

FREEING HEAVEN'S SECRETS

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A Sound Art Performance by Luay Eljamal

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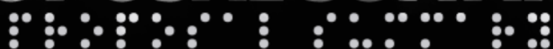


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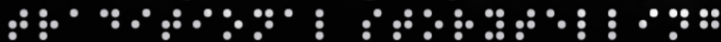
*All images in this proposal are from workshopped performance in 2014.

PROPOSAL SUMMARY



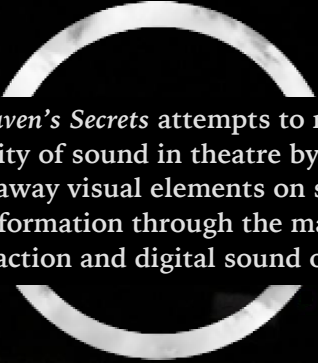
Originally workshopped in Edmonton, AB in 2014, *Freeing Heaven's Secrets* is a **digital sound art play** that seeks to resurrect the ingenuity of sound in theatre. It is designed for multicultural audiences, regardless of their cultural background, religious views or the languages that they may speak. With this proposal, I plan to further develop the script and technology, and stage a new production in Fort McMurray, Canada.

TRADITIONAL STORYTELLING



Storytelling was traditionally an auditory experience. People would sit around a fire-pit and listen to a storyteller recount an ancient story. Listeners used their imagination to picture the characters and environments in the story and occasionally had to self-correct the images they had created in their minds eye as they were given more exposition. Storytelling in this form was a personalised experience.

The introduction of theatre shifted storytelling from an auditory experience to a visual one, minimising the amount of imaginative power required for an audience to interpret a story. Instead, it asked audiences to visualise a story the way that *artists* imagined it, as opposed to giving audiences agency over how they imagined the work.



Freeing Heaven's Secrets attempts to resurrect the ingenuity of sound in theatre by gradually stripping away visual elements on stage and sharing information through the marriage of physical action and digital sound on stage.

PLAY SYNOPSIS



Scheherazade, a young blind girl on her deathbed, promises her father that she will visit him in his dreams and tell him what her heaven is like. On her journey to the other side, Scheherazade passes her blindness onto the audience, and gifts herself with sight, inviting the audience to experience her heaven through the **element of sound alone**, the way that she would have experienced their world when she was blind.

Before entering through heaven's gates, Scheherazade learns that she has lost her ability to speak—her voice belongs with her body, which gets left behind on earth.

The play follows Scheherazade as she learns more about how to navigate her heaven and the heavens neighbouring hers, with the intention of keeping the promise she has made to her father. In interpreting her journey, the audience is encouraged to question what their own heavens would be like, based on the discoveries that Scheherazade makes about her own along the way.

The play highlights and **explores the commonalities we all have** through the discussion of **what makes 'heaven' the place that it is**. By being detached from any one particular cultural or religious point-of-view, the show appeals to diverse audiences from around the world.

View workshop recording at <https://tinyurl.com/ycbky94z>



BLIND STORYTELLING



*SOUNDS of magical strings and sand falling to the ground.
Something heavenly is happening but SCHEHERAZADE doesn't realize it yet.
Her sand-dog has turned into her real dog.*

*Her dog barks.
SCHEHERAZADE sits straight up and stares at her dog.
Her dog barks, pants, and approaches her.
She has never seen her dog before, and doesn't recognize him at first.
She backs up on the sand furthering the distance between her and her dog.*

*SOUND of dog barking and then panting.
SCHEHERAZADE notices that her dog does not seem like a predator.
She reaches her arm out
The dog barks at her. He is happy.
But she pulls back.*

*She kneels.
The dog approaches her and she strokes his face.
She recognizes how it feels.
She smiles.
She understands who this is.
The dog turns on his back and she scratches his stomach.
This makes them both happy.*

Once Scheherazade enters her own heaven, her and the performers around her are the only things that the audience can see. **Everything else must be heard for context.**

In this scene, Scheherazade is seen touching something invisible in front of her. The digital, reactive sounds of a dog barking signals to the audience that what she is touching is a dog. As she continues to explore her environments and the objects in it, the audience is **encouraged to visualise the heavens** based primarily on the sounds that they hear.

This concept was shortlisted for a **DBACE award in 2016.**



TECHNOLOGY



|||≡ Ableton

Freeing Heaven's Secrets makes use of **Ableton Live 10 Suite**, a music and sound editing and playback software. This program allows for sound to follow the performer's action, and eliminates the need for performers to time their actions to a pre-recorded track.

14 speakers will be installed in the space, in order to localise sound on stage. Sound will be mapped between the speakers in such a way that simulates aural movement. Imagine the sound of a bird in flight coming from overhead, and travelling from one end of the stage to the other; or the sound of waves at a beach coming from underneath the audience's seats.

This all adds to the **hyperrealism of the performance**, feeding the audience's imagination.



ARTIST BIO



Luay Eljamal

Luay is a Lebanese-Canadian theatre artist. He is the **playwright and director** behind *Freeing Heaven's Secrets*.

As a writer and director, he approaches performance-creation from a **sonic standpoint**, and has developed a performance style which marries the sounds that are being heard in the space with the physical action on stage. His recent credits including directing Michelle Riml's *Sexy Laundry*, and *The Insanity of Mary Girard*, which was awarded with 6 provincial awards, including **Outstanding Director** and **Outstanding Sound Design**.

As a freelance Visual & Sound Designer, Luay produces videos, projections, sound effects, and musical compositions for various theatrical projects. He has designed video and sound content for *Quarter Life Crisis* by Yolanda Mercy (OvalHouse, London & Underbelly Edinburgh Fringe Festival 2017), *Lottery* (The Pleasance, London) and *The Slave* (Tristan Bates Theatre, London)

Luay also works as a **Programs & Communications Manager** at the **Multicultural Association of Wood Buffalo**.

For more information visit:

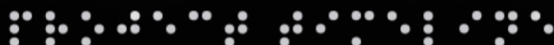
www.Luay.Eljamal.com



**“WHAT IS ALREADY POSSIBLE ON STAGE CANNOT
YET BE REAL IN REALITY. THE THEATER FLIES
AHEAD: FOLLOW IT FOLLOW IT FOLLOW IT”**

- Ginka Steinwachs

PROJECT TIMELINE



PHASE ONE

Venue/Theatre Research

Research potential venues and visit sites
Appeal to Artistic Directors of theatres
Appeal to theatre festivals

PHASE TWO

Script Development and Sound Collection

Dramaturgical research
Refining *Freeing Heaven's Secrets* script
Recording and collection of sounds
Building Ableton scenes
Venue decision
Promoting auditions & production team recruitment

PHASE THREE

Casting and Rehearsals

Auditions & casting
Begin rehearsals
Continue to edit Ableton scenes alongside actor exploration

PHASE FOUR

Promotion

Publicity & marketing
Inviting agencies to view work

PHASE FIVE

Pre-Production

Technical/dress rehearsals
Performance recording for archives
Performance for press & publicity

PHASE SIX

Performance

Public performances
Press release kit
Lessons learned
Post-mortem document

Overall project estimated at 6-7 months in duration

SYMMETREE THEATRE



Freeing Heaven's Secrets will be used to kickstart a new theatre company:
Symmetree Theatre.

OUR MISSION STATEMENT

Symmetree Theatre creates stories about marginalised members of society, where the main conflict does not stem from the fact that they are marginalised.



FORT MCMURRAY



According to Statistics Canada, **Fort McMurray has a higher percentage of visible minorities than the Canadian average (26%)**. However most theatre productions in the city represent North American cultures only. Additionally, 20% of our population have a primary language other than English. Most of the theatre put on in our region, do not cater towards these populations.

Freeing Heaven's Secrets is a **bare-bones performance**, which makes it accessible to audiences from all cultural backgrounds. The play tells its story through the **elimination of language** and visual elements on stage; a recipe that works perfectly for diverse audiences from around the world.

The performance **encourages its audience to think about what it is that individualizes us**, through the metaphor of "heaven", without making reference to any one particular religion or culture. It is sure to illicit a multitude of understandings and interpretations from its audience, due to its abstract nature, and we are eager to interact with and learn from the perspectives that Fort McMurray diverse multicultural audience can bring to our production.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Lucy Eljamel



