

Final Report: CEJS Fellowship, Ki Gottberg

Adapting, Writing, Directing, Producing, Marketing & Touring

The Last Salmon, a Chamber Musical for Kids and the People Who Love Them

I am pleased to submit my final report for this project. At this point, I am part of a bigger team of people who are helping with the myriad details involved in such a collaborative project: thus I will use “we”, rather than “I”, to cite the further accomplishments. As the initiator of the project, I continue to lead on many fronts.

Since the mid-project report, the following milestones were achieved:

- A final draft of the script with rewrites was completed.
- The 80-hour rehearsal process was completed.
- Lights and live sound were brought into the show, a backdrop was created for the “set”.
- The Last Salmon opened and ran for the scheduled two weeks at The Merc Playhouse in Twisp, Washington.
- We performed one school show for the 3rd, 4th, and 6th grade classes from Methow Valley Elementary school, including their teachers and 140 kids.
- We had three “talk-back” discussions after performances, where the audience asked questions and discussed ideas with a leader from the Methow Valley Conservancy: the most common questions were “what happened to Gill?” (one of the wild salmon characters) and “what can we do in our daily lives to help wild salmon survive?”. The discussions were lively!
- We spent 8 hours doing a live professional recording of the entire show.
- We created a website with edited samples of the music, information about the show (possible future bookings, ticket sales, etc.) and the original book from which the show was adapted.
- We solidified plans to bring the show to Seattle University on June 18 for two performances. This process included creating budgets and contracts, securing space, meetings regarding ticketing, technical needs of the show, transportation of equipment and personnel from the Merc, and working around the already established season and calendar in process at The Merc.
- We are beginning fund-raising work with the Methow Conservancy to create a tour of the show that will go to all communities that are connected to headwaters in Eastern Washington.

From the point of my mid-project report, submitted on January 26, my project The Last Salmon continued to unfold in a manner that brought me satisfaction and the Merc Playhouse great success: the show ran for two weeks. We had greater numbers in our audiences for this show than for any show previously in the 3 years I have served as Artistic Director. This was particularly surprising as the local population is not very adventurous regarding something they have “never heard of,” but we did garner good pre-show press, and during the 2nd week of the run I happened to be the featured artist in a big spread in the Methow Arts quarterly newspaper.

The most surprising aspect of the audience response for all of us working on the show, however, was the spontaneous standing ovation every performance received! Grown

men and women cried and laughed right along with the kids in the house. There was a palpable sense of pride that this show was a “world premiere” beginning life in this little rural theater. Many people stayed for post-play discussions to become more informed about the science and issues involved in the wild vs. hatcheries debate. People in the Methow Valley are obviously very concerned about the future of the area, and the creation of a theatre piece that speaks to an endangered aspect of their beloved home, performed by local performers, brought them new ideas about the possibilities for community engagement through live theatre.

Press and other web info:

<http://methowvalleynews.com/2016/02/18/last-salmon-tells-story-of-hope-through-music-at-the-merc/>

<http://www.methowarts.org/featured-artist/ki-gottberg-spring-16/>

<http://www.seattlespectator.com/2016/03/31/writing-upstream-with-professor-ki-gottberg/>

<http://www.methowarts.org/the-last-salmon-at-the-merc/>

<http://www.thelastsalmon.com>