears, desires and internal voices around issues of global warming. The events were very different each night. They were always challenging in the best of ways. Some went really, really well and a couple of them were very difficult. I am confident, though, that in all of them the people attending left with their minds and hearts buzzing in new and personal ways about the issue, and, in many cases, about what theatre can be. People came to me many times, so enthusiastic, saying that this was the singularly most valuable, profound, useful, insightful event on climate

¹ Columbia Institute, David Suzuki Foundation, Ecojustice, Fraser Basin Council, Pembina Institute, Sierra Club of BC, Society Promoting Environmental Conservation and the Wilderness Committee.

change they had ever attended, and that it would spiral, ripple out way beyond this night. (Details in the full report.)

There were numerous insights each night, but one that came up on more than one occasion, and that people thought was quite profound was about how many of our parents' generation worked so hard to achieve the lifestyle we all enjoy (the same lifestyle that is destroying the planet) and how most parents want their children to have more than they themselves had. How do we navigate this profound change of attitude towards consumption without the message to our parents (and the values they have instilled within us) being that we are rejecting what they worked so hard to achieve? Isn't it the case that part of the difficulty we face is that while the issue seems external, they are actually about values which are deeply personal?

We played to 81% houses, with seating sizes ranging from small, intimate cafés of 40 seats (Wired Monk) to 100 seat venues (Composite Hall and Alice McKay Room at the Vancouver Public Library). When we embarked on these events I had only ever done evenings like this in a theatre setting. I was wary of the café. Having finished, I really liked the café setting for this kind of an event. They were far less formal, and there was also far less separation between the "stage" and the audience, both increasing the intimacy and the engagement, and also, somehow, the sense of risk (in a good way).

The event meets any given community where it is – not where the Joker² might assume the community to be. The event isn't to teach anything – the purpose is to generate thought, dialogue, the challenging of assumptions, often hidden and not discussed. The "depth" of event 'A' can't be compared to the "depth" of event 'B'. It is completely possible that a more radical group that travels deeper, and is used to doing so, is LESS challenged by doing that than a more conservative group that has a more surface journey. Group 'B' might, in fact, have had a relatively more challenging event.

Also, the Jokers' International Day of Action was a great success. There were 44 separate events in 25 countries on 6 continents! A full listing, with reports from Jokers is available here:

http://www.headlinestheatre.com/2Degrees08/jokers_events.htm

We are receiving requests to do more *2° of Fear and Desire* events, from as varied places as the Saltspring Coffee Company on Saltspring Island, to the Fraser Basin Council provincial conference, to the National Arts Centre in Ottawa.

A very big thank you to the Working Group consisting of: Columbia Institute, David Suzuki Foundation, Ecojustice, Fraser Basin Council, Pembina Institute, Sierra Club of BC, Society Promoting Environmental Conservation and the Wilderness Committee. Representatives of these organizations came to numerous planning and input meetings, helped with networking and also attended events to be available as resource people afterwards for audience members who had specific questions.

Thanks also to the funders who did contribute – most of them signing on for the initial *2° of adaptation* and staying committed when it changed to *2° of Fear and Desire*. Their logos are on the front page.

² The Joker is the role I play: think "wild card" in a deck of cards – facilitator, director, animateur.

April 17, 2008

We had a post-mortem meeting with the working group today.

We started with a general discussion of how the project went and also about the difference between “instructive” process and this kind of dialogical process in which the discussion and information each night emerges from the room in that moment. People thought 2° was a very good vehicle for knitting community together vis a vis the global warming issue. Audiences were challenged (both general audience and activists). 2° had the ability to meet audiences where each of them were.

We got a sense in the meeting that if something more was to happen with the project, it would not be a “main stage project” like *2° of adaptation* was going to be, but rather more of these kinds of events. One of the working group wondered about doing them during the build-up into the election, in April of 2010. The timing of this might work for Headlines. What was discussed:

David will work up a budget for 12 more events, (relevant office/admin costs including some PR and Outreach salary, travel, accommodation, per diems, printing, etc.) and approach the working group for assistance with:

1. Money. Both actual cash and help fundraising.
2. Grassroots organizers in up to 12 communities. Some would be Lower Mainland and up the Valley, others in BC.

The local organizers would provide a performance guarantee and a venue. Headlines would supply PR material and PR/Outreach/technical support up to the event. The local organizers (perhaps a coalition of environment groups in each area) would bring out an audience.

Headlines would need two people on the road. David and a Stage/production manager. We would also travel with a sound system.

2° Quotes

“People at the conference really liked that through the experience of *2° of Fear and Desire*, the most important sources of our wasteful life-style were identified. We wouldn't have expected that both the personal and global level could come so nicely together.”

Livia Bizikova, organizer, Research and Practitioner Partnerships for Action on Climate Change: Developing Guidance for Communities, Richmond, BC (March, 2008)

“*2° of Fear and Desire* was the most profound activism I have ever witnessed.”

Molly Caron, Vancouver BC (March, 2008)

“I thoroughly enjoyed *2° of Fear and Desire* and found the interactive concept not only enlightening but it deepened my understanding that we ‘all’ face incredible struggles in taking steps to make significant changes in our lives towards the prevention of global warming. This in turn results in improvements to our environment in not only our Community, City, Province, Country but inevitably, the Universe.”

Heather Fairhead, Vancouver BC (March, 2008)

“I had a great time at *2° of Fear and Desire*. It was quite a new experience for me. The objective is clear I think, following more or less that famous saying "Tell me and I will forget, show me and I may remember, include me and I will understand". The message I took home is: For a change to happen, something inside of every one of us must happen. Something in me must change. I must change. And for me to change, I really need to want to change. I must look at myself in the mirror and decide. It is very helpful to have people around that are asking themselves the same questions. *2°* helps by joining us all, and being our mirror. It takes honesty and sacrifice to change profoundly. I understood that while at *2°* degrees. Thank you very much for the courage and determination to face reality in a very interesting way and inviting us to do the same.

Oliver Lane, Vancouver BC (March, 2006)

“I was at Thursday’s performance of *2°* and had great follow up conversations with the friends that came with me. A few people from the audience also came over to talk after the show – they had a couple questions on global warming and what they could do, but mostly they wanted to chat about what they are doing for the environment. I see a lot of value in that – confirmation that each of us isn’t acting alone.

The ending on Thursday night hit home for me when the main character moved all the voices and herself off of the stage and into the middle of the audience, with each of them seated and facing each other for a chat. David pointed out at the time that this brought the story into the community, which I think is often a big challenge and a real benefit of Headlines work.”

Alison Bailie, Sustainable Communities Group, Pembina Institute (February, 2008)

“Just a quickie to say I thoroughly enjoyed the session at the Wired Monk (Thurs), on a professional and personal level. It was very inspiring and therapeutic at the same time, and judging from the vibe of the room had the same impact on everyone else too.”

Abigail Barragry, Vancouver BC (February, 2008)

“Ever since attending *2° of Fear and Desire* at The Rhizome Cafe, my experience of the climate change issue has shifted. It is no longer such an abstract thing that I THINK about; now, when I read articles in the newspaper or see images in print or on the web I find myself FEELING the issue as I read and take in the images: I am now (re)connected to the issue. The range of emotions are similar to those I’ve experienced when a close friend has wrestled with what is said to be a terminal illness. Grief...the kind that contracts your breathing and tightens your breath...is the chief emotion. Carpooling up to Bellingham from Seattle with a friend of mine, I could see and feel many (previously) hidden connections. And, as I move amongst these hidden connections I find myself reminded of fragments from the literature on the fear of death, the fear of annihilation. In light of these emotions and this expanded way of seeing and thinking about these previously hidden connections, I begin to get a better

sense (though still not an understanding) of the human, all too human, resistance to opening one's heart and one's eyes to the human face of climate change.”

Adam Ward, Bellingham WA, (Dec, 2007)

“I attended *2° of Fear and Desire* last Saturday and was completely blown away by the experience. As a sustainability educator, I have been attending numerous conferences and meetings to gather a reading on what people are actually doing to make effective action and changes regarding climate change. I always leave such events saddened because they usually simply add to the ever-growing grave database about the severity of the matter, but fall short of analyzing why our society has become the way it is in order to break free from it and create the drive and motivation to change.

Experiencing *2°* was so refreshing because it went straight to the source, the human psyche, and examined it with honesty, respect, and witty humour. Furthermore, the performance was strikingly tangible and personal to the audience members and participants. The show helped each of us understand our mental processes a bit better, and develop a sort of solidarity with each other in recognizing and processing through our common struggles. Thank you so much for the wonderfully deep work you have done.”

Elisa Lee, Vancouver BC (Nov, 2007)

This is just a brief note to express my gratitude for your continued contribution to making our community (both the local, geographic one and the greater 'human' one) imminently more liveable. I attended *2° of Fear and Desire* on Nov 9, which not only has inspired me to critically explore my own 'internal monologue' with respect to climate change, but has impressed upon me the power of Theatre for Living to coalesce the individual creative energy in our communities into constructive dialogue out of which substantive change emerges. The key, as you are clearly aware, is that this energy emerges organically from the community which is engaged by Headlines, as opposed to the more traditional activist model of hierarchical, ideological direction from above.

Grant Jamieson, Vancouver BC (Nov, 2007)

“Thank you so much for *2° of Fear and Desire* this evening on climate change. I left with a feeling of hope that I haven't had for some time now. It is precisely this kind of courageous self-exploration and community-building that needs to happen in order to effect real change on this most complex and global of issues.”

Marian Rose, Vancouver BC (Nov, 2007)

“I just wanted to take some time to express how *2° of Fear and Desire* experience created such a buzz in the room throughout the entire evening. It was a challenging piece for me, but essential to any efforts we can put forth in reducing the negative impacts of climate change, because it forced me to humanize the 'other' that is normally so easy to demonize...in this case a corporate other. I obviously tell people I care about everyone, but I also slip easily into blaming a certain type of person for the problem of climate change, usually economists, business people and politicians. This particular way of engaging the issue used by Headlines Theatre struck a deep chord in me that to actually overcome this problem, we absolutely cannot dehumanize anybody in this. As cliché as it sounds, we all truly are in it together...but I think we best realize that when we discuss the issue in terms of fear and desire, as we did on Friday, because we all identify with fears and desires around climate change.”

Andrew Rushmere, Vancouver, BC (Nov, 2007)

“I recently attended *2° of Fear and Desire* on the evenings of Nov 8th and 10th. It allowed me to participate in the exploration of the issue of climate change, an issue which I admittedly ignore or disregard on a day to day basis. I have discovered that I am not alone in finding the issue to be at times overwhelming and all encompassing. However, through this theatre process, I discovered that I am not alone. I am not alone in my fears, my complacency, my daily dilemmas, my periodic feelings of helplessness, nor my desire to change things. For myself, this forum was not about finding answers, it was about getting

together to discuss, to think, to explore, and to share common ground. And I believe this is the first step towards finding an answer, or answers. And this is crucial. As a Canadian, a son, a future husband and father, and as a human being, I'd like to thank you and hope you continue this work."

Ashley Liu, Vancouver BC (Nov, 2007)

"I attended the *2° of Fear and Desire* session at the Rhizome Café on Saturday. Your approach with Headline Theatre is so important and it is especially needed to move us forward in dealing with climate change. Climate change far too often is seen as an issue or problem that is out there and far in the distance. I think the opposite is true: it is happening right here and now. Therefore it is important to start changing our core behaviours and increase our awareness of why we are making certain decisions. Headline Theatre brings a refreshing approach to the room and helps us connect with our humanity and move beyond the frustration. In my work as a life coach I am helping individuals make choices in line with their values. Headline Theatre helps us make choices in line with our values through dialogue, play and community. We need more of that!"

Julia James, Vancouver BC (Nov, 2007)

"I'm just writing to let you know how much I appreciated your *2° of Fear and Desire* events at the Rhizome Cafe. The theatrical tools and the audience's ideas were so intriguing that I returned the next night. I related deeply to the struggles people shared about how to make responsible, realistic choices, and I feel excited and relieved to have learned how to deconstruct those moments of decision-making in my own head!

After attending and participating in *2° of Fear and Desire* on Friday night, I was inspired to invite others to join me for Saturday's adventure. One friend who came with me whispered into my ear, shortly after the evening began, "Where the hell have you brought me this time???" and at the end of the evening she was thanking me and every participant in sight. The events gave me the clarity and the guts to look at the issue, and my relationship to it, anew."

Jane Henderson, Vancouver BC (Nov, 2007)

Everything has a context

2° of Fear and Desire – an intimate evening of theatre (without a play) emerged out of reactions to various stimuli. Here are two of them.

#1 In May of 2007 I was working in a small northern Manitoba community called Wasagamack. To get there, one flies from Winnipeg in a Dash-8 due north for about an hour to St. Teresa Point. From there transport is a small boat with an outboard motor for 30 minutes to Wasagamack – a community to which almost everything must travel by plane and then boat.

One morning I was having breakfast with some of the organizers of the work. I picked up a jar of jam that was on the table. French Jam. French mango and pineapple jam. Wait a minute, I thought to myself, mangoes and pineapples don't grow in France. How many times has whatever fruit there is in this jar been around the planet to make it into my hands in Wasagamack? And worse than that – if I wasn't preparing for a project on global warming, this thought would likely never have entered my mind. Why? Because for some reason, I am entitled to eat mango and pineapple jam from France.

So, there I was spiraling into a vortex of guilt and despair and, not wanting to endure that alone, decided to share the thought with my colleagues at the table; social justice activists each and every one of us.

One of them, in a very weary voice said, "Can't we just have breakfast?" Understanding and sympathizing with the fatigue....I shut my mouth. The voices in my head that don't want to be seen to always be a bother, that want to be liked, that are also tired and panicked at the enormity of the global warming issue, convinced me, against my true better judgment, to be silent.

Of course governments need to develop clear and well thought out policies to deal with this most important issue. Likewise, corporations must change their destructive behaviour on the planet. I have questions, though, if either of these necessities will have much meaning if each and every one of us humans don't confront our own expectations, entitlements and patterns of behaviour that create the intricate web that both supports and creates the unsustainable culture in which we live.

2° of Fear and Desire was not an opportunity to use the language of the theatre to *convince other people* to do anything. The project was an opportunity for the members of each individual audience and me to *convince ourselves* to break through the barriers to making core behavioural change. The theatre events were not about "us and them". (Is there an "us and them" in the global warming issue?) The events could only be about "us".

I used the jam story to begin the event each night.

#2 Also about a year prior to the project, I was watching the news one night, when an item came on regarding the World Health Organization. WHO had determined that the average North American eats the beef equivalent of two McDonalds Big Macs *every day!* Beef production (animals for food production) rivals (if not exceeds) greenhouse gas production with emissions from automobiles. A way to approach global warming, therefore, would be to reduce beef consumption by at least 50%, the news item said. Part of the story was an interview with an Albertan cattle rancher. He was furious. Actually, he was more than furious – he was hurt. He insisted that his cows were not the problem that was killing the planet. Why wasn't the story focusing on all the people in the city driving SUVs? His grandfather and raised cattle, his father raised cattle and he hoped his children would raise cattle. The global warming issue was attacking his life's work – his family's values. He saw himself, of course, as a very good person, working hard to feed people, not as a planet destroyer.

I recognized in this story how personal the issue is for all of us. Like the cattle rancher, we don't see ourselves as bad people. We are all just making our way in the world – paying mortgages, putting kids through school, etc. how would a theatre project transcend the nuts and bolts of the issue (carbon emission levels) and get down into this human level?

I believe *2° of Fear and Desire* accomplished exactly that. Interestingly, on the final night on Saltspring Island, one of the women who made an intervention, told a story about her cattle ranching parents and having grown up on the farm in Alberta, and how her own decision to leave, based on how hurtful meat production is for the planet, was so very difficult to navigate with her parents, who were deeply hurt by her decision.

The initial three November events at the Rhizome Café

November 8, 2007

Rhizome Café

Seating: 60

Attendance: 59

Percentage: 98%

Headlines Theatre invites you to

2° of fear and desire:
a theatrical inquiry
into climate change

Joked by David Diamond

An intimate evening of theatre
(without a play)
just us and our fears, desires and challenges
to change our behaviours that hurt the planet

Nov 8, 9 and 10
7pm
Admission by donation
For more info: 604.871.0508

Rhizome Café
317 E Broadway, Vancouver
Food and beverages available

Future of Arctic sea ice
in doubt after record heat

we're
flooded.
let's go
happier

extremes
of weather
please planet

SANTO DOMINGO
\$795

These events mark the **400th THEATRE FOR LIVING project in Headlines' history** and are designed to be the beginning of the “human research” for the larger mainstage project this year on climate change: **2° of adaptation**. It was full tonight. Very intense. People came to me after, so enthusiastic, saying

that this was the singularly most valuable, profound, useful, insightful event on climate change they had ever attended, and that it would spiral, ripple out way beyond this night and the café.

The room chose to focus into the story of a young man, let's call him Brian. He is in his girlfriend's kitchen. He has just given up on a lucrative job he had, doing work in the automotive industry – working on fuel cells – because he has come to believe that there will never be an electric car. He is disillusioned and wants to be an artist. They have an argument. She says to him, “I'm never going to own a house, am I?”

(This story was one of three that was offered in the moment, by members of the audience. The audience chose this story by an overwhelming majority.

Although I had planned for these events to us the “Rainbow of Desire” technique, Brian's story was ripe for “Cops in the Head”.³ “Cops” investigates the voices in our heads that come from other people, that stop us from making healthy choices, or stop us from being happy.

³ See the Appendix for an explanation of these techniques.

He identified three Cops that we worked on:

- One was his mother, in his head – telling him to surrender to the market to make money and find security, regardless of what that meant. She wants him to be financially safe and successful.
- The second was also his mother, grabbing his shoulders, telling him to “be a man” and provide for his wife and family to be. In order to do this he may have to make sacrifices and stay in an industry he believes now is part of a larger problem.
- The third is a “producer”, a man with a cell phone, who is telling him that if he doesn’t grab the opportunity in front of him, he will lose it.

The room related very strongly to the symbols in the story and also at how these voices in our heads that want us to “take care of ourselves” and “be respected by others” are also voices that ironically compel us to lead unsustainable lives.

The investigation led us into questions and conversation about who is family, and how we broaden the circle of who we are “taking care of” when we take care of “family”. How do we make the choices – where are the boundaries? If we recognize that we have a responsibility to the “human family” beyond the creature comforts of our “immediate family” this changes the choices we make.

How do we define “respect” and “self respect”? What does “success” mean? Why is financial wealth attached to respect and success? What is it that makes parents proud of their children, and adults proud of themselves? Why are possessions attached to respect and success? And pride? What has happened to us? How do we break out of this destructive image – destructive for us as individuals, destructive for our relationships, and destructive for the planet.

How, when we take action, do we make it authentic? For instance, a man from the audience took Brian’s place and tried to divert the producer’s attention to another audience member – to ‘trick’ the producer. This worked for 20 seconds but then the scene returned to its original conflict and the girlfriend was now fed up with the Brian character’s games. Isn’t that what we do? Don’t we “play” at climate change? How do we take authentic action?

All of these questions got discussed tonight, bouncing off of the symbol of the story of the young man. It was a very rich evening and I am certain that the dialogue(s) will continue in homes, workplaces, schools. People were challenged, shook up, in very positive ways. They were delighted at the personalization of the issue...that "the environment" isn't something "out there" that we need to "fix". **WE ARE THE ENVIRONMENT.**

The feedback after the event was spectacular.

November 9, 2007

Seating: 60

Attendance: 68 Percentage: 113%

It was packed to the rafters in there – I understand we turned away 30 people. We did use the “Rainbow of Desire” tonight, as planned. Although feedback from many at the event and from people I have run into on the street after has been enthusiastically positive, I think it was a difficult night.

Two close friends recognized my frustration during the event – I think the whole room was frustrated at points – and it has taken me a day to get some perspective on it.

The email below came directly into my inbox from someone I don’t know:

“I just wanted to thank you for a very informative and enjoyable evening last night. I really learned a lot more about dealing with conflict. I have made a promise to myself to reduce the stress in my life. And, avoiding conflict equates to less stress. I now have a much better understanding of how underlying fears and desires fuel a conflict, and how, by recognizing these fears and desires, I can turn a conflict into a productive conversation.”

On the surface the email seems like a good thing, but is symptomatic of what I think went wrong with the evening. We didn’t do an investigation of our blockages around *climate change*. We investigated a conflict between a woman who wanted to sell services to a CEO, and a CEO who didn’t want to buy her services. The services happened to be about environmental consulting, but this was, in fact, incidental to the moment. This confusion is itself, an insight into the complexity of the issue.

I also think that the problem was compounded (or created?) by doing the Rainbow of Desire exercise. This is what I had planned to do at these events but, because of the story on the first night, did Cops in the Head instead. Rainbow is a GREAT exercise to investigate complexity between two individuals. However, I have come to think it may be the wrong tool to investigate our blockages to core behavioural change. This is a really valuable learning for me from these three nights that were always going to be highly experimental.

The story: a woman who does “social marketing” has flown in to somewhere to give a presentation to a CEO of a large company about environmentally friendly ways to do business. The CEO offers her some bottled water and she refuses it saying that she doesn’t drink bottled water, it is bad for the environment and that there are options other than bottled water. The CEO responds that he, in fact, is giving his clients options by OFFERING them bottled water. The two are at an impasse now and never get to the conversation about whether or not he wants to buy her services. The room chose this story by an overwhelming majority.

A man offered to play the CEO and we put the moment on the stage. This was hard to do because the story-teller wouldn't, or couldn't just play the moment. She kept breaking out of the improvisation, checking in with me, and I kept asking her to just play the scene and forget I was there. In order for the thing to work we had to build some emotional momentum.

I let the improvisation go for some time, and then finally froze the moment when her hand gestures stopped and she leaned forward in her chair, her fingers changing color because of the tension in her hands. It seemed like a moment filled with complexity.

We started to find her Rainbow fragments of fear and desire. One desire was to stand up to him, and another to run away. When I asked her about her fear, at first she insisted she didn't have any. I told her I didn't believe her – we all have fear – and asked her to imagine. She immediately offered her fear that she was going to explode and strangle the CEO.

The man playing the CEO became somewhat fixated on the water bottles. It was very interesting – they became a huge symbol for him. It often didn't matter what happened in an improvisation, he kept bringing it back to the bottles. At the same time, both characters (and the rainbow fragments) had at their core, a desire to do something for the environment. The exchanges between the fragments and the CEO were windows into the same corporate ethic that I found in the Ottawa meetings a few weeks ago⁴. The CEO wants to act or he wouldn't be in this meeting. He is operating, however, inside a particular world view from which he cannot easily escape, and now he is angry because he has been insulted in a simple moment of offering his guest some water. He can't see beyond the water bottle moment to the larger issue at hand.

Of course we also animated the CEO's Rainbow. A woman came up to be one of his desires. She started going on about how (he) wanted to get into the social marketer's pants, wanted to be touched, wanted to grab his own crotch. I tried to ground this in some kind of reality that was present in the scene we were seeing on the stage, but felt strongly that what we were getting on the stage was an angry comment on "male CEO's" in general. I went to the audience, as I often do, for their insights and the actions of the fragment did lead to an interesting conversation about how we get "dislocated" in business. I think, however, we were all stretching.

The most interesting part, and when I think it started to come to life, was when we got to the final phase of pairing up the story-teller's rainbow fragments with the CEO's fragments. Our task had been to investigate blockages to core behavioural change around climate and it was at this underlying layer that we finally started to be able to do that.

⁴ I had attended some meetings on global warming that were also attended by CEO's of oil companies, leaders of environmental organizations, politicians and policy people.

This led to a conversation, that happened, I think, each night, of the difference between looking at the horizon and trying to solve the whole big problem, and looking right in front of us and taking a step. Having made a small shift, that new place becomes “normal” and from there we can make another small shift. The challenge is to keep the momentum – and to start.

The conflict resolution nature of the Rainbow had a value, I think, in an investigation of how we get diverted easily. The climate change issue is important enough for us to be able to work together on a common goal – even when we anger each other.

When it was over, the woman who told the story came to me and asked if I could network her into the CEOs who were in the Ottawa meeting, so she could offer them her environmental consulting services. I explained that all of us had agreed we would not expose who was in that meeting and so, I couldn't do what she was asking. She asked again, and I explained again. Then she gave me her card, so I would have her contact info, just in case I found a way to do what she was asking.

There is a larger theatrical story here for me – the problems we had with this evening, are in a way, the problems we are having with the issue. Is climate change yet another sales opportunity? In a way, it must be, because the economy does have to transfer over, but what does this mean?

Interestingly, Saturday afternoon, I was walking near Kits Beach and two women stopped me, who had been at the event this night. They had loved it – thought it was amazing.

November 10, 2007

Seating: 60

Attendance: 57

Percentage: 95%

It was almost full – we had a lot of reservations, I gather, and some didn't show. This evening was far more coherent than the night before.

I decided beforehand not to do Rainbow of Desire, but to set the evening up for Cops in the Head. I think this was a good choice.

The story: a man is in bed in the morning. As many of us do, he is listening to the radio, the news, the weather. “Will I take the car? Or transit?” There are voices in his head – pulling him to the car. They are, in this case, very personal voices: his children and wife telling him, in various ways, that he deserves to ‘take care of himself’, ‘give himself a break’, and another that was giving the Environment the finger.

This simple story became a rich symbol because so many in the room, I think, live it every morning – even those who came onto the stage who are hard core

cyclists. One young woman confessed that “cycling in the rain sucks”, but she does it. Of course the *entire* solution to climate change isn’t public transit. The story became a symbol, I think, for all those other decisions we make – the creature comfort decisions, the ‘I will when others do’ decisions.

Some successful moments:

A woman acknowledged that the voices that want her to take care of herself need to be and can be refocused so that “herself” is “the planet”. She talked about a process of integration to make this redefinition.

Another woman had created a very funny improvisation in which she continued a very light and friendly conversation with the “give yourself a break” voice, while she got out of bed, got dressed and walked to the bus. There was nothing the Cop could do to stop her.

More emotional moments happened when people tried to change the Cops minds, or when, in one case, a young woman just surrendered – because she was tired of being in opposition. “I want to avoid conflict in my life” she declared. This led to an interesting conversation with the audience about the nature of conflict, of being “a warrior” as someone mentioned, not needing to see acts of violence or negative disruption. We do need to know when it is necessary and appropriate to simply relax, but is the surrender that happened in this intervention something the planet can afford?

It was interesting for me to talk with people who had been to all three evenings. Their favorite had been the first – they thought it was the most powerful. I think I know why. The story, about wanting to give the fiancée the house and all the accoutrements to “success” led us to emotionally charged scenes on the stage. It felt like there was a lot at stake in these improvised investigations – one the one side, the health of the planet and on the other, a person’s image of themselves as a success in this world in which we live.

There may be an insight here into possible content choices for the larger project, if we get to do it. And this was, after all, the goal of doing these three nights of “human research”.

Emergence at work at Headlines

“The detailed theory of **emergence** shows that the instabilities and subsequent jumps to new forms of organization are the result of fluctuations amplified by feedback loops. The system encounters a small disturbance, which then circulates around multiple feedback loops and is amplified until the system as a whole becomes unstable. At this point, it will either break down or break through to a new form of order.”

Fritjof Capra, in the foreword to “Theatre for Living” by David Diamond, Trafford Publishing, 2007

It is with a mixture of regret and renewed excitement that we must announce the cancellation of Headlines’ main stage Forum Theatre project for 2007/08, **2^o of Adaptation**. This is the first time in the theatre company’s 27 year history that a cancellation of this kind has been necessary. Below are details of what has happened, and what we feel is the natural evolution of the project into a series of grassroots events.

We have been very surprised by the difficulty we have had raising funds for the production, which was to investigate the blockages we face in making core behavioural change in our lives in relation to climate issues. Having received many rejections from potential funders, we received notice on November 15 from our final hope that they would not be supporting the project. Being approximately \$70,000 short of the budget necessary for a full production at this late date, we have made arrangements with our very talented design team to pay them 50% of their fees, and to “pull the plug” on the project before it commits Headlines to a debt from which the theatre company would not recover.

We believe that part of the difficulty we encountered is a sense from some funders that the environment is something “out there” that we can go and fix, and that the solutions are “top down”. What this misses is that we are the environment. The adaptations and mitigations that are necessary in the face of climate change lie inside us.

We would like to thank the Endswell Fund of Tides Canada⁵ and McLean Foundations as well as the Columbia Institute who did offer financial support and also the individuals who made donations. We are communicating with these organizations and people about either returning the project funds, or putting them towards the evolution of the project.

To the 106 people who applied to us for places in the community workshop and cast, who by now will have heard from us directly, thank you for your deep interest and desire to confront the issue. We hope you will attend the grassroots events.

⁵ Endswell has already agreed to a funds transfer.

This project has had a long and interesting evolution. Four years ago we started planning a large theatre/dance production we were calling **Fire Season**. The production was going to be a highly produced, alarm bell ringing play, trying to get people to focus on the issue.

Last year it became apparent that the discussions around the issue had evolved beyond the **Fire Season** project and, in an attempt to make the production more relevant to the current climate change discussions, we adapted the plan into **2° of Adaptation: making choices while the climate changes**. The interactive Forum Theatre production, created and performed by people struggling to make core behavioural change in their lives would, we felt, have a more immediate relevance in the world today.

As a build-up into the Forum production, we recently did 3 nights of “public workshop” on Nov. 8, 9 and 10 at the Rhizome Café. We called these **2° of Fear and Desire** (a theatrical inquiry into climate change – with no play, no actors and no script).

It appears to us that the difficulty raising the funds for the larger project is part of a signal we are getting regarding what is most appropriate at this point in time regarding the climate change issue. The subject is so large, scary and also somewhat amorphous, that the best way to access it is in very focused, deeply grassroots events. More grassroots than **Fire Season**; even more grassroots than **2° of Adaptation**.

So in the short term, we will be mounting up to nine **2° of Fear and Desire** events in Vancouver during February/March of 2008, when the larger production was supposed to be running. We will do three in East Vancouver somewhere on or near Commercial Drive, three back at the Rhizome Café on Broadway near Main and three in Kitsilano.

In the longer term, we will be meeting with our environmental working group, representatives from: Pembina Institute, Ecojustice, Fraser Basin Council, Sierra Club of BC, Society Promoting Environmental Conservation and the David Suzuki Foundation about how we can keep working together in the future on this very important issue.

The rest of the events

February 21, 2008

The Wired Monk Café

Seats: 40

Attendance: 46 Percentage 115%

The first night – getting back into the flow, perhaps. I think it went well with some glitches.

The very nice folks at the café, which is deep in the heart of Kitsilano, on Vancouver’s affluent West Side had told us they could seat 60 people, but, really, there were about 40 seats. I watched at least 10 people arrive close to 7:00, look in, see it was very full, and leave. Too bad, this.

I made a decision, based on the first three events, to use Cops in the Head in all of the upcoming events.

The introduction and getting the stories went quite smoothly. The story chosen by the room involved a woman, let’s call her Susan, and her employer – a not-for-profit environmental education agency. Susan has been traveling into the far north to give environmental awareness workshops, which have been very well received. There is no one there who can take them over – no skills training is happening, and she really loves going into the far north to work – the adventure of it. Her employer comes to her with great news that another contract has come and she is going to be off again. There is one problem: Susan is starting to feel very guilty about all the flying she is doing, (and to do environmental awareness work!). She is torn inside. She wants to continue, she feels it is essential to stop. She also wants to keep her job.

The voices were easy for Susan to find. It felt like it took a while for people to offer to be the voices. I could feel the “chill” in the room suddenly. “Can’t we just watch someone do this?” is what it felt like.

But we did get the voices:

1. a good friend who wants her to have the experiences, and forget about the environmental impact; after all, the plane is going to go anyway.
2. another friend who is an environmental activist, who judges her, disapprovingly, saying she should not be a hypocrite (and risk losing her job).
3. her husband, who wants her to stop so she isn’t going away so much, and give up something she loves doing.

4. the employer, who wants her to go, because it means more profile for the organization, more funding, and great opportunity for her.

I think I didn't explain "Cops in the Head" very well tonight, as there was some fuzziness around some of the improvising – it lacked dramatic tension. Maybe I need to insert the concept of "pushing" into the explanation.

Still – there were some great moments:

The friend who wants her to have the experiences loves her. What she misses, however, is that they are both integral parts of the planet – the environment. How can the love and desire for experience, which is so valid, be translated in a way that is integral to understanding that neither of them are separate from the environment?

The activist friend – in an improvisation, gets confronted with her own hypocrisy. Her political enviro-activism involves a lot of travel – how can she judge her friend? Aren't they both doing the same thing? As she is confronted with this, I watch the audience member playing this voice, start to crumble inside. Her eyes fill with tears. We get to talk about this: how our jobs are our identities; our activism our identities; our travel our identities. If we are not these things, who are we? Instead of confronting the issue inside ourselves, we encourage others to give these things up.

There was, as is often the case, a lot of laughter in the evening and some lovely silences – also some uncomfortable silences.

I had the sense during two of the improvisations in particular that things got a little boring. This is, of course, the danger of an event like this. Not everyone engages on the stage in the same way. I try to animate that – freeze moments and escalate what is happening, physically, try to find the underbelly. It is an evening of theatre, and boring it should not be.

"Susan" spoke at the end and commented on how she never usually does things like this – and found she learned so many practical lessons – things she can DO to deal with both the voices in her head and the actual people around her.

I had a good suggestion at the end from a young man who had loved it – one of many people who came with praise. He suggested that when I tell people, after freezing them, "not to look at me – to look at each other", that it might be more successful to eliminate the negative and simply ask them to stay focused on each other – tell them what to do, not what not to do. This is, I think, a great suggestion.

Addendum: I was going to write this addendum anyway, and then just had a very strange but interesting call at Headlines' office. Phone rang, I picked it up.

D Headlines Theatre

Caller Oh...I have the wrong number

D Oh – OK. Your voice sounds very familiar, though – who is this?

C I was at the 2^o event last night – but I didn't say anything. I don't know how you would know it was me.

D Oh. Weird, eh?

C I really enjoyed the event last night.

D Great, thank you.

C I sit on the other side of the environmental fence, not a big supporter, so, different, I guess, than a lot of the other people in the room, but I got a lot out of it.

D That's great that you were there.

C Yes – thanks. Bye.

This exchange ties into some thoughts I have had about last night. I think the (mostly) middle-aged audience last night, in Kitsilano, was more conservative, less radical, really, than the mostly youth audience in east Vancouver previously. They seemed to be “sitting back” more. It is easy to be dissatisfied with this, which is a dangerous trap.

The work, the event, meets any given community where it is – not where the Joker wants the community to be. The event isn't there to teach them anything – the purpose is to generate thought, dialogue, the challenging of assumptions, often hidden and not discussed. The “depth” of event A can't be compared to the “depth” of event B. It is completely possible that a more radical group that travels deeper, and is used to doing so, is LESS challenged by doing that than a more conservative group that has a more surface journey. Group B might, in fact, have had relatively more challenging event.

I fall, like other people, into comparing one night to another and must remember to honour each audience, each “living community” on their own. The phone call today really illustrates this.

Email came from Lorena Jara, a Headlines' Board Member this morning, (in response to receiving my journal update on how things are going) that I want to include:

“You've hit the nail on the head David, (regarding Feb, 21) because we tend to hang around like minded people, we forget that the most challenging political work (changing peoples' minds is political) is with those “sitting on the other side of the fence”. It has nothing to do with being middle age, it has to do with socialization, self interests and the circle each individual moves in.

Take it from a community activist, who started as a 12 year-old working on the conversion of her elementary school peers, the phone call you received from the event in Kitsilano indicates it to have been a great success, even if the person who called was the only one left looking within. Far from what we're led to believe, revolutions don't start with fireworks and *hermandad* of thought but with lots of hard work. Congratulations to you all!!”

February 22, 2008

North Vancouver City Council Chamber

Seats 60

Attendance 46 Percentage 77%

A great invitation was facilitated by Charley Beresford (Columbia Institute), for us to do one of the events in the North Vancouver City Council Chamber. The people there were great to deal with and truly welcoming of the event.

We went into this evening “sold out” in terms of reservations and had about a 25% no show rate. We’ll need to talk in the office on Monday about what (if anything) we can do about this.

Having written yesterday about how the work “meets” the audience where it is....tonight was soooooo hard.

The stories came easily and were quite strong. The one the room chose (by a slim margin) involved a man who is a trucker. He is in his truck, driving, and in crisis about all the pollution he knows he is spewing out of the truck. He wants to change professions and then again, the trucks will keep rolling – everything comes to us by truck somehow – short or long haul. If he doesn’t, someone else will. So why not him?

When I started working with him to animate the story, I asked him to place himself in the truck and start an internal monologue. He found that very, very hard, hard to not make fun of himself, put up a wall of jokes and “aside” statements. A protection mechanism, perhaps. In retrospect, I should have asked him then if he really wanted to do this. His answer might have been no, in which case I would have gone to the next story in line. I didn’t think of doing that, and so we continued.

I froze the moment when I heard him say he “had no choice” and closed his eyes. Show me the voices in your head, in this moment, that are giving you advice that you know is unhealthy for the planet. The first voice is crouching on the ground – in pain. “Who understand this voice?” – many hands in the air. Who can come and play it – turn it into a character. Silence. Silence...silence.

Finally, the woman who was the centre of the story last night (who had come back and brought friends!) offered to play the voice. This voice became his father, who is telling him to get his life together, to stop complaining, to do his job and support his family.

OK. Another voice. “Another one?” he asks. Yes, is there another one? I am starting to see how hard it is for this man to “go there”. He struggles and struggles and finally comes up with a voice that has its arms outstretched. Who understands and can play this voice? Silence... silence... silence. Andrea

Reimer, from the Wilderness Committee, on our Working Group, offers to play the voice, who turns into a co-employee, saying, “don’t worry, the sun will shine tomorrow whether you drive the truck or not”.

I don’t think he is going to come up with a third voice and so turn to the audience to offer one. A woman (his sister – I know this because she has been saying things to him from the audience) comes to offer a voice. It is saying to him “get out of the truck – stop doing this”. I remind her that I am asking for voices that are giving him advice that is bad for the planet (and therefore also him). OK – she says, and repeats the same sentence again. I explain again, she says she understands, and says the same thing again. I ask her what she is trying to do for or with him and she explains she is trying to help – to solve the problem for him. I explain that that is exactly the opposite of what I am asking her to do. Oh – so...just tell me what to say, then. No, I won’t, I say, and ask her if she wants to do this. Not really, she says, I was just trying to help. OK, if you don’t want to – thank you – you can go back to your seat. She stands there. Do you want to? No. Ok then....you can go back to your seat....this goes back and forth – finally another family member of hers tells her to come sit down – yells out “You were great!”...and she sits down.

Jen Cressey (Headlines’ Publicist) tells me on the way home how painful this was to watch and how obvious it was that this woman just wouldn’t or couldn’t listen to what was happening. She had her own idea of what was being asked for – had decided, and it didn’t matter what I said.

Another woman, quite elderly, offers a voice, that turns into a girlfriend who is saying, “Man, you are so hot in that truck – the girls love a man in a truck”.

And so we start to animate the voices. We work on the girlfriend voice and there are interventions - one of them turns into both characters yelling at each other, no one listening to anything while the man is driving the truck all over the highway. We talk about that. How many of us argue with the voices in our heads to distraction?

Then it comes to the father voice and again, there is silence. So much silence that I sit down and ask if we can talk about the silence. What is it? We agree that many of us have judgmental parent voices in our heads, and dealing with them is frightening. What is it about the global warming issue and this voice?

A discussion starts about how it is about staying in the job or not – facing the unknown and how scary that is. A City Councilor who is there talks about wanting to have a well thought out plan first and this leads to telling a story about people in the oil business all wanting to take a step together, but that being impossible. We are waiting for the well thought out solution to appear, but it isn’t going to. We need to discover it; it needs to emerge out of our actions.

I leave space for someone to try something and no one will and, as I am going to move on, Adam from Bellingham, who is there again, wants to try and so he brings the father-voice into the truck and starts to ask his advice, for help in sorting out the dilemma and the father responds positively but, when the son gets vulnerable, the father whacks him emotionally. The father puts him in his place like an angry father does to a child. And Adam is helpless – it all stops. You can feel the emotion in the room. Something authentic has happened.

We move to the co-employee voice and a man comes to the stage and, instead of fighting with her, he parks the truck. He gets out and walks away, up the stairs, out the door. I ask him where is he going? Away. To where? Not here. But...where? Somewhere else. OK – but we are ALWAYS somewhere specific. Our bodies occupy specific space. Where are you going? Home. OK – this (the stage) is no longer the truck. Now it is your home. The voice arrives back and says “thank you for inviting me into your home”....

And this starts an exchange about whether or not one can “leave” the issue of global warming. OK – you DO something and, then what? There is no “offstage” here, in the same way that there is no offstage in our lives. You walked away. OK. What happens now? It isn’t “nothingness”.

Is this part of the issue, that in the face of the enormity of the global warming issue, and the seemingly small things any of us can do, we retreat into a “safety” of “nothingness”?

A big moment, winding up, when I asked the story-teller to either leave the voices where they were, or change their physical relationship to him, by moving them. People in his position have changed the positioning of the voices, 100% of the time. Instead, he started confessing to them in very personal ways. I stopped him and suggested this wasn’t necessary, but if he wanted to, he could move them. He couldn’t. Or wouldn’t. At any rate, he didn’t. I asked the audience what this meant to them. Paralysis. Doesn’t care anymore. And then an audience member said, ‘I see on the stage that investigating ourselves on this issue makes us feel too vulnerable, and so we just don’t want to go there.’

I think this kind of summed up the evening. Maybe this is what got talked about on the way home.

You know, I think with how hard this was tonight, that I lost track of the global warming issue. I need to find a way to ground my analysis on the difficult evenings, to keep bringing us back on topic from the symbolic work of the voices.

February 23, 2008

Wired Monk Café

Seats: 40

Attendance: 35 Percentage 88%

What a different night. A much, much more enjoyable event tonight, for me, and the feedback from it was wonderful. There was virtually no feedback afterwards from last night, by the way.⁶

I made some changes in the intro from last night: I stressed to the audience that if, for whatever reason, they didn't want to really deal with the story they were offering, not to offer it. I also made sure they knew that if they offered a story, they would be on stage with me for the rest of the event. Both these items were a problem last night. I believe the story-teller didn't want to be there and this, of course, affected the whole evening deeply.

The story chosen: a young man is waiting at the bus stop on his way to work. The bus is 20 minutes late. The bus journey is at least 3 times longer than taking the car. What is he to do? He hates waiting like this, in the rain, for transit that doesn't work and this makes him want to move closer to work – but he lives with his parents and extended family and it would hurt them terribly if he left home. He is being “pushed” by these two factors into taking the car to work – something he doesn't want to do. The voices:

1. his mother: here – take the car keys, be good to yourself, be happy, and stay here with us.
2. his girlfriend: her fingers in his ears – don't listen to anyone but me – spend more time with me – if you drive – you will have more time for me.
3. his uncle: excel at work – get there early, leave there late – the way to accomplish this is not to waste your life on the bus. Take the car!
4. a best friend: her head, snoozing on his shoulder.....stay in bed longer...relax....don't get stressed....transit is stressful....

The young man telling the story was great. He was very engaged and honest, and interested in pursuing the exercise. The voices also really committed to portraying the voices with a sense of integrity.

⁶ Not true now. The sister of the storyteller called and talked with Adeline today (Feb. 25) – she didn't want to talk with me. She called to complain that the event wasn't fair to her brother – that it asked too much of him, and that he should have been paid 50% of the donations and also the jar of jam that I use as a prop for the introduction.

A wonderful moment with the mother – a person from the audience holds out her hands, in an attempt to show her mother how she feels about the preciousness of family, that moving away is not abandonment – and the mother mischievously drops the car keys into the outstretched cupped hands.

This led to a conversation about how our parents' generation worked so hard to achieve the lifestyle we all enjoy (the same lifestyle that is destroying the planet) and how parents want their children to have more than they themselves had. How do we navigate this profound change of attitude towards consumption without the message to our parents (and the values they have instilled within us) that we are rejecting what they worked so hard to achieve?

Another moment, with the best friend – the relax and be good to yourself voice. This voice can be an ally, if we use it to relax into the world of public transit. However, in order for this to be viable, the transit has to work well. We must couple our transition into transit with concerted pressure on government to improve our terrible transit system.

The evening was wonderfully light-hearted and this created the space for deep thought and feeling as well. I made a point with myself that worked well, of continually going back to the audience, recognizing the symbolism of what was happening on the stage, and asking them to interpret the symbolic actions in relation to our struggles around global warming. More than any night so far, this grounded the event over and over again, in the issue. I must remember to keep doing this.

There were lovely ways (as above) that the personal interwove into the political. Also lots of great feedback after the event – people promising to come back and bring others with them. Lots of hugs tonight.

February 28, 2008

Rhizome Café

Seats 60

Attendance 31

Percentage 52%

Well – that was hard, although I am going to trust Jackie Crossland's, Headlines' Financial Administrator, impression from being in the audience when she says that they were very engaged and thoughtful and complimentary when they were on their way home.

We have a dilemma. There was supposed to be a feature in the Georgia Straight last Thursday. It wasn't there and they told us it would be in today. It isn't there and now they are saying next Thursday. We had thought there would be something in the Vancouver Sun, but nothing has appeared. We have these ten events and are pushing, doing what we can think of, and there were 31 people there tonight, our smallest house so far. This is coming as a

surprise as one of the reasons to decide to do more of these events, was the full houses and very enthusiastic turnout to the events in November.

Putting this into perspective, I know that the major theatres in Vancouver also play to very small houses, sometimes less than 31 in 3-500 seat theatres. My own concern is how much harder it is to “ignite” the interactive event with a smaller, more exposed crowd. The chemistry in the room is very different.

The stories tonight were all strong. The one chosen was from a woman, a single mother. She has been through her daily chaos getting her kids dressed and fed and ready for school and now it is time to get on the bicycles to ride the 15 minutes to school. It is always right down to the wire (time-wise) and today is no different. It is 7:45. With her hands on the handlebars of the bike, the voices in her head activate:

1. her good friend, also a single mother, saying don't ride the bike, don't shame me, take the car. I want to take MY car – don't abandon me.
2. her employer who is saying, are you a professional? Professionals don't ride bicycles, they drive.
3. her mother, saying, get it together. Get organized. March them into the car, get them to school efficiently, and get on with your day. Do it the old way – what is wrong with you?

We animated the voices in the above order. I chose to capture only three voices tonight to experiment with time. If we only do three, can we do two interventions for each voice and not have the event go too long? I started doing two interventions on 4 voices, which took too long, and then one intervention on each of four voices (on time, but less satisfying). There was a lot of silence today, poking and prodding from me and this took time, but it might be that two interventions on each of three voices is a solution.

There was a very strong intervention from a man who tried to physically move away from the friend voice and this highlighted the pathetic fear of the voice. She is desperate for there not to have to be change and, just like in a lateral violence moment, in which one dysfunctional community member pulls another community member who is healing back down, (so the healing journey of one won't make the other look bad), this frightened friend tries to keep the mother from getting on the bicycle. If one changes, the other feels she has to, and doesn't want to change.

There were successes in just ignoring this person, deciding to abandon her and hoping that eventually, she would be moved to join a majority. The question arose, about how we “get on the bike” and “take her with us”. We couldn't answer that.

The employer voice was very difficult. It erodes our sense of professionalism and “adulthood”. These images, in the culture which we inhabit, are so tied up with consuming. Many in the room acknowledged that there is a lot of pressure not to bike to work, because of the comments one gets from co-workers and employers. It has not yet become “acceptable”; admirable, yes, but not mainstream and this is important in many work situations.

The work on the mother reminded me of last Saturday night and the conversation about how ‘our parents’ had worked so hard to achieve the unsustainable lifestyle that we now need to move away from, and how hard it is for the rejection of that not to be taken as a personal rejection. Many people in the room related to this analysis of the moment.

One woman, a First Nations woman, spoke up at this point and said that what we were talking about, what this was about, had nothing to do with her or her life, growing up in poverty on the East Side. She also mentioned that she thought it had nothing to do with an immigrant story, either. This turned into a complex moment. I knew that she and the man she was with had arrived quite late and had not experienced HOW we got to the story we were working on – that people had offered stories, and the room had voted on a story.

I told her that I thought it was hard to make everything relevant to everyone, but that I knew there were some things we shared. The Saturday story, for instance, WAS from an immigrant family, a young Chinese man and his mother, and that while this immigrant story was different than MY immigrant story (I am third generation) that there are things we share. I also mentioned working in Iqaluit and knowing that for the Innu the issue of global warming was VERY present, but again, in a completely different way. I wondered how the Innu story was an intergenerational story, different than this intergenerational story. She was nodding yes throughout and when I asked her if there was anything she wanted to say or add, she mentioned that she only wanted to say that this story was not her story.

Now, writing, I wish I had had a way to ask her if she had a way to FIT herself in this story, by making an image, perhaps, but I didn’t have the presence of mind in the moment to do that. A learning moment, always more to learn.

I know that as I am describing these interventions it doesn’t reflect the layers of silence there was in the room. So much silence. And yet lots of people came after to mention how much they had gotten out of it, and yes – a smaller house is more exposed...hopefully, these folks are going to get on the phone tomorrow.

February 29, 2008

Rhizome Café

Seats 60

Attendance 60 Percentage 100%

We had a full house tonight, and turned about half a dozen people away. We are sold out for Saturday. Hopefully, this will translate into the larger venues as well.

This was a much better night, energetically. The truth is that a full house takes less energy from me.

The story chosen may sound a bit familiar at this point....but not, of course, to THIS roomful of people:

A woman is standing at her alarm at 10:00 PM Sunday night. What time she sets the alarm for will be determined by whether or not she is going to drive to work in the morning or ride her bike. The voices in her head:

1. her mother – who is grasping her lapels – telling her to arrive at work safe and clean, not sweaty, to be a professional.
2. her partner, laying in bed, enticing her into cuddling...knowing it will mean less sleep – encouraging her to indulge with him because she CAN drive to work in the morning...she deserves it...what is more important? Him and their relationship or her concern for the environment?
3. her co-worker, telling her to pay attention to what her mother is telling her – riding her bike to work is too weird – it sets her apart – work doesn't have the facilities to support bike-riders.

There was a lot of lively discussion throughout the event. People related very strongly first to the mother and then the partner. There were two very different interventions with the mother.

The first walked out on her, meaning the woman could ride her bike, but, symbolically, as was brought up in the room, was going to “work on the issues” alone. The woman making this intervention made an interesting statement that she is a social justice activist and gave up a long time ago trying to talk to her family – they are not the issue – she walked away from them. Of course, I think there is great irony in this statement but, because of the very personal nature of it, I did not pursue it. I was very aware, though, in the silence that followed, that many people in the room were struck by it.

The second, really engaged the mother – responded to her obvious love and care and, as the mother listened, she softened. She didn't change her mind,

but she opened her heart (and then her mind). We got to talk about various tactics to deal not only with the voice in our heads but the people in our lives.

The partner voice was very entertaining. Many of us, I think, related to the voice and how it symbolizes our attraction to “comfort”, “indulgence”, “privilege”. We got to talk about addiction through the interactions with this voice.

There was only one intervention on the co-worker, and it was quite practical and effective, in a way. It was to offer to sort out all the technical aspects of the issue....to create a shower space, lockers, a bike rack....to take on creating the space in which bike-riding would be more “normal”. The co-worker was very afraid of this, in the same way as the friend from last night was afraid. If this happens, the co-worker is closer to having no excuse. The co-worker is afraid of the power of the woman and her trajectory for change.

The event moved along well tonight – we started at 7:15 and came down at 9:20 – JUST over two hours long.

March 1, 2008

Rhizome Café

Seats 60

Attendance 53

Percentage 88%

We had been sold out but had a lot of “no-shows”.

Another good night – a focused audience and very engaged. A woman came to me after with a story that I want to start with. She works with SPEC, a local environmental organization. An older woman, she is a life-long activist. She talked with me about how much she learned in the evening, especially about how to deal with the “parental voices” in our heads – even in our old age – that get in the way of our own behavioural change. This woman gave me a great gift, because in EVERY interview I do about this work, the question comes up about “preaching to the converted” and I insist that there is no such thing as the converted, that this is a question designed, consciously or unconsciously, to discredit the work. Certainly, if *there is* a “converted” this woman is it – and she had deep insights in the event tonight.

The story: a young woman is on her bicycle, riding home from work. She is passing a store advertising fresh pomelos.⁷ She loves pomelos and wants to buy some to eat, but doesn’t want to support the international trade, the flights, etc., that goes into bringing the tropical pomelos to Vancouver. Of

⁷ The pomelo (or Chinese grapefruit, pummelo, pommelo, jabong, boongon, shaddock, jeruk Bali, or suha), *Citrus maxima*, also *Citrus grandis*, is a citrus fruit, usually a pale green to yellow when ripe, larger than a grapefruit, with sweet flesh and thick spongy rind.

course in the event the pomelo is a pomelo, but it is also our extravagance, our “special treats”, our consumerism, our indulgence; it is many things.

The voices:

1. her mother, telling her to be happy, to buy and eat the pomelo, she deserves it. Why is it an issue? Her bike comes from Taiwan, what is the problem?
2. her best friend, telling her to go in and get the pomelo. It isn't such a big deal – she will enjoy the pomelo with her – and (again) to be *with* the friend in her indulgences, not to be so strong.
3. her employer who is encouraging her to support local businesses and the local economy. What happens if she doesn't buy from the store? Someone else will buy them anyway; and (knowing information about her) she is just going to go and get the over-ripe ones from the dumpster anyway. Isn't this hypocritical? *Buy* them – pay money for them. Don't steal them.

The audience dug into the story with great relish tonight. The people coming to the stage knew the voices and were very engaged. Some nice moments:

A young woman works on the mother voice and says that she suffers from stomach acid, and the pomelos increase the acidity. The mother, wanting the best for her daughter, gives in. Such interesting symbolism here – the intervention is about listening to one's body, to one's authentic internal voices. When we make decisions that are bad for the planet, don't many of us *know* that is what we are doing? How do we listen to those authentic, caring voices and use the information from them to make the unhealthy voices our allies instead of our adversaries?

It came again about the intergenerational conflict and the insight from a few nights ago was articulated (by me) about how hard many of our parents worked to create this unsustainable lifestyle. Audiences are struck very hard, I am finding (in a good way) by this thought, because, I think, it makes sense of how personal the threat of lifestyle change is for the people around us.

The employer was a very strong voice, with a complex argument. Of course we want to support local business, but how do we go about doing that? We can give the employer what she wants. It is good advice she is giving us to support our local economy, but we can do that from within a decision-making framework of supporting local businesses that are selling local products. We have to do our research, and we also have to not beat ourselves up when doing so is not possible.

There was a great deal of positive feedback after tonight from a vast array of people, coming from different cultures and age groups. This was, I think, the most diverse audience so far.

I made another innovation tonight that I liked. I started asking the voices to articulate specifically their fears and their desires in improvisational moments. This out of a thought today about why we titled the project, *2° of Fear and Desire*.

Onward now, into bigger and more formal venues.

March 6, 2008

Best Western, Richmond – Environment Canada Conference

Seats - 60

Attendance – 31 Percentage 52%

There could have been 100 seats tonight. I removed some down to 40 seats before the doors opened for the event – and so am compromising with numbers and calling it 60.

About half the audience came from the conference, about 15 people. The other 15 people came mostly from Richmond, responding, I think, to an article in the Richmond paper. They really came to see a “play” though. I made a point of asking before we started.

I was very concerned that this audience was going to want to watch and so, started by explaining first what we were going to do – in detail – and then explained that this meant that in order to be successful, the event was going to have to involve many of them directly, and that I didn’t want to trap them into that. I asked for a show of hands for how many people could imagine that they would end up on the stage tonight. 10 raised their hands. 33% of the audience – not a lot. I said that if we continue, I will really need their involvement and asked them to raise their hands again – creating a kind of “contract”, and away we went.

Interestingly, as the evening progressed, it was only the people who initially raised their hands who entered the playing area. Others did speak from their seats.

The story: a man, John, is working in his home office. His combo photocopier, scanner, fax is flashing at him that it needs repair. He finally gets someone on the phone, who wants \$100 just to look at it (it cost \$140). This Tech Support person encourages him to turf it and buy a new one. John wants to repair it – it is far less wasteful, but can feel his resolve slip away. The voices in his head:

1. his mother who wants his life to be easy, less stressful. Let go of these ideals, she encourages him, and be happy;
2. a manager from the past who is telling him to keep his productivity up, not to waste time;

3. a different manager who is discouraging him from the repair option because it will mean less income – what about his mortgage and other bills? He can't afford the loss in income.

Because of the small audience and the silence that was already in the room, and also how late we started (people had a very hard time finding where we were in the hotel), I decided to take only one intervention per voice.

The mother voice had “movement” quite quickly, but because of what was, I think, an insightful intervention that said to her, ‘Mom, easy does not equal happy’. She wants her son to be happy, but taking the easy way is making him miserable. He is very concerned about the planet. Mom has no way to understand this, but she *hears* it and is willing to back off because she loves her son.

This led to an interesting conversation about how we affect the people close to us in our lives. Do they have to understand the details? Or is it enough for them to understand the emotional resonance?

The two managers were played by different people, but, obviously, had similar things to say. The approaches to them varied. One woman led the manager off the stage to the resource table and talked with her about karma and different kinds of profit. The value of this intervention was that it threw the manager so far off balance – into a world she was not prepared for – that this imbalance opened up her ears.

Another intervention was to argue with the manager on economic grounds, but this got no where. The reason for this, I think, is that the manager is correct. Profits may very well be compromised. Are we prepared for this?

An interesting symbolic thing happened when John moved the voices at the end of the exercise. He put his mother in a chair on the other side of the stage and, in order to do so, had to dismantle some of his office. When I pointed this out the room.....grunted, is the best way I can describe this. He wants to keep her with him and at the same time, is stepping back from so much productivity. Perhaps this is something we will all have to think about. How much profit is necessary?

People did stay all the way through and I am aware that this audience was very engaged. 2° was something unlike anything many of them had even imagined. One of the Environment Canada people came to me and said this, and wondered aloud how it could be used for dialogue generation inside Environment Canada...

A woman came to me after, who loved the evening. She wanted me to know that she had not planned to come alone. She had hoped her son, who had loved Headlines “Here and Now” on gang violence would come – but he refused because he thinks “we are doomed” regarding global warming and, what is the point? She had had dinner with a friend, who was supposed to be

coming with her – but over dinner, when the friend realized it was an event about global warming, she backed out. Leaving this woman to attend alone.

This explains, to some degree, the trouble we are having getting people out for this. The polls may tell us global warming is #1 on Canadians' minds, but when push comes to shove, getting beyond thinking about it and attending something may be a different matter.

This came in email from the organizer from Environment Canada:

“People at the conference really liked that through the experience of *2° of Fear and Desire*, the most important sources of our wasteful life-style were identified. We wouldn't have expected that both the personal and global level could come so nicely together.”

Livia Bizikova, organizer, Research and Practitioner Partnerships for Action on Climate Change: Developing Guidance for Communities, Richmond, BC (March, 2008)

March 7, 2008

Composite Hall, Vancouver

Seats 100

Attendance 64 Percentage 64%

The event itself tonight went very well. Getting in was really rough.

We arrived at 5:30, which should have been plenty of time. There were two lighting trees, with four lights, as planned. There were stairs for the stage and a sound system. The organizer handed it over to me to set up. This is not what we thought was going to happen.

So...now I am functioning as Technical Director. The lights are very, very old. Two of them hardly throw any light. Adeline Huynh (Executive Assistant at Headlines) is up a ladder, I am on the stage and the lights are not co-operating. It took almost an hour to focus 4 lights. In the midst of this, no one seemed to understand that the extension cords couldn't be loose the way they were – they couldn't be running across the room the way they were. I asked a man there (a volunteer) to check the circuit breakers so we could plug each tree into a socket on it's own side of the room and avoid crossing the room with cables. He assured me it was OK. I asked if he was certain that when we plug the coffee urn in the fuses wouldn't blow. He was certain. We plugged the urn in. The fuses blew.

I started pulling audience members in to help with the set up because they were arriving and the room was a very dangerous place. Cables needed taping down or being covered with carpet, the speakers had been placed at the sides of the stairs when better sound would be at the sides of the stage. The stairs that had been built for the event were unsafe and tipped over when you stepped on the first step, and so they need to be weighted down and wired in place. It was 6:45 (we start at 7:00) and the room was chaos.

Jen Cressey (Headlines' Publicist) came to me in the midst of this with the organizer's paper insert for our program. I asked her if there was anything to be concerned about. "well....."

..... The background here is that we had been over and over with the organizer that the event could not be designed to support any political party. It is fine for a Party to be part of a larger organizing body, but the event cannot be an endorsement of politicians, cannot be a fundraiser, cannot support ANY political party. Headlines cannot be used this way. Each time we had talked about this the organizer had said he understood, and then it had come up again.

So there we were and the insert mentions certain politicians and profiles them. When someone bought something at the food concession, they were being told the proceeds are going to Party! I had no choice but to call the organizer into a meeting on the stairs.

I asked the organizer to look at the funders on the postcard. Headlines gets funding from all three levels of Government. Do they fund us to support a political party? Do the Foundations give us money so we will raise \$\$ for a political party? My own politics are irrelevant to this. David is not Headlines. Headlines is a not-for-profit and a registered charity. I will not allow something like this to jeopardize Headlines' charity status.

We agreed that before I went on the stage, the organizer would announce that there has been a "miscommunication" and that an error had been made and that Headlines cannot engage in anything that endorses any political party and that there is no fundraising element or endorsement from Headlines. We agree on this. Then, the organizer got on the stage and said – there has been an error, the concession money will go to Headlines Theatre.

So...I didn't want to poison the exploration of global warming that would happen at the event, but when the event was done, I sat on the stairs and said that what the organizer had mentioned at the beginning was not about money, and explained, in detail, what I have written above about Headlines not being used to support ANY political party or politician, and why I cannot allow that to happen. I am aware from feedback, that most in the room understood this.

The story that was chosen:

"Lucy", an environmental lawyer, and her uncle are walking on the beach in Australia. She has been there visiting him for 3 weeks, and is leaving in a week. He wants to know when she is coming back. She starts talking about carbon emissions, her guilt, the atmosphere....he has no idea why any of this is relevant – he wants to stay connected to his niece. In this moment, there are voices in her head....

1. her yuppie law school friend who is saying she deserves the treat of travel, that the planes will fly anyway. There is really nothing that her not flying will accomplish so, why not fly?
2. her brother, telling her to get her life together, take care of herself and stop worrying about big concepts so much;
3. her aunt (uncle's wife), who is crying and saying that the tears will be handed down from generation to generation if she severs her connection with her family.

The room was very engaged with the voices and the process, it sometimes felt like some of them would have preferred to talk from their seats, having an intellectual meeting, rather than the emotion-based event that this was. One woman came to me after, having loved it, who also talked about how challenging it was to move out of her head on the issue – and how very valuable she had found that.

A lot of the discussion through interventions had to do with making clear choices and making it clear that the choices were OUR choices. This happened in particular with the yuppie friend who “heard” it when “Lucy” created a clear boundary and acknowledged that the choice of the friend was not her choice. Her choice was to stop flying, and that didn't put pressure on anyone else.

As I write this, I am reminded of other “friend” voices who have needed the story-teller to keep consuming so that they could also keep consuming. These are linked.

This was also the case with the brother voice – and, interestingly – the two voices had very similar shapes. The brother, though, also started to question himself and his narrow relationship to the global warming issue when “Lucy” insisted that her choice did not have to be imposed on the brother.

When I went to the audience the feedback was that there was a lesson here about leading by example, that convincing the “other” was not always the most effective. A cliché, I know, but we transform the world by transforming ourselves.

The aunt was a powerful voice and the audience seemed very reluctant to take her on. Finally someone did, the woman who was playing the Uncle! She met the aunt on her own territory: in tears. She mourned with the aunt, the loss of physical connection that reducing our travel means. We are a new kind of culture on the planet, very mobile and very spread out families. We will either give up the travel, or it will be taken away, someone from the audience pointed out. We cannot avoid the mourning. We have to move through it. Once we do that a few things may become possible: Families might re-integrate in physical locations, or we might learn to use things like Skype (which will evolve) in better ways.

There was tremendous feedback after the event and lots of spoken invitation to bring 2° to other communities.....we'll see.

March 8, 2008

Vancouver Public Library

Seats 100

Attendance 46

Percentage 46%

It is so strange – last night getting ready to do the event was chaos and then the event was really focused and pretty lively. Tonight getting ready was very, very calm. I didn't feel as focused tonight, although engagement was high, there were a lot of interventions and also discussion.

I am liking the Café spaces more than the larger, more formal rooms. The larger rooms are less intimate. The “space” also creates “space” in the event. It feels better when we are jammed in tight together. There can be less escaping. It feels more visceral – less intellectual.

The story: a man has a resort on a beautiful, pristine lake. At the resort the guests and the day to day of the resort creates a lot of Styrofoam waste. At first, he starts to store it, not knowing what to do with it. It grows and grows into a mountain – truckloads, he said, of Styrofoam. He has no idea what to do with it. It is his, though, he “owns” it and wants to take responsibility for it – and so he puts it (in loads) into a large barrel and burns it. He doesn't WANT to do this, but feels he has no other way to get rid of it without dumping it in someone else's yard. The moment is when he is going to light it, not wanting to, with these voices in his head:

1. an environmental activist friend, who is telling him to realize that the Styrofoam is just a stumbling block for him right now. Don't worry about it so much, just burn it. It won't make so much of a difference. He has bigger environmental work to do – to run for office, to mobilize. Don't sacrifice the big picture to this small moment.
2. his life partner, who is telling him to stop feeling so guilty – it is only Styrofoam – can't they get on with their lives? If THIS is such a big deal, what ELSE do they have to change in how they live?
3. his mother, who wants him to be happy – to stop worrying so much, to enjoy what life has to offer, including all the modern conveniences, let someone else worry about these things – be happy.

The audience was very, very engaged by the enviro activist – we could have taken 4 or 5 interventions on just this voice. There was a tendency, pointed out by an audience member, to get into a lot of trying to convince each other and never getting to *doing* anything.

An audience member did an interesting thing – he gave this voice 30 seconds to speak to him, while blocking out the other voices he knew were there and asked the voice to give him tactics of things to do. He chose the things she gave him carefully, the ones he found useful, like making the Styrofoam a community issue, not just his own issue, but rejected running for office.

This really activated another man in the audience who, it turns out, is a Green Party candidate in Ontario. Here for a conference, he came a day early just so he could see *2° of Fear and Desire*! He negotiated with the enviro friend for a way for them to take political action together, using the Styrofoam as a symbol that the community could rally around.

The partner voice was a difficult, scary voice. People were very quiet in the face of the voice, for a long time. Then a young girl, someone who had done a Gimme the Keys⁸ workshop with me 3 years ago – she was in grade eight then – yelled stop. She confronted the partner voice in a very honest and emotional way, saying that they had to face this together, that the partner should not be afraid of what would happen. She recognized the partner's fear and this is when we got into a conversation of how the partner is afraid of a slippery slope. If we acknowledge that the Styrofoam is toxic, that it is hurting the planet, then this will open up the issue. What are we going to have to give up? How are we going to have to change? The girl turned around and started to walk away from the partner, leave her there, and the partner had to make a choice then, and chose the relationship. They would have to work on this together. A very powerful moment from this grade 11 student.

(A sidebar – I remember these 3 youth. The girl was so very, very shy. She is now “out there”, articulate both verbally and emotionally. They came to me – 2 girls and a boy – and all said they had learned so many things in the week of Gimme the Keys.)

The mother voice posed a problem, as powerful Cops in our Heads do. She wants her son to be happy. This led to a deep conversation about what happiness is, and how we are in a point in time when, instead of having to be Unhappy, we need to redefine what makes us happy? Does generating so much waste make us happy? What if we redefine what makes us happy, at a very core level?

....one more, on the 16th. We are all (at Headlines) tired....

⁸ See <http://www.headlinestheatre.com/GTK/index.html>

March 16, 2008

Joker's International Day of Action on Global Warming (with pictures)

Café du Soleil

| | |
|-------------|------|
| Seats: | 100 |
| Attendance: | 123 |
| Percentage | 123% |

The idea for a Jokers' International Day of Action on Global Warming was brought to us by Adam Ward, a Joker⁹ from Fairhaven, Washington, in the USA, after he attended some of the 2° of *Fear and Desire* events in November.



What would happen, he asked, if Jokers from around the world all created local events on climate issues on the same day? What kind of energy could be created on this issue to, even in a small way, move responses to global warming forward?

After consultation with Augusto Boal¹¹, we chose March 16, 2008, Boal's 77th birthday, as the Jokers' International Day of Action on Global Warming. Why do this on Boal's birthday? To celebrate his remarkable work in a most appropriate way – by focusing into this ultimately important issue that must unite us, all over the world.

Emails went out from Headlines into a network of Jokers with requests to forward to other Jokers. In the end, there were 44 separate events in 25 countries on 6 continents! A full listing, with reports from Jokers is available here: http://www.headlinestheatre.com/2Degrees08/jokers_events.htm

The Café Deux Soleils: There were 3 Fresnel lights for bands and very dim lighting in the rest of the room, with a bank of light on the back wall that didn't work. We had checked the space out during the day and underestimated how dark it was. Also, the people at the café had varying information about what light was available. We turned one of the Fresnels 180° to bounce off the back wall, and thankfully photographer (Tim Matheson) brought some lights with him, that we bounced off other walls so that I could see the audience. Keeping the connection with them is essential to the success of the event. Connected to this is creating a lighting situation in which there is no big division between the audience and the stage. The more division there is, the harder it is for audience members to break that sacred wall, to get out of their seats and enter the playing area.

⁹ “Joker” is the term used to describe the facilitator, director, animateur, (think “wild card” in a deck of cards), at an event that rises out of Boal-based work.

¹⁰ Art work and Layout: Dafne Blanco

¹¹ Founder of the *Theatre of the Oppressed*.

The audience was packed in there like sardines – a great energy. The demographics of tonight were much younger than most other nights, including a big group of 10 or so from Katimavik.

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The stories came fairly quickly after the usual introduction and warm-up. The story chosen: “Soft rock or hard rock?”

“Sharon” is a young woman, lying in bed

after a sleepless night. Today she has to decide about a job, after a lot of procrastinating. She has just recently received a degree in Geology and is being “courted” by Shell Oil. She is in debt, can’t pay her rent and really needs the job, but doesn’t want to work for an oil company. The Cops that were identified were:

1. a job recruiter saying – you want this job, it’ll be good for you, there are lots of perks, it won’t be so bad;
2. her Geology professor saying – you’ve worked so hard for this – launch your career – this is a great opportunity;
3. her father saying – be successful – grab the prize. You need to pay your rent, don’t make decisions that will lead you into poverty – you need to take care of yourself first.

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The recruiter was very challenging. It wasn’t until the very end of the 2nd intervention on this Cop that we got some glimpse into him, about his need to have her say yes, because it fulfills his identity. If she walks away from the job, who is he?



The Geology professor was a very difficult Cop – there was such a deep silence during her scene with Sharon. No one wanted to or could think of a way to approach her. I asked the room about the silence

¹² The Joker counting votes. Photo: Tim Matheson

¹³ An audience intervention on the “recruiter” Cop. Photo: Tim Matheson

and people started to speak about how this Cop is so powerful in their own heads and then a woman entered the playing area and played a very heartfelt scene with the Professor, asking her questions about her own choices and why she is a Professor and not working for an oil company herself, if she thinks it is such a great opportunity. This led to a beautiful scene in which the professor talked about opportunities for women and how they didn't exist in the oil business when she was young and now they do and she wants Sharon to seize the opportunity she never had (like a parent). Sharon's questions, though led the Professor to question her own choices – had she done the right things, and why was this so important to her?

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People in the audience had very profound things to say about how the Professor, a person and also a symbol, was the “expectation” that a lot of young people face from mentors, parents, the “system” to excel in unsustainable career choices and behaviour. Sharon being clear about her own priorities, being true to her own needs and desires, was hard, but in doing so she also transformed the Professor. In transforming the Professor, she was transforming the “system”.



Of course the father Cop resonated with a lot of people and the approach to him was, in some ways, similar to the Professor, who had a parental quality. Once again, as in previous 2^o events, we got to talk about how hard some of our parents worked to create this unsustainable lifestyle.

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Something else that was articulated, by the young woman playing the father (who identified herself as having been a kid living in the street a short time ago), is that the distance between poverty and affluence is actually very small, and that the impulse to protect ourselves by taking the high paying job in the unsustainable sector is very powerful.

There was a tremendous amount of appreciation throughout the event – lots of laughter and long applause, and also those great silences in which you could feel the whole room struggling, thinking.

¹⁴ Audience members. Photo: Tim Matheson

¹⁵ Audience members. Photo: Tim Matheson

And then a wonderful round of applause for Boal on his 77th birthday, and for Headlines' Staff, and, I think, for all of us in the room and the communal event that had just taken place.

March 29, 2008

Saltspring Island
 Fulford Harbour Community Hall
 Seats 150
 Attendance 130 percentage 87%

The final event, this one sponsored by the Saltspring Coffee Company. They are doing very interesting work in sustainability issues, and have just decided to train their employees as “sustainability educators” and turn their coffee outlets into “sustainability education centres”. Pretty impressive.

The story: “Jane” lives in Ontario with her husband and children. They are “back to the land-ers”. They are finding Ontario winter, though, too difficult with this chosen lifestyle and have decided to move to BC, giving up the lifestyle that has so much meaning to them in regards to reducing their environmental footprint. Jane wants to stay on the land, she wants to make a ‘go’ of the lifestyle and all that it implies, but is emptying the bucket that they gather human waste in for the last time and, in that moment...there are voices in her head:

1. Mom, saying to her she should put her concerns for the Environment out of her mind, leave this harsh life, and be good to herself and her children. The dream was always impossible, creature comfort is important to raise her children.
2. Dad, who is saying, he has tried so hard to give her a better life, but she tried to throw it all away. She can have running water, flushing toilets, why make life so hard?
3. Sister, saying BC is wonderful, it is warm, the grass is green, there is no winter....life will be wonderful.

We started roughly, with the woman playing Mom confused about what she was supposed to be doing. She started by trying to solve the problem for the daughter, the opposite of what is necessary for the exercise. She must play the oppositional, “bad advice” role, so that the audience can have something to experiment with and push against. Otherwise, there is no tension in the scene and no reason to make interventions. We sorted this out, and then the evening clicked into gear.

The exploration of Dad led very naturally – in fact this came from the audience, not me – into the intergenerational, personal conflict generated by how hard our parents worked to give us this unsustainable lifestyle. Again, the room was very, very struck by the clarity this gives the “struggle”. It really is a personal moment.

The idea that worked with Dad the best was when Jane put down the bucket – something interveners found hard to do, as it represented the whole lifestyle she didn’t want to be leaving, and engaged with Dad honestly – reassuring him that the desire to live a simpler life wasn’t threatening. Dad could become an ally.

A very interesting thing happened with the Sister. A young man came onto the stage and threw down the bucket and agreed. Gave in – and agreed....and the sister transformed, now not wanting Jane to go, afraid that she would lose contact with Jane and her niece and nephew. This led us into a conversation about being authentic to ourselves, about how, inside us, we know what is good for the planet and how there are so many controlling voices out there, advertising, parents, employers, other interests, that pull us in unhealthy directions.

Lots of people came after, having been very moved by the event. One man mentioned to me that his partner beside him had cried numerous times in the course of the evening. I am also aware that Marcus was there tonight assessing the project for the Canada Council. He came after, gave me a big hug and congratulations. A good sign.

This marks the end of the 2^o of *Fear and Desire* events. There is interest being expressed in keeping 2^o going. I think this may be possible, as “one-off” events.

Appendix

Rainbow of Desire

These are beautiful exercises that take from 2 to 4 hours, depending on the size of the group and what wants to be accomplished. They can be used to explore an infinite number of issues, particularly instances where our 'internal voices' confuse us and stop us from being happy or succeeding. How do they work?

In **Rainbow of Desire** the group (or audience) chooses a story that is offered by one of the participants to focus on (let's say about a brother and sister). The storyteller (sister) picks someone from the group to play her brother. A short discussion happens to get the details of the moment clear. The brother and sister improvise the moment. This could be 30 seconds long.

The facilitator then asks the sister to start making physical shapes of her desires and fears in relation to her brother. Perhaps a desire is to run away from the brother, another to hug him. She takes on one of these shapes. Someone from the audience, who understands the shape, comes onto the stage and takes it on in her place.....becomes it. In this way we people the stage with 2, 4, 6 fears and desires of the sister. The same with the brother.

Why does a person come onto the stage to take on one of these shapes? Not because they know what is inside the sister, but because they relate what is inside themselves to what is inside the sister. We quickly move from the singular (the sister's story) to the plural (the consciousness of the group).

Once we have the two rainbows on the stage we can do many things with them. They can improvise with each other, the sister's rainbow can improvise with the brother and vice-versa.....everything being 'driven' by the facilitator so that it stays energized. In the process everyone learns huge amounts about their own perceptions that are attached to this story and through that to a specific issue or issues.

Cops in the Head

This is a beautiful exercises that takes from 2 to 3 hours, depending on the size of the group and what wants to be accomplished. It can be used to explore an infinite number of issues, particularly instances where our 'internal voices' confuse or paralyze us and stop us from functioning in a healthy way or succeeding. How does it work?

In **Cops in the Head** the group (or audience) chooses a story that is offered by one of the participants to focus on (let's say about a brother and sister).

In Cops the story could also be a monologue – for instance, a person standing in the tomato section of the supermarket, trying to decide between the beautiful GMO tomatoes and the spotted organic tomatoes.

The storyteller (sister) picks someone from the group to play her brother. A short discussion happens to get the details of the moment clear. The brother and sister improvise the moment. This could be 30 seconds long.

The facilitator then asks the sister to start making physical shapes of the voices in her head that are stopping her from dealing effectively with this moment with her brother. These are very particular voices, from ***other people*** who have taken up residence inside her head. She makes a shape of what one of the voices is telling her, and someone from the audience comes into the playing area and volunteers to create a character, based on that shape. Slowly, we people the stage with the Cops in the sister's head.

Why does a person come onto the stage to take on one of these shapes? Not because they know what is inside the sister, but because they relate what is inside themselves to what they believe is inside the sister. We quickly move from the singular (the sister's story) to the plural (the consciousness of the group).

Once we have numerous Cops on the stage we can focus on them one at a time, and, using audience-interactive, Forum Theatre techniques, experiment with ways to deal with each Cop.

The personal story becomes a metaphor for the larger, living community, and the theatrical event becomes a community rehearsal for dealing with the issues in the real world.

The exercise is fun, entertaining, and profound.

An appreciative letter

Dear David Diamond and Headlines Theatre,

I am writing to thank you, your staff, your board, and the working group and the funders of the **2 Degrees of Fear and Desire** project for including the follow-up 2 Degrees discussion group that took place last night at The Rhizome Cafe, in Vancouver. It was simply one of the most intellectually, emotionally, and socially satisfying issue-based dialogues I have ever attended.

Elizabeth Henry, of Fraser Basin, and her colleague, Alison Baille, of Pembina, two members of the 2 Degrees working group, were gracious, skilled, and highly effective hosts. Dialogue facilitation can easily go in a mechanistic direction; far to the contrary, Elizabeth and Alison effortlessly (and quickly) established an open environment within which an authentic, rigorous, convivial dialogue took place; ideas and insights emerged between people; and meaningful (and unexpected) connections were made between people working in very different ways on the issue of climate change.

The discussion went well beyond the 7:00 to 8:30 pm time frame: every single person stayed present and engaged in the conversation right up until a few minutes short of 10 pm. Yes, just under 3 hours! Our hosts dutifully (and gently) acknowledged the approach of the 8:30 mark and several times created opportunities for individuals to take a graceful exit if needed and for the group to draw to a close if that was what the group desired. At the same time, our hosts appeared open to the meeting continuing beyond 8:30 as the conversation between the attendees continued to unfold; which is to say, our hosts were very gracious in not looking at their watch and saying "Well, our time is up. Thanks. Bye." Given their daytime commitments, I was most appreciative (as others clearly were as well) of the openness of our hosts to the unfolding interest of the attendees to extend the conversation to what turned out to be twice the allotted time.

David, during the performances of 2°, you stressed the theme of looking at our own struggles to make core behavioral changes to protect the planet and ourselves (not about changing others). That theme of looking at our own struggles permeated the discussion at The Rhizome. Another theatrical reference point present throughout the evening was our shared sense of the reality of the voices in our heads giving us bad advice in relation to climate change. Again and again, participants in the discussion returned to what had happened on the stage as a way of making sense of what we were talking about. The efficacy of the your Theatre for Living approach to use the language of theatre to provoke dialogue about the issue of climate change was palpable throughout the evening, to say the least.

My goal with this letter is not to recount the details of the many practical ideas that emerged, provide a list of the many amazing and diverse things that people (in the room) are already doing, describe the types of email introductions people offered to make on behalf of fellow attendees, or list the kinds of upcoming events attendees will be inviting each other to attend. Instead, my goal here is to convey to you and your 2° colleagues a quick glimpse of how your choice to use the language of the theatre created a robust dialogue between people from three countries that was so deeply satiating that nobody really wanted to see it come to an end.

Today, the morning after the event, the emails of the attendees have already been emailed out to each of us by Elizabeth, of Fraser Basin. What happened last night felt like the beginning of conversations and actions...not the end of a theatre debrief.

Thanks to you and your colleagues for making such a conversation (and the actions that follow from it) possible. Headlines has taken what feels like an abstract issue

"out there" (somewhere else) that other people (not me) need to solve and made it approachable in human turns. I am grateful for your pioneering work and to all those who have aided and supported this important effort. I hope you and your allies will continue to use the language of theatre to inspire these much needed grassroots conversations and social connections between people. Your work gives me great hope.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Adam Ward
Artistic Director, Democracy Improv