SONYA COOKE

Directing Portfolio

DIRECTING PROJECTS:

Bloom Girl : devised, walking, environmental piece

The Fireturtles: an Indie Rockumentary

Antigone by Sophocles

The Woolgatherer by William Mastrosimone

Student films

Advanced Class Showcase 2016 & 2018





LSU School of theatre presents

PRIVATE STORIES IN PUBLIC

A devised theatre piece directed by Sonya Cooke

Performance times and dates:5pm & 8pm | Friday, Oct. 15th2pm & 5pm & 8pm | Sunday, Oct. 17th



MEET AT THE MDA BUILDING. WE HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE!

BLOOM GIRL

A devised, walking, environmental piece on LSU's campus

Premise:

In response to the loss of community and detachment from physical space due to shelter-in-place orders, the devised play, originally titled "Private Stories in Public," offered its twelve diverse actresses a path to reengagement with their communities and environment.



We had all been driven indoors and online for our education since the pandemic began. COVID made our internal lives louder, and a lot of social change occurred in that brief time. I sensed that our students were teeming with private stories that were held in and unshared. Plus, with theatres shuttered, we hadn't been in space with each other. We had effectively lost a sense of three dimensionality in our worlds, the longer the aftermath of the pandemic played out. During the pandemic, I developed a personal appreciation for the beauty, history, and largess of LSU's campus' buildings, spaces, monuments. So, I wanted to connect the two elements: public space and private stories. How does our space evoke story? What characters, narratives, themes, and rhythms emanate from a particular location? To heal from the alienation and isolation of the pandemic, the devised piece was designed to allow the surrounding environment to speak to the students. And by sharing these stories through performance, we could return to the live event of storytelling that we were denied for so long. The desired result was a woven narrative, driven by student content and storytelling. Audiences would go on a journey with the cast of this piece, literally and figuratively.



The Fireturtles: an Indie Rockumentary 2015



When asked to direct this pilot, I knew that what I could bring to the table was a strong through-line to the story and a sense of authenticity to counteract the playful text and outrageous scenarios. When on set, I executed a tight ship and helped to encourage a collaborative environment.

Logline: An indie rock band struggles to satisfy their greedy record label and lives in a recording studio as unwilling stars of a reality television show.

Produced by Not Normal Band Productions Written by Brett Duggan and directed by Sonya Cooke Starring: (from left to right) Kevin Stafford, Brett Duggan, Casey Schuckett, Jason McNichols, and Todd Risenmay

Plot Summary

In the pilot, Brett Brett, the band leader, failed his band mates by never reading their contract. To redeem himself, he goes to a record store and discovers a list of unknown yet influential indie rock bands, and The Fireturtles cover a 70s funk song, "Nunja" which is about a ninjitsu nun. Monkey Haus, their corporate record label, rejects the obscure cover, which they call "unknown kachalhoogan." Dejected, *The Fireturtles* go back to the recording studio and fail over and over again, writing nothing but crap. When they find out Monkey Haus is owned by AOC Corp, which stands for Arms, Oil and Cable, they decide to write a song that stands up for the little people: "The I Phone Song." Surprisingly, the song is a success, and it seems that all are united. However, there is a twist, Monkey Haus clamps down by installing spy cameras in their recording studio.



Sizzle Reel

Click here to view the sizzle reel: https://youtu.be/ZOOXtM7APVk

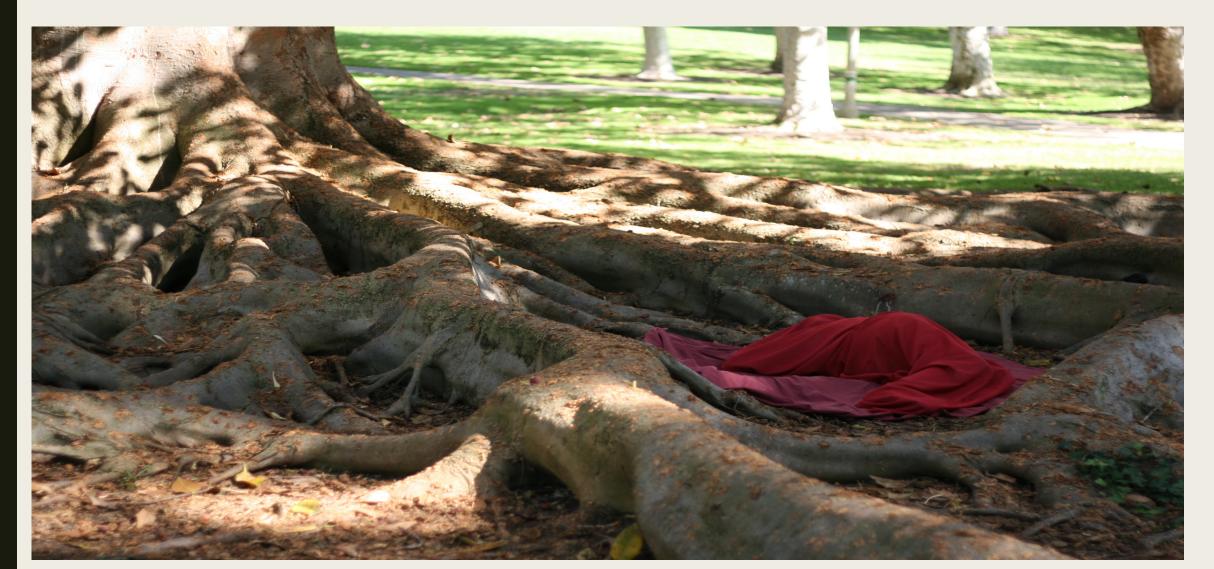




The pilot featured two music videos, "Nunja" and "The I Phone Song."

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pGS J77X2 Iw https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5t2 COrFIDfo

Antigone by SophoclesA Tragedy En FootFall 2011



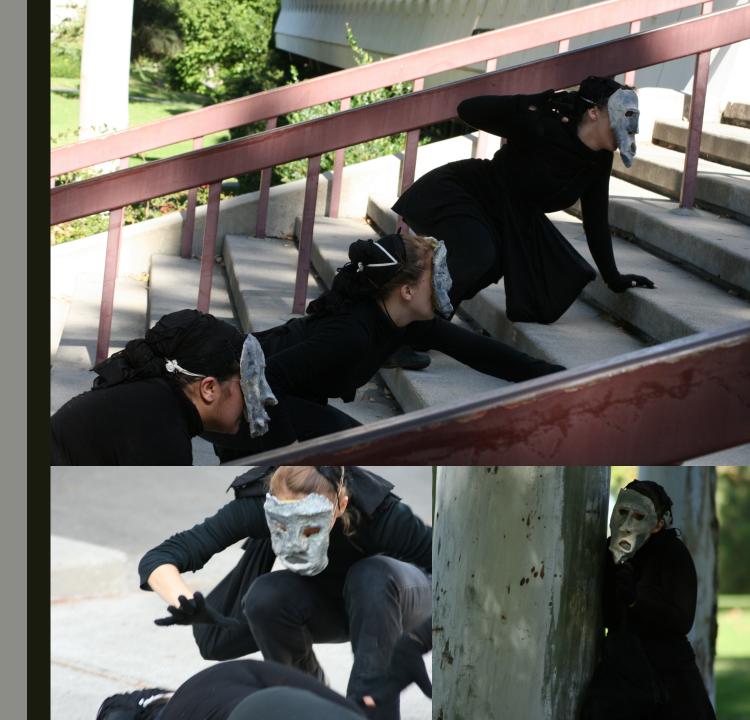
Plot Summary

Antigone by Sophocles is about the niece of King Creon, Antigone, who gives her deceased brother funeral rites despite his being labeled a war criminal. Creon sentences Antigone to life imprisonment, which sets off a chain reaction that Creon cannot anticipate. The play ends with everyone Creon loves or once loved dead.



The Chorus

Four actresses were cast as the Chorus. Wearing "Greek masks" created by mask instructor Eli Simon, the Chorus led the audience through the show. By singing songs and enacting "physicalizations," they helped the audience relate to and experience the story.



The Setting: Aldrich Park

I conceived the idea for the show while on a walk through campus. I remember thinking as I gazed at the well-known architecture of UC-Irvine's campus, this looks like the setting of a Greek tragedy! So inspired, I saw the project through with a cast of fourteen brave actors who were willing to traipse all over campus. I mapped out where to set each scene, and between scenes the audience would follow the chorus which would lead them to their next location.



Gender-Swapping

I wanted to cast the main characters based on the strongest actors I had auditioning, and hands down, actress Iris Gonzalez demonstrated the greatest capabilities for the role of Creon. With a woman at the helm, the audience viewed the actions of Creon with a simultaneously sympathetic and wary eye. With regards to Eurydice, I found her depiction by Sophocles to be steeped in feminine victimhood. By casting actor Jeremy Hohn, I hoped to remove the stereotypical gender trappings of a traditional interpretation.



The Audience

The audiences would grow with the show. Someone would be walking to class and get distracted by our passing production. We would start with an audience of twenty and end with an audience of eighty. People were drawn to the interplay of a fictional world with their every day reality. In the middle of a climactic scene, a college student would aimlessly walk through the stage space. The lively and unpredictable environment brought humor and lightness to this classic and tragic story.



The Woolgatherer by William Mastrosimone

Spring 2011



Plot

Rose, a shy dímestore salesgírl whose lífe centers around reveríes and daydreams, líves ín a dreary Phíladelphía apartment. Into her lífe saunters Clíff, a hard working, hard drínking truck dríver. He ís rough and wítty and just as starved for love as she ís.



Inspiration

I had long since loved this play ever sínce I had seen it in New York. Again, inspired by locale, I could vísualíze the drama between Rose and Cliff playing out in the Yurt on uc-Invine's campus. I was excited to work on a two-person play that would demand so much heavylifting between the two actors. Rachelle Rose Clark and Aaron Friedman crafted an interdependency that made their performances magnetic.



Directing Students' Reels...

At my studios I direct scenes for students' reels. For each project, we spend weeks preparing. The actors are in training, so we take the time to learn our process well. With full production value, we aim to create a high quality product that demonstrates the talents of the actors. https://youtu.be/nLc6CfCiPIM

https://youtu.be/Dclg8dfX7L0

Anywhere but Here by Alvin Sargent

Famous Quotes by Kevin M Reese

These are two scenes that we prepared, produced and shot for an actor's reel. For the first one, we wanted to create a messy and cluttered environment to convey the daughter's chaotic life with her mother. For the second, we aimed to create a lighthearted, playful feel. <u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vvO</u> <u>V51w1BZg&t=2s</u>

<u>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m8v</u> <u>Go27PZ68&t=2s</u>

Advanced Class Showcase

At the Actor's Studio of Orange County, we put on a showcase for agents and managers in Hollywood. Nine months of preparation culminate in this final performance in June. In the 3 months before the showcase, I worked to assign and weave together an assortment of scenes that demonstrated the talents of our actors. As director of the showcase, the scenes were blocked and sculpted with simplicity and specificity in order to tell the story without adding extraneous production elements. Our last showcase in 2018 was received enthusiastically by industry members. Almost all of our actors received meetings and most of them are now signed with representation.

