

Queer Representation in Contemporary Theatre
Partners in Scholarship Project Proposal

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Abstract

LGBTQ+ folx do not typically see accurate, non-stereotypical representations of themselves in contemporary media. Through adapting Connor Rodenbeck's poetic short story "SOAK" into a devised creative production, LGBTQ+ folx will have access to media that portrays the queer experience in a truthful, authentic, and human way.

Research Novelty & Impact

Connor Rodenbeck's "SOAK" is a love letter to the poetic capabilities of memories and the human psyche. Captured through vignettes, the trauma of one relationship bleeds into the love story of another. In the piece, Pale Boy illustrates his suffering through memory with a past love, Sunflower Girl, until he experiences a new love with Lightning Boy. Through poetic retelling, words and memory simultaneously burn, electrify, and drench Pale Boy until a moment of closure. Rodenbeck asks how one can cope, reconcile, negotiate, and understand pain as love in order to surface as someone who can both effectively receive and give love. - "SOAK" Synopsis

I share this synopsis to emphasize the originality of this artistic piece and to introduce you to one queer voice on the University of Denver's campus. ***(1)** My conversations with other LGBTQ+ students at DU have revealed that there are few spaces for folx to gather and celebrate. The societal shifts caused by COVID-19 have made it more difficult to find and participate in these communities. This project begins to rebuild those spaces of expression through artistry, improvisation, and collaboration in a practice known as devised theatre. ***(2)** (Author could spend more time explicitly explaining the importance in filling this gap).

***(3)** Devised theatre utilizes improvisation activities within an ensemble to design a performance. For this project, the ensemble will use improv to stage the images and moments featured in "SOAK". Through discussion, ensemble improvisation, voice and body work ensemble members will become embodiments of the characters they portray.

***(4)** This creative project aims to converse with other queer art as part of the trajectory of queer representation in contemporary media and attitudes toward LGBTQ+ people.

Methods

***(2)** The timeline provided illustrates a detailed step-by-step plan for this creative project. The scope of design work includes set, light, sound, and costume with support from a set designer, lighting designer, and technical assistant. Costumes will be integrated into the work of the actors and student researcher. The actors and I will collaborate as an ensemble to create imagery featured in Rodenbeck's "SOAK." ***(1)** I will either share recorded rehearsals with Rodenbeck or invite him to join via Zoom, so he can have input on the creative integrity of the work. ***(1)**

(Author could spend more time explicitly explaining how the project is likely to succeed and how the project connects to their broader questions)

Some potential risks and fallback options are as followed:

- *(6)** 1. An actor backs out – We will have at least two understudies that can fill in each of the male and female roles.
- *(3)** 2. Live streaming the performance via Zoom, Facebook, and YouTube threatens the integrity of the work – We will video record and edit the performance; time has been allotted for editing.
3. An ensemble member contracts COVID-19 – We will continue to rehearse via Zoom until that person is out of quarantine; to be safe, all other members should also be tested and act as necessary depending on their results.

Personal Impact

***(1)** This creative endeavor offers the opportunity to apply the ***(1)** theatrical skills I've learned over the past several years in a way that engages with the stimulating process of devised theatre. I will also collaborate with the author of "SOAK" which challenges me to consider the cross-sections between theatre and literary works. ***(3)** Through my partnership with the ensemble and designers, I will analyze the effectiveness of improvisation activities, critique my own approach to theatrical design, and construct a foundation for future devised pieces. (Author could elaborate on their background that prepares them for the project).

Adapting During COVID-19

To obey to COVID-19 policies as of 10/7, all design meetings will take place virtually. The ensemble (3 people) and the director (1 person) will rehearse with masks and socially distanced in the Byron Studio (Newman Center 184). Character lines can be pre-recorded and shared via speakers. If an audience is not allowed, we can record the final performance and share it or video stream it Live on Zoom, Facebook, and YouTube. We will ask that all ensemble and designers be tested prior to our first rehearsal. This is ever changing, and we will adapt as necessary.

Timeline

Orange indicates time w/Designers
Green indicates time with Ensemble

Blue indicates time w/Designers/Ensemble
Yellow indicates other project deadline

Events	Item Details
Reach Out to Potential TA Monday, October 5 th	I confirmed with Haley Hartmann that she will serve as the technical assistant and lighting designer for the project.
Apply for Supported Project via Theatre Department Complete by Monday, November 2 nd	I will apply for a Supported Project through the Theatre Department which helps ensure a performance/rehearsal space and access to a technical assistant.

Coordinate Project Details with Faculty Advisor Complete by Monday, November 9 th	I will work out all details with my faculty advisor, Greg Ungar including rehearsal agendas, designer paperwork, and communication with the department to not interfere with mainstage productions. I will communicate with the Department's technical director and chair as needed.
Contact Designers Complete by Friday, November 13 th	I will reach out to potential set and lighting designers who will be collaborating with me on the production team. Once finalized, designers will receive the text.
Production Meeting #1 Beginning of Winter Break, must complete by Friday, December 18 th (1 hours)	At our first meeting, designers and I will talk about the vision of the show. We will start working on preliminary design concepts. I will meet 1:1 with designers depending on need.
Marketing: Auditions Monday, December 21 st – Tuesday, January 5 th	*(5) I will circulate a flyer marketing auditions for the show to get more people to join.
Production Check-In #1 Before Winter Quarter starts, must complete by Friday, January 3 rd (30 minutes)	Designers and I will meet briefly to view our final design plans before auditions happen. Designers will provide me with finalized list of needed materials. Show materials will then be purchased.
Auditions Tuesday, January 5 th , 6pm	I will partner with the Theatre Department to participate in their auditions which allows access to a wider pool of people. COVID Plan: Auditions can also be held online via Zoom or by having actors/actresses send in recorded audition tapes via email.
Callbacks TBD	I will either wait for the Theatre Department to complete their Winter auditions before Callbacks, or I will work with them collaboratively. COVID Plan: Callbacks can be completed online or with actors/actresses in masks and at least 6ft apart.
Cast List TBD	I will either wait for the Theatre Department to post their cast lists, or I will post them the same day (1/7).
Production Meeting #2 Friday, January 8 th (30 minutes)	Designers and I will meet to start working on bringing everything together. Check-in to see if any other materials are necessary; order if needed.

Rehearsal #1 Saturday, January 9 th (2 hours)	Script read-through; ensemble team building activities pulled from “Games for Actors and Non-Actors” by Augusto Boal; introduction to devised theatre; design presentations; clothes sizes/measurements taken for costumes
Rehearsal #2 Saturday, January 16 th (2 hours)	TBD – going to be determined with Faculty Advisor by November 9 th
Marketing: Show Flyer Complete week of Monday, January 18 th	A flyer advertising the show dates/times and content will be shared via social media, Facebook event, and on bulletin boards if available. The flyer will also be shared via the Theatre Department’s listserv and other DU emailing services/offices.
Production Check-In #2 Week of Monday, January 18 th (30 minutes)	Designers and I will check in to see how things are going and what is needed.
Rehearsal #3 Monday, January 18 th (MLK Day) (2 hours)	TBD – going to be determined with Faculty Advisor by November 9 th
Costumes By Saturday, January 23 rd	Have potential costume pieces ready for try on.
Rehearsal #4 Saturday, January 23 rd (2 hours)	Ensemble will record their lines; I will begin working on creating designer cues; ensemble try on costume pieces; test streaming options via Zoom, Facebook, and YouTube for quality. Assess whether or not we should live stream or record. <i>If needed, contact Elizabeth Stacks with the Film Department to schedule recording for Dress Rehearsals.</i>
Costumes Week of Monday, January 25 th	Return costume pieces that are not needed; label costumes that are being used; thrift or borrow pieces from the costume shop.
Rehearsal #5 Sunday, January 31 st (2 hours)	TBD; ensemble and I will create a short commercial; ensemble should have spoken, lines memorized.
Production Meeting #3 Week of Monday, February 1 st (1 hour)	Designers and I will prep materials for load-in and tech rehearsal. I will have sound cues prepared, and I will start editing the commercial.
Marketing: Show Commercial By Friday, February 5 th	A short commercial will be created and shared via social media to advertise the production.
Rehearsal #6	TBD – going to be determined with Faculty Advisor

Sunday, February 7 th (2 hours)	by November 9 th
Production Meeting #4 Friday, February 12 th (1.5 hours)	Load In: Designers and I will bring in all of our materials to our performance space. Lighting designer will start hanging lights; set designer, and I will start preparing the set
Tech Rehearsal Saturday, February 13 th 9am – 1pm (4 hours)	Designers will continue to work on prepping the set and lights; I will have the sound board and cues ready to go. As designers are finishing up, I will work with the ensemble on vocal warm-ups and a line-through. Once the set and lights are ready, we will work on completing a cue-to-cue, focusing on getting the sound and light cues accurate to what our design concepts are in the timing of the performance.

Dress Rehearsals Monday, February 15 th – Thursday, February 18 th 7pm – 10pm (12 hours total; 6 hours w. Designers)	Every dress rehearsal will be a practice for the final performance. Designers are invited to be there Monday and Tuesday to work out any kinks in the systems or set. Afterward, the light and sound board will be operated by the Technical Assistant.
Final Performances Friday, February 19 th , 7pm Saturday, February 20 th , 7pm Sunday, February 21 st , 2pm (5 hours total)	*(1) Ensemble will perform for an audience either in-person, pre-recorded and then streamed, or Live via Zoom, Facebook, or YouTube. Performances are dependent on COVID policies at that time.
COVID-19 Back Up Friday, February 26 th , 7pm Saturday, February 27 th , 7pm	In the event that the production has to be recorded and then edited, the performances will be pushed back a week to allow for editing time.
Totals Designers – 15 hours Ensemble – 30 hours	

Budget Justification

Cost	Item	Quantity	Unit Price	Justification
\$450	Ensemble participation compensation	3 ensemble members	\$150	To honor the time (30 hours) ensemble members dedicate to this process and the performance, I'd like to offer monetary compensation as this time might be taken away from individual's

				work hours.
\$400	Technical assistant	1 technical assistant	\$400	The technical assistant will help with lighting designs and operating the necessary technical equipment for the final production; required by the Theatre Department.
\$400	Set design	N/A	\$400	The set design will include materials to hang photos, the cost of printing photos, fabric, three chairs, two tables, plates, silverware, and other props.
\$75	Designer participation compensation	1 designer	\$75	To honor the time (15 hours) the set designers dedicate to this process and the performance, I'd like to offer monetary compensation as this time might be taken away from individual's work hours.

\$70	Sound gear*	7 days	\$10 per day of use	Sound equipment is needed to play pre-show and post-show music, and atmospheric sounds throughout the performance.
\$60	Lighting fixtures**	10 lights	\$0.3 per fixture per hr	Lights are needed for basic performance ambiance.
\$45	Costumes and accessories	3 people	\$15 budget per person	The costumes and accessories worn by actors (shirts, jackets, pants, skirts, dresses, purses) will help develop the characters they are portraying.
TOTAL:	\$1,500			

*Cost of sound gear determined by \$10 per day of use, needed for 7 days ($10 \times 7 = \$70$)

**Cost of lighting fixtures determined by \$0.30 per lighting fixture per hour; 10 lighting fixtures needed for 20 hours ($10 \times 20 \text{ hrs} = 200 \text{ hrs} \dots 200 \times \$0.30 = \$60$)