Storytelling Program

Since the 1970's, storytelling has experienced a renaissance. From storytelling festivals to corporations, people are experiencing the value and joy of hearing and telling stories. Whether time-tested folk and fairy tales, or personal stories told well, stories help us remember we all have more in common than we realize, and that there is much more to unite us as people than separates us.

Storytelling offers a vehicle for self-expression, and performance, not always available through other traditional mediums.

As founders of the Great Bear Folk Theatre, we've been performing at storytelling festivals, schools, libraries and private functions for over 25 years. We've taught storytelling at the University level, as well as led workshops and residencies, and done keynote presentations. Let us come share with you what we love to do, and you can witness and experience as an educator/program coordinator, the value of storytelling, and how it can enhance your curriculum.

We offer:

Performance:

Celtic Tales: some of our favorite stories and music. Tandem tales to tickle your funny bone, and a few to touch your heartstrings, with classic Irish folk songs.

Tales for a Winter's Night: stories and music meant to warm you up during the holiday hubbub. Tandem tales, personal stories, folktales and folk songs to celebrate the season.

Candlelight Hauntings: classic ghost stories and music meant to chill your bones and melt your heart. Nothing like a spine tingling tale to get you ready for Halloween. Don't worry, we focus on great stories, not gore.

Wonder Tales: fairytales, folktales, all things magical. We'll share stories that speak to the miraculous. Fairies, trolls, witches, dragons, serpents, and more!

Becoming an Honorary Crone: Lori's one-woman show. Using folk tales and personal stories, it brings light to the issues of aging, acceptance, and what is real beauty. Lori has toured this show, it's been highly praised, and is available for purchase on CD.

Ballad of a Meadow: Omar's unique one-man show, with original folk music, tells the story of the Mountain Meadows Massacre. A historical account, told through the eyes of Nephi Johnson, and asks the question "Can a man be a monster for one day, and ever find redemption?"

With a wide repertoire of tales, we're ready to entertain your group, school, and theatre audience. Have stories, will travel!

Storytelling Residencies:

Storytelling 101

We will spend a week at your school, teaching your students how to tell great stories. The time is spent in the following:

- 1. We spend the first two sessions teaching the students how to craft a story, using the elements of dramatic structure, plot, theme, description, etc. This is valuable for them in choosing a great story to tell, and then how to write their own versions of those stories. Folktales are a perfect medium, and they lend themselves to dramatic structure very well. Or, they can choose an event from their own life. We help them craft those events into a great story, using the same elements of dramatic structure.
- 2. We then teach the students how to present, or perform the stories they have constructed. Telling a story sounds simple, and once a student knows the ins and outs of telling, it can be. But there are skills such as voice projection, diction, eye contact, etc. to master, and we cover all of it. After group instruction and demonstrating to the group, and addressing their concerns, we divide the class into small groups of 2-3, and they will begin practicing by telling to their small group. This is a more comfortable way to begin performing, rather than immediately telling their stories to the whole class, which for particularly younger tellers, can be intimidating. It is also much more time efficient.

 This is also a two-day process.
- 3. By the end of the week, they are ready to put together a storytelling concert. This can be organized however the teacher chooses. Some options are in-class, or for the whole school, or for parents, etc. We are also happy while we are working with the school, to do our own performance, whether during the day for the school as an assembly, or an evening performance for the community, which may be used as a fundraiser, or however you see fit.

This residency is designed to be flexible for different age groups. From older elementary children to junior and senior high school students, we structure the residency to their level. We do not recommend the residency for children under the 4th grade.

All in all, it's a great week. Our usual fee for a week-long residency is \$2,500, plus travel, but this can include working with up to two classes. We also are happy to do a storytelling performance ourselves for the community. You may choose to use this as a fundraiser, or any way you see fit. Feel free to call us and discuss exactly what you are looking for, the teaching aspects you would like to emphasize, and what you can afford. We can usually work something out that benefits us both! It's a program that can be shared by English, Humanities, and Theatre departments, and benefits all.

Story Theatre

This residency is conducted in two different ways: The first, we come to your class and go through the process with your students, which is really fun, or we go through the same process with a group of teachers, and help them learn how to put on a theatrical performance that is lower stress, simpler production value, cost-free (as far as royalties and scripts are involved). It's fun either way, and as a teacher, you will learn either way. The residency incorporates writing skills,

1. As a group, we discuss different folktales, and fairytales, great works of literature in the public domain, even poetry pieces. Together we decide which story we want to put into a theatrical form. (For younger groups we love doing tales like The Bremen Town Musicians, or the folk song There Was An Old Woman Who Swallowed a Fly. One of our favorite presentations for older students is staging The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.)

We take into account the number of boys and girls, and what stories might work. The nice thing is folktales can be gender-neutral in many ways, (a group of robbers, animals, etc.) As a group we choose what story we are going to perform.

- 2. We then search out several versions of the story, if it's a folktale, read each version, and combine them or use the elements of each that we like, and start to form our own script. We tell the story as a group several times, so everyone understands the plot progression, and it begins to solidify.
- 3. We then cast the show, assigning character parts to everyone involved. We begin to write our own script, letting the children (with guidance) figure out their own lines. Using a narrator helps keep the story moving forward and provides a framework to work within. Once the lines are set, we can rehearse the story. It's important that the children understand that this is not an improvisation once we have established a script. Without boundaries it could easily turn into a free-for-all, and no one wants that!

- 4. Next we block the show. We guide them through staging their piece, teaching simple theatre rules (facing out, not blocking other actors, voice projection, etc.) This is a really fun part of the process, and exciting to help kids develop their characters, watch them begin to interact in character with each other, and get comfortable with the play.
- 5. We help the group decide how to decorate the set for their show. We highly recommend simplicity. Gathering things, butcher paper drawings, painting cardboard backgrounds. Anything is possible, but the point is to keep it simple. We are not trying to create a realistic set, that would be a nightmare! We just want to create a mood. By allowing the class/cast to plan and participate in this, they take ownership of their production.
- 6. We do the same thing with costumes. Hands on, simple costumes. We often use masks they make, or headbands with different ears, etc. Dressing up in the colors of their characters (brown for the dog, stripes for the robbers, overalls for the farmer).
- 7. We then practice as much as we can, and put on a show!

As mentioned in the Storytelling residency, our fee for the week is \$2,500, but we are happy to work with two classes, as long as we have the time in-class to accomplish that. At the end of the week, when they are ready to perform, two classes' work would be a blast to do. We are also happy, as we mentioned in the other residency, to do a storytelling performance ourselves, which you are free to use as a fundraiser, or a free event, or however you see fit.

Workshops

Here's a list and descriptions of several workshops we offer. Take a look and see what might appeal to you. With over 25 years experience as storytellers, we can also structure a workshop or residency to meet your unique needs and interests. The possibilities are boundless. Just let us know.

Kids' Storytelling Workshop: It's elementary!

This workshop focuses on teaching children good storytelling skills, beginning with how to structure a great story. Performance skills are emphasized and practiced, such as voice projection, diction, character development, eye contact, etc. Children will learn the steps used to create and perform a great story. This workshop can be done in a short period of time with a basic overview, or can be led over the course of several sessions, covering areas in greater depth, with more opportunity to write, practice and perform their work. Can be adapted for the age group of your choice.

Tandem Telling: Sharing Stories Two by Two

Telling stories with a partner can be an exciting way to perform. We've been tandem telling for over 20 years. Come learn from our experience, from both our mistakes and successes. You'll learn how to work with a partner, how to give and take focus, how to share the stage and become one dynamic storytelling twosome. Tandem storytelling is fun! You may become hooked!

Story Theatre: Is it a play? Is it a story? It's both, and it's a blast!

Take one great story, a stage, and a fearless leader, mix well, and the result is a fun show, proud performers, happy parents, and a teacher who hasn't puller his/her hair out! Story theatre is just that: taking a folk tale (say, The Bremen Town Musicians), learning it as a class, assigning parts, (cat, dog, rooster, horse, and a whole lot of robbers), and performing the story. Come learn how to adapt a story into a script, learn some basic directing skills, and simple staging and costuming techniques. You'll quickly see that theatre can be imaginative, fun, low stress, and inexpensive. This workshop can be completed within a couple of hours, or over several sessions. With more time, you can actually practice putting together a **project of your own.**

Quilting Your Story

Picture an old fashioned quilting bee. Lots of quilters gathered round a quilt, sharing stories and stitches. As a quilter and storyteller, Lori has discovered the joy and satisfaction of taking a personal story, or memory, and transferring it into your own memory quilt. Using her own quilts that tell stories as examples, Lori will inspire you, brainstorm with you, help you choose a life event you treasure, and then help you design your own heirloom quilt. Imagine the memories that will be passed down from generation to generation, as your family learns the stories contained in your quilt.

Storytelling for Adults

A storytelling workshop for adults. Come learn how to glean the stories you've stored in your memory for years, and transform them into entertaining, enriching stories. You'll learn the elements of story structure, from exposition to rising and falling action. You'll learn performance skills and techniques to help you tell with confidence. If you've ever wanted to tell stories to an audience, whether it be at a festival to hundreds, or at your next family reunion, this workshop will help you have the skills and confidence to dive in.

Tandem Telling

If you've ever wanted to try your hand at telling tales with another person, this is for you. This workshop is great for a storytelling guild, a classroom, or any group of storytellers. With over 25 years of tandem telling experience, we can help you avoid some of the pitfalls and ineffective techniques that we had to learn the hard way!

A few other suggestions:

Putting together your own storytelling concert.

Dealing with stage fright.

Vocal coaching.

Making your body your friend. (otherwise known as "Good grief, where do my hands go?")

Researching tales.

Discovering your own storytelling style.

Digging deep into your memories to glean story ideas.

Let us know your interests, your budget, and your goals and we can tailor a storytelling workshop plan with you to suit your own unique set of needs. Our standard fee is \$300.00 per 2-hour session.

Theatre Program

We have an extensive background in theatre and are ready to share it with you. Omar taught theatre at the University level for 25+ years, and has been a professional actor for even longer. He is a member of Sag, Equity, and has acted for television, commercials, and the professional stage. A playwright, he wrote plays for the Tellers and Troubadours Children's Theatre program at BYU-Idaho for many years, as well as other full-length plays and musicals.

Lori has taught Storytelling at the college level, and was the primary director for the Tellers and Troubadours program at BYU-Idaho that Omar led. Acting, storytelling and directing are her theatrical emphases, and teaching children storytelling and theatre bring her much joy.

Theatre Residencies:

Each of the residencies described run over the course of a week. We expect to use about two hours a day working with the students. Whether it's in-class, during

rehearsal time, or whenever you can schedule it, we will work around your time allotments. These workshops are geared to Junior High and High School students and community theatres. Not appropriate for younger groups, as the skills we delve into are more complicated and in-depth than they are ready for. Our standard fee for residencies is \$2,500. As with our storytelling residencies, we offer you our own storytelling performance, which you can schedule for either your school or your community. It can be used as a fund raiser, or any way you see fit.

One-week visit: We will come to your school, and for a couple of hours a day, over the course of a week we can help you turn your play into a great work of art. If theatre is not in your background, or even if it is, we will spend time with your cast, working on character development, staging, voice and diction, relaxation, and more. Let us help relieve the stress of putting a show together. It's a lot of fun, and the results are wonderful. You'll still have all your hair when the show ends.

Playwriting: We will spend the week teaching your group/class how to write a play. By teaching play structure, character development, plot, theme, etc., by the end of the week students should be able to complete a 10-minute play. We allow time for reading the plays together, giving positive critique and feedback, and a final reading. This residency can be presented to more than one class, thereby sharing the fee.

Mask Making and Mask Acting: This is a fun, hands-on program. We begin with simple paper masks, and then move on to papier-mache. We will demonstrate the technique of making a mold of a student's face, which is then used as the template on which creative masks are formed. We love papier-mache, since it's inexpensive, versatile, and repairable. We will cover the ways to work with it to get the best results. We introduce other types of masks that use different mediums, i.e. leather, foam, and more. We then spend time working with the masks the students create, teaching mask-acting techniques, and put together a simple show using them. This is a fun, low-stress week, and allows for a great amount of personal creativity.

Theatre Workshops:

Our workshops usually last for about two hours, and our fee for them is \$300.00. If it's not in your budget, or your available time to take a week to work so intensively, all of the residencies listed above can be broken down into smaller bites. Instead of covering all of the skills we work on in the residencies, feel free to choose what aspects you feel would help your students the most. For example we can teach workshops in:

Character development Staging Relaxation Voice and diction, etc. Play structure Writing an exciting character Effective Plots

Demonstrating the papier-mache method of mask-making Mask Acting

Stage fright and relaxation

Feel free to contact us, let us know what you need/want, and together we can come up with a program that you will be pleased with. Our goal is to use our skills to add to your skills, all the time focusing on your students' growth and development as theatre artists.