

ON THE ROAD IN SEARCH OF STORIES ...

Events Reviews by Virginia Rankin

Going North ...

“Tell it! Move it!: Kinetic Theater Approaches to Storytelling” What a tantalizing title for a workshop. I knew nothing about the presenters, a pair who called themselves Eth-Noh-Tec, but their focus on movement, vocal characterization, and facial expression convinced me I had to go. And so I went - all the way to Bellingham. The drive was beautiful; the venue, an old Carnegie library, was perfect.

The workshop itself was wonderfully energizing. First we watched our instructors, Robert Kikuchi-Yngojo and Nancy Wang, demonstrate their sound and movement based style of storytelling. Before we had time to think, ‘I can’t do that,’ we were up on our feet, and moving.

We learned - by doing - the difference between punching and slashing, between dabbing and flicking, between gliding and floating. We learned to do these different actions with our whole body, or perhaps just with a shoulder or a finger or a nose. We changed levels – high, low, and everything in between. We realized we could make our voices punch and flick and float as well.

We applied and deepened our learning by taking a movement we had been trying out randomly, and using it in a sentence from one of our own stories. It was while I tried to float as the Crane Maiden that I received clarifying feedback on how floating differed from gliding. I started to see one of my oldest characters in a new way.

Watching the various ways the other participants used what we were learning made clear that this was not a one right way approach. Instead we were presented with new options. People used what suited their personality and stories to come up with something highly individual.

On the drive home I felt grateful to the good people of the Bellingham Storytellers Guild who brought this exciting California duo to their city. You can reach them at bhamstoryguild@clearwire.net You can learn more about Eth-Noh-Tec at www.ethnohtec.org.

Going South ...

On a recent Saturday night I found myself looking for an evening’s entertainment in Portland. I was pleased to learn that the Portland Storytellers Guild was offering a program at the Kennedy School. I had a picture in my head of this venue, and was amazed to find myself in an old school building that had been transformed into a facility holding restaurants, a pub, a bed and breakfast, and the “Community Room” where the PSG hosts several monthly events.

Four dollars bought me admission to a 2- hour program, featuring 3 different tellers -Margaret Eng, Lynn Fike, and Lawrence Howard. The theme was “Shelter from the Storm: Surviving Winter’s Cold and Warming the Human Spirit,” and it was chilly enough that evening to put us in the mood.

Lawrence began with a recitation of “The Cremation of Sam McGee,” with Lynn putting in an appearance as the poor miner from the South who could never get warm. Margaret then became an old Chinese Grandmother spinning a mythic tale while sitting on a stove to keep warm – what a wonderful connection. Lawrence then transported us to the icy kingdom of Grandfather Frost, a place he made so real I both saw it and felt it. Lynn concluded the first half with a story about a man who refused to go with Death until spring. I love surprising stories and this one kept me guessing until the very end.

The Portland Guild does three events a month. If you are heading south, check out their website before you go: www.portlandstorytelling.org