

Langara Research Committee

PROJECT: The Secret Agent Story Workshop
APPLICANTS: Aaron Bushkowsky and David Hudgins

Project Details: \$2000 for the workshop of "The Secret Agent Story", March 14 & 15, 2011

REPORT

After receiving these funds Aaron Bushkowsky and David Hudgins (Theatre Arts Dept.) worked hard at fine-tuning the script of "The Secret Agent Story". A dramaturge, Ian Weir ("Arctic Air" producer and head writer), gave detailed notes for two separate drafts. Solo Collective, a local theatre company, with Director Rachel Peake (Jessie nominee, Outstanding Director 2011), also gave notes on the story and songs. Solo Collective became the company to head up the workshop. After two rewrites, casting commenced. Several grads of Studio 58 were hired as actors and the cast was completed with the following: Colin Murdock, Josh Drebit, Jen Lines, Emma Slipp, Medina Hahn, Andrew McNee, Jules Mackey, and musician Peter Allen.

On March 14 the group (including director Rachel Peake, writer Aaron Bushkowsky and lyricist David Hudgins) met at Langara College for the first read through. Rehearsals ran the whole day from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Several readings were given and many changes were made to the script to make the story stronger. The music was given a run-through with more changes. Musician Peter Allen practiced each of the seven songs with the actors and some taped it to practice at home.

On March 15, the cast and other artists met again at the college to read through the changed script and the practice the music. Again, changes were made to the script and music. The rehearsal was from 2-6.

At 8 o'clock the actors and other artists met at the Russian Hall to present the play to an invited audience. The audience was given feed-back sheets to write down their impressions of the play. The questions were about story clarity, character motivation and music. The presentation was highly entertaining with terrific response from the audience. Five artistic directors of Vancouver theatre companies were in attendance attended as well, including Diane Brown of Ruby Slippers, Norman Armour of The PuSh Festival, and Katrina Dunn of Touchstone; all responded positively to the play.

Written feedback was invaluable and overwhelmingly positive. The selected audience loved the play. Suggestions as to how to make the piece stronger included plot changes to the second act in particular and new music at the start of the play. Most loved the way the play blended historical fact with fiction and thoroughly enjoyed the main characters of Joseph Conrad and Olivia Rossetti. Their ill-fated romance was clear, as were their character arcs. After the reading, dramaturge Ian Weir gave detailed notes to help with the rewrites. And currently further productions of the play are in the works.

Thank you for the opportunity to research this play and to strengthen the story. It was a huge success.

Aaron Bushkowsky
Theatre Arts and English Dept. Instructor

