

UPSTAGE

THE

**AMONG
THE
ARCHIVE**

EMMA:
I never knew speaking a language required so much... bravery.

INSTRUCTOR:
My dear. Nothing on earth could possibly require more.



Click here for a **SNEAK PEEK** of *The Language Archive*!

HOW DO YOU EXPRESS YOURSELF?

THE LANGUAGE ARCHIVE

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Expression Through Writing

INTERVIEW WITH THE PLAYWRIGHT: JULIA CHO

UPSTAGE INTERVIEWED PLAYWRIGHT JULIA CHO TO GET HER THOUGHTS ON THE SCRIPT.

What inspired you to write *The Language Archive*?

One spark for the play came from a newspaper article about the last speaker of a language passing away. It was the first time I realized languages could be endangered or extinct and the idea made me enormously sad. I'd always thought of language as something persistent and omnipresent, and suddenly I saw how fragile it was and how easily it could be lost. But I don't think I consciously set out to write a play about extinct tongues. What interested me most was the kind of person who would care about such a thing, a person who would devote his or her life to the preservation of something that was impossible to save.

What do you think your play is about? Does the play have personal resonance for you and if so, how?

At its most reductive, it's about communication and relationships. But it's a play that also celebrates language – its beauty, inventiveness and variety. I envy people who can speak many languages. But I also think that even within the same language there are many different modes of speaking. And so the play is also about the languages within language – how a couple or even a person can have a language that is unique and particular.

On a more personal level, a lot of the play also grew out of my own sense of loss. My parents speak Korean but I never learned it. And so when I was reading about how easily languages go extinct, I really took it to heart. I've always felt guilty for not speaking Korean but in a way, that guilt has been a gift. Because without it, I probably never would've thought to write this play.

How did you research the world of the play? What kind of research did you do?

I read some books and articles – there's one article by Jack Hitt that is particularly well-written. But most of the world of the play is made up. I'm not a very good researcher. I sometimes find that the more I know, the more limited my imagination becomes.

Did the play evolve much in rehearsals during its development process/South Coast Rep premiere? Will it change for the NYC production?

I'd done a staged reading of the play with Mark Brokaw at SCR a year before the production as part of their Pacific



Playwrights Festival. That was a crucial step in the play's development because I came into the Festival with a new draft that I was very uncertain about. Somehow I'd lost my bearings with the play. All I could see were the flaws and I'd written a new draft in an attempt to fix the play and clarify things that seemed confusing or muddled.

THE LANGUAGE ARCHIVE
“IS ABOUT LANGUAGE AS A
METAPHOR FOR LOVE” AND
THUS ABOUT THE ABILITY
(OR INABILITY) TO EXPRESS
ONE’S FEELINGS.
– JULIA CHO

Mark had the cast read the new draft and then also read the previous draft and he encouraged me to go back to the earlier one. That was enormously helpful. It helped me find the play again and reset my compass. I felt like a musician who'd gone temporarily tone deaf, and that reading – plus Mark's invaluable insight and advice – helped me regain my ear. From there, we continued to develop the play at the O'Neill Playwrights Conference. And that was another crucial step because it was there that Mark and I really had the time

to discuss the play and learn each other's language. By the time we got to the production at SCR, the play was fairly far along. I made changes, of course, but they weren't major structural ones. I'll continue to make tweaks as we move forward into the NYC production. But the rewriting has become very fine-tuned and precise.

Can you describe what you look for in a director? In casting actors?

I think all playwrights have a similar wish list: we all want a director who's smart, theatrical, great with actors and passionate about working on new plays. And there's actually a fair number of directors who fit this bill. But I also look for an extra quality; I'll call it a good heart, though even that doesn't entirely capture it. As someone who's pretty private, I don't want to let anyone in I don't trust and feel safe with. And so I look for the good-hearted: people who are generous, warm and honest – as well as brilliant. It is my enormous good luck

that every director I've worked with has been just that.

As for actors, Gordon Edelstein, taught me a good lesson. When we were casting BFE, he advocated Karen Kandel for the part of Evvie. It wasn't just because Karen was – and is – a brilliant actor. Gordon insisted that we had to cast Karen because her very presence would bless the process. And he was absolutely right. I don't know how to describe it, but there are just some actors who bring good energy into the room. Whether it's because they're so skilled or so generous, they just bring out the best in everyone. And so when I'm casting, I'm not just looking for talent or whether the actor fits the part; I'm also looking at who the actor is and trying to figure out what kind of energy they'll bring to the process.

You also write for different mediums like movies and television. What are some of the different challenges in writing for stage, screen and TV?

I find all forms of writing extremely challenging. One of the particular challenges of writing plays is that as time goes by and life gets more complicated, it's harder for me to find the kind of solitude and quiet that allows me to sink into my subconscious. That's the place plays truly come from, not from external things I read or see, but from some deep current within me. I can't force myself to write a play out of an idea. I have to be still and quiet and let the play come out of its own accord.

But it's all fairly mysterious to me. Once a play is written, I can look back and see what idea led to it. But there are many ideas that never succeed in becoming plays at all. And why one idea deepens and develops while another idea falters and fades I still don't understand. And I find the entire endeavor is suffused with a certain sense of failure. You're trying to capture the sublime and so there's a certainty that you will fail, no matter how hard you try. Even my best plays have elements I'm not happy with, certain things I could've done better if only I'd been wiser or had better tools. And I have a lot of failed plays behind me too. I know they're necessary steps in my development as a writer. But I'm always aware that I'm capable of writing a terrible play as much as a good one. When a loose collection of writings and ideas begins to take shape as a play, I always hold my breath because it could just as easily turn out badly as turn out well.

Television is hard in different ways. TV scripts are like incredibly complicated puzzles. There's usually an intense time pressure: you might have a few weeks to write a script (though it's often shorter). And there are a lot of people to answer to: the showrunners, the network, the production company, etc. So you're basically trying to complete this huge task in very little time with a production schedule bearing down on you. It's been likened to laying track down before a speeding train.

It's also been a challenge for me to develop the muscles that TV writing requires. I've had to develop a better sense of structure and visual storytelling – and I still have a lot to learn. But there's something satisfying in learning a new skill and it can be fun to slip into someone else's world and voice.

Who are your favorite playwrights? Do you find reading or seeing other plays helpful? How do you feed yourself as a writer?

One of my favorite writers is Caryl Churchill. Her early plays are touchstones, of course, but it's her later plays that leave me in awe. They're just extraordinarily written: spare, theatrical and uncompromising. But I also love the classic American writers: Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, O'Neill. And I love Chekhov.

There are also certain plays that have left a deep impression on me. Jean Anouilh's *Antigone*. Sarah Ruhl's *Eurydice*. Horton Foote's *The Young Man from Atlanta*. Most of these I've never seen, only read. But they're so clear in my mind it's as if I did see them.

But seeing a great production is inspiring in its own way. I recall seeing Churchill's *Blue Kettle* at BAM years ago, and there's a moment during "*Blue Heart*" (one of the two plays that make up *Blue Kettle*) when children burst out of cupboards and run around stage. It was one of the most joyous moments I've ever seen onstage. And that joy could have only been realized on stage; a line of stage directions doesn't even begin to convey it.


Where did you train to be a playwright? Was your education important to you? If so, why?

If I weren't a writer, I'd probably be an academic so education has been very important to me. I took my first playwriting class with Constance Congdon at Amherst College, and she was a generous, wonderful teacher. After graduation, I did a brief stint in English grad school before going to NYU for a MFA in Dramatic Writing. I'm forever indebted to the program for bringing me to New York and giving me time to write. After graduating, I was a playwriting fellow at The Juilliard School. That was another crucial step, because it helped transition me from school into being a working playwright. In grad school, I was a student. At Juilliard, Marsha Norman and Christopher Durang made me feel like a colleague.

What advice would you give to a young person who wants to write for the theatre?

Write as much as you can. Write until you write something good. And then write something else good. Keep writing good things as long as you can. Everything else will take care of itself.

What are you working on now?

I'm working on trying to take my own advice. 

Expression Through Directing

INTERVIEW WITH THE DIRECTOR: MARK BROKAW

UPSTAGE SAT DOWN WITH DIRECTOR MARK BROKAW TO DISCUSS HIS THOUGHTS FOR JULIA CHO'S PLAY.

Why did you want to direct *The Language Archive*?

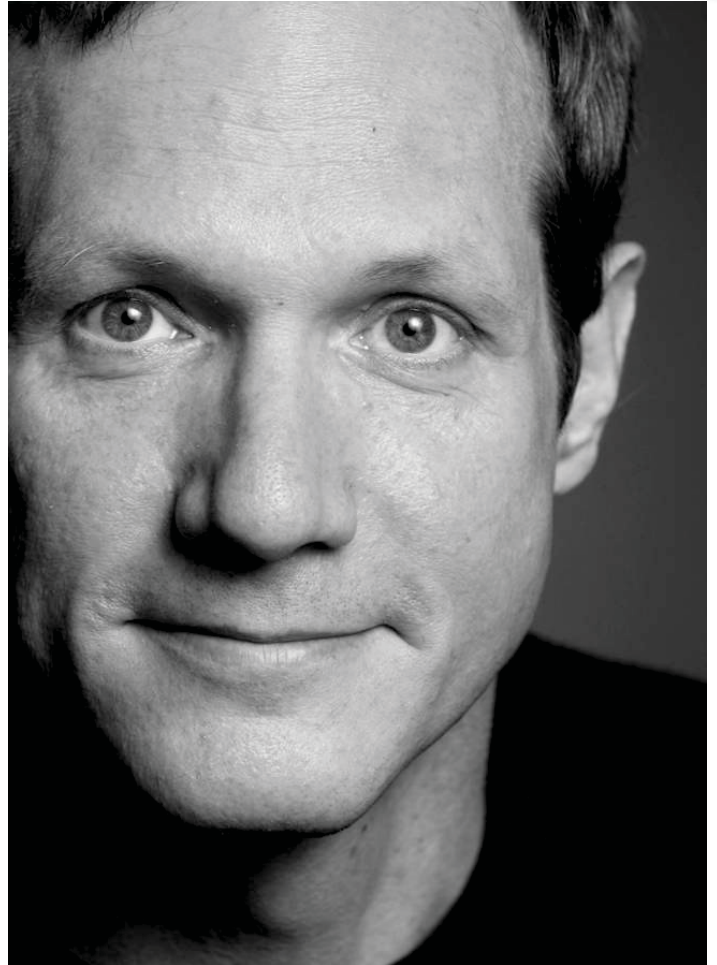
I love Julia Cho's writing. She is an author with a very unique voice, and that voice is bountifully apparent in this play. She has the ability to luxuriate in a richness of language without it ever seeming arch or precious – the characters always speak in their own voices, instead of as a mouthpiece of the author. And this play also captures a special and seamless blend of the serious and the comic, which is a “hat trick” to be applauded. There's also a melancholy stream that runs through the story which seems very true to me; people don't always get what they want, no matter how desperately they may want it. There is no easy ending to these character's journey, but it is a joyful, honest and rich journey every step of the way no matter how daunting. I find their effort uplifting.

What do you think the play is about?

It's very hard to look at another human being and communicate what is deep within your heart, and it is equally difficult to hear and receive that kind of intimate exchange and truly get what that person is trying to say to you. We all have so much baggage and so many personal filters that can distort what we're hearing, and we all have the tendency to censor ourselves before words even leave our mouth. To be present and listen, to be heard, and to really say what we feel takes great effort, practice, and confidence. It's not something to be taken for granted. It's the basis of being human – that need to communicate and connect. This story is about the struggle to do that, and how hard it is, and how often we deceive ourselves not only about what we are hearing but also about what we think we are truly saying. In Julia's play it is a struggle full of human foibles, great humor and passionate need.

How did you research the world of the play? What kind of research did you have to do in order to direct it?

There is a lot of information out there about the many brave and industrious souls who travel to the ends of the earth to preserve a dying language. There is actually an organization called the Living Tongues Institute for Endangered Languages. It's a topic with real urgency, and the more you read the more you want to jump on a plane and go help them capture a record of these cultures before they disappear from the face of the earth forever. With the designers we investigated a lot of different visual sources: pictures of all the many and varied archives that exist, the artist Paul Klee, the artist



Modigliani, photos of landscapes that all seemed to have no people in them and if they did there's only one (I think that's because many of the characters in the play are so lonely). We also were drawn to research depicting cultures that are being assimilated, and that is happening everywhere around the world. It's happening in Eastern Europe, South America, the Russian steppes, the far-flung corners of China, Nepal and surrounding countries – everywhere. It's very instructive for the world of this play to gather pictures of older folks (like Alta and Resten in our story) wearing clothes from many different cultures, and in the process making up their own, new mini-culture. You'll see a picture of a woman with an old head covering like those used 200 years ago, a traditional woven skirt from her old world, a second-hand down vest from North Face and Nike tennis shoes.

Most important, the physical world of our story goes to many different locations: the language lab, George and Mary's house, a cab, a train platform, the inside of a train car, a bakery, numerous outside streets, etc. It needs to be a space that can transform quickly and effortlessly, and yet encompass all of those physical worlds. There is also a timeless nature to the story, a feeling that is a sort of fable. So that made a difference in all of the props that were chosen and the costumes worn.

What were you looking for in casting the play? What traits did you need?

This play demands actors who have great dexterity with language, actors who are very precise and clear in how they verbally communicate. Now those are traits I think all actors need no matter what the play, but are even more crucial in this circumstance because this story is very language based. It's not motored by some elaborate plot. Julia is very careful and specific in her use of language and each of the characters speak in their own way with their own specific rhythm. So you want actors with a good "ear." Also, for two of the roles it is important that they be transformational – they have to play many different people in the course of the evening. The line between humor and seriousness is very delicate in the play, and not all actors have an innate window into that sort of light touch. And even though these people spend a great deal of their time covering up how they really feel, we needed actors with a great emotional depth so that we in the audience can feel the deep need inside them yearning to get out.

Can you describe your process in collaborating with your design team on this play?

Get the smartest group you can in a room together, and don't censor yourself. Tell everything you feel about the play, and share all of the research. You look at everything. Pictures and paintings are most evocative for me. The work of the artists Paul Klee and Modigliani were very influential to our process. You also listen to music. Go to museums. Everything is fair game. I go into the process with a strong hunch about what I think the active point of view towards the material should be – but that point of view is further fleshed out and further articulated in the work you all do together. I like to work with collaborators who have an interest in all aspects of the storytelling – not just their department. Because at the beginning, that's really what we're doing. Talking about how to visually, in three dimensions, create a world where when the characters enter, the story must be told -- it is inevitable. And that requires trial and error, a lot of "what ifs" that you test out, hang onto part of, and then throw the rest away until you reach what seems right. It's an exciting process that requires great openness and a love of collaboration.

Has your understanding of the play changed since its premiere on the West Coast? Will there be changes in the NYC production?

My connection to the play has of course deepened and grown. I've been working on this play on and off now for over two years, and the beauty in that long involvement is that the play gets to percolate inside me for all of that time – and the play is able to work on me, as well as me work on it. So often we only get a number of months to work on a project, and we don't have the opportunity and luxury to have a long relationship with the story and the people who inhabit that story. This play is like an old friend that I'm always happy to visit, or to have visit me.

The physical world of the play is almost identical to the production in April, but how the story unfolds on the stage

of the Pels will be a totally different experience for me. This is a brand new company of actors, so they are coming to this world fresh and with a whole different set of responses and instincts. My goal is to harness all of that creative output and guide it into the channel of the play as I understand it, into this telling of the tale. So to an outside eye who sees both productions the story that is being told is the same, the staging may be very similar, the set and lighting is almost the same – but the moment to moment journey of how we traverse the story will be slightly different because there are different human beings portraying the roles in New York. It's the director's job to give the story a specific and active point of view, but actors have a very strong influence on how that story unfolds in the rehearsal hall.

What inspires you as a director? Do you see other director's work? Go to movies? Museums? Travel?

Being a director means I get to remain a "student" of sorts my whole life – only there's no test at the end of the term. Everything I bump up against is useful for my work; it all goes into "pot" inside my brain and gut and stirs around until I need to pull it out for some specific project. Of course plays, musicals, movies, museums and travel are all terrific because they give your imagination more to feed from. And that's what I'm always trying to do: increase the reach of my imagination and my ability to put myself in somebody else's shoes. A director (as well as an actor and writer) must possess great empathy towards others. That doesn't mean we always agree with the choices people or characters make, but it does mean that we can understand their motives and have compassion for them. And just plain old reading of anything is a fantastic tool – the more I read the more life I experience. Opening a book is like jumping on a plane to a distant locale, or entering a time machine. I get to live the life of the story without leaving my chair. ^{UP}

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW HOW TO SPEAK...

Mary, George's wife in the play, expresses her feelings in writing and leaves poems around the house for George to find and read. Emily Dickinson, famous poet from the 1800's, felt quite similarly. In her later years, Dickinson secluded herself from the world and avoided talking to anyone who came to visit. She continued to correspond with friends and family however, by leaving them poems and gifts on the doorstep.

Expression Through Language



In 1786, scholars discovered that the “f” in the modern English language corresponded with the “p” in the ancient Latin and Sanskrit languages. This discovery began several studies to examine and compare different languages.

WHAT IS A LINGUIST?

lin-guist [ling-gwist] -noun

1. a specialist in linguistics.
2. a person who is skilled in several languages; polyglot.

A linguist can be someone who studies the structure of one or more languages in terms of grammar and word order or it can be someone who is fluent in many languages.

HISTORY OF LINGUISTICS

In the 1920's, linguists started to examine the grammar of language as well. Does “i” always come before “e”?

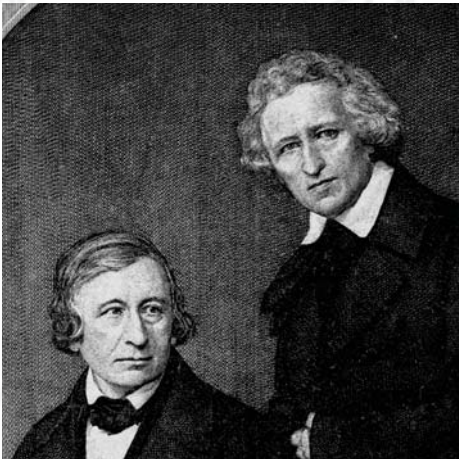
In the past 50 years, scholars have studied how language defines a culture and how it either separates or unites different social groups in society.

Throughout time people and linguists alike have searched for ways to avoid being misunderstood while also trying to determine how humans use language to express their thoughts and their emotions. Playwright Julia Cho's story is just one representation of the continued study of how humans have the ability or inability to express themselves through words.

How many languages in the world are there?

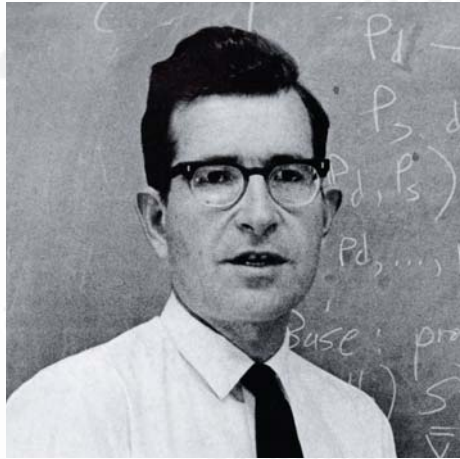
[Click here to find out!](#)

Famous Linguists



The Brothers Grimm

An evil stepmother, a poison apple and seven dwarfs; sound familiar? These elements belong to the story of Snow White, a well-known and well-liked fairytale from long ago. Snow White was written by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, also referred to as the Brothers Grimm. Born in the 1780s, the two brothers were not only fairytale authors but also German linguists who unified their culture by creating a standardized German language. They used their love of storytelling as a research tool and traveled the country recording the speech patterns of local storytellers.



Noam Chomsky

As a modern day linguist, Noam Chomsky believes the ability to learn a language is within us when we are born and then is developed by human interaction in the early stages of life. In *The Language Archive*, George somehow forgets how to use the language he knows so well. Chomsky sees our use of language as exercise for the skills we learned as children. If we do not exercise or use our words on a daily basis, chances are they will be lost to the language archive.



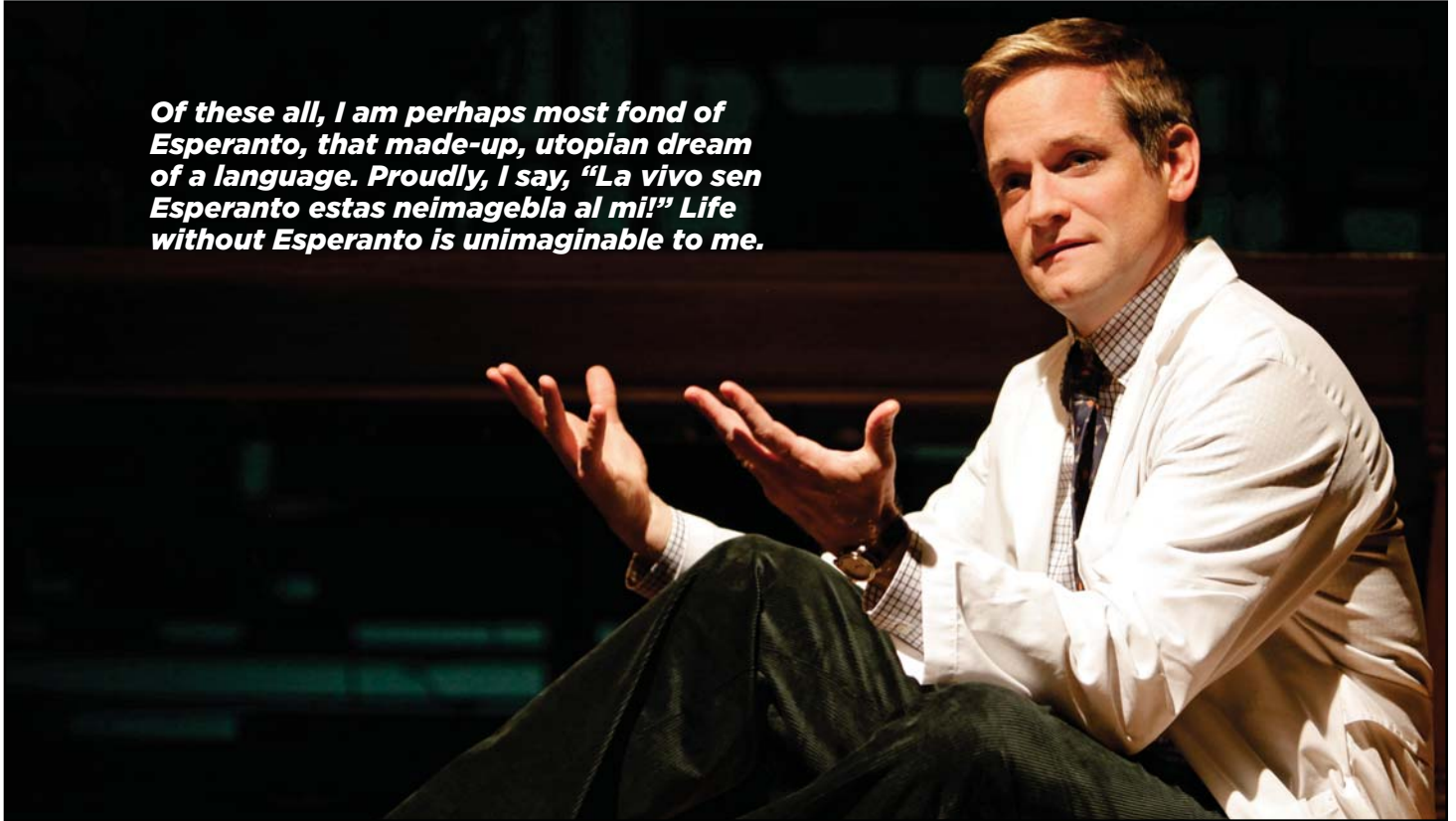
Paul Robeson

Like the main character of *The Language Archive*, Paul Robeson was a linguist who spoke several languages including Chinese, Russian, Spanish and Gaelic. He was born in Princeton, New Jersey with exceptional talent in political, academic, athletic and artistic worlds. After earning a law degree and playing football at Columbia University, he made his way to New York to star in shows such as *Othello* and *Show Boat*. He received a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award after his death in 1976 to honor not only his vocal performances but also his contribution to promoting world peace.

Check out this New York Times feature: *City of Endangered Languages*. New York has long been a city of immigrants, but linguists now consider it a laboratory for studying and preserving languages in rapid decline elsewhere in the world. [Click here for link to the article and video.](#)

Expression Through Esperanto

Of these all, I am perhaps most fond of Esperanto, that made-up, utopian dream of a language. Proudly, I say, "La vivo sen Esperanto estas neimagebla al mi!" Life without Esperanto is unimaginable to me.



WHAT IS ESPERANTO?

Esperanto in its own language means "hopeful". Created by Ludovic Lazarus Zamenhof, it is an authentic language still spoken today, with an estimated 50,000 to two million native speakers worldwide. Zamenhof set out to unify the world by creating a universal language that did not belong to one particular culture. He believed having one common language would open communication between different nationalities and provide a path towards peace, equality and understanding. *The Language Archive* playwright Julia Cho uses Esperanto at one point to help her characters find a common language and a moment of understanding.

ESPERANTO GLOSSARY

- Mir ni glessalla*** - Don't leave me.
- Kiu estas George?*** - Who is George?
- Depost kiam?*** - Since when?
- Mi amas vin*** - I love you.
- Bonege*** - Wonderful
- Jes*** - Yes
- Cu vi parolas Esperanton?*** - Do you speak Esperanto?
- Dankon*** - Thank you.

Click here to
watch a video
of a conversation
in Esperanto!

Expression Through Archiving

INTERVIEW WITH ROUNABOUT ARCHIVIST: TIFFANY NIXON

THE ROUNABOUT THEATRE COMPANY HAS ITS OWN ARCHIVE OF TREASURES FROM PAST PERFORMANCES. UPSTAGE CONDUCTED AN INTERVIEW WITH TIFFANY NIXON, ROUNABOUT'S ARCHIVIST, ABOUT WHAT AN ARCHIVE IS AND WHY IT IS IMPORTANT.

What is an archive?

An archive is a special collection of unique and rare materials that are typically unpublished and are preserved for longevity. An archive is a collection of materials that is generally maintained for research purposes and historic record.

Why do you think an archive is important?

In the case of theatre, you are dealing with materials that are used at most 2 to 3 months and then are seldom used again, so the materials are very significant because they hold the historic record of the company and its productions. Without the archive, the historic record might be lost and future generations would not be able to use these source materials for research. Which, by the way, happens all the time with theatre ephemera.

If you could choose to archive anything what would it be?

Wow! You know - I went back to school to study library science thinking I might work with teens. Honestly, I was not a theatre person. Now that I've started this archive, I find the collection so enchanting. There are so many pieces in a collection like this: you have textiles, you have photographs, you have three dimensional objects to archive. The costumes are so lovely! When I go to speak with kids I always bring costumes for them to touch and feel. Seeing the excitement on their faces is priceless. Even though I sort of fell into the theatre world I actually think it is where I was meant to be.

How did you become an archivist and if one of those kids were to come up to you and say, "I wanna do this!", what advice would you have for them?

My advice to someone who is interested in working in an archive is really just to volunteer a bunch of your time in different kinds of archives, different kinds of libraries to see what you are passionate about. It's an amazing field. It's very translatable. You can work in corporate archives, you can work in a school, you can work anywhere so it's sort of a dreamy career! I always say I have the best job at Roundabout because I do!

The playwright Julia Cho uses a quote at the beginning of the play from H.E. Jacobs and it says, "Why should I take up such a burden?...Who would ever finish gathering so much material?" How does it feel to take up the burden and be responsible for materials?

It's actually a huge responsibility. I take it very seriously and



[Click here to watch a video of more of the interview with Tiffany!](#)

I'm passionate about it. It's very exciting to be the caretaker of all these things but you do always have to think about the integrity of the pieces and the artists. I spend a lot of my time encouraging people to have that same kind of integrity for the materials, to appreciate what we have and know that these are unbelievable pieces but not to take them for granted. Archiving is a passion it's not a burden.

"Why should I take up such a burden?" I thought to myself. "Who would ever finish gathering so much material?" But then I did take up the burden. And I gathered—without finishing. And now, in the midst of the gathering, I begin the tale."

Six Thousand Years of Bread,
H.E. Jacob

How do you express yourself?

Pre Show Activity: Create your own Language Archive!

The Language Archive tells the story of a man devoted to the study of language. How do we identify meaningful words in our own lives?

George describes the purpose of his work:

“I am a linguist. This is my trade. There are 6500 languages in the world. More than half are expected to die within the next century. When we say a language dies, we are talking about a whole way of life.”

Imagine that your own language was threatened with extinction. You need to record the most important words that represent your way of life. Choose the words that matter most to you and your family – and why?

WHAT WORDS ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU?	WHY?
WHAT WORDS ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO YOUR PARENTS/ GUARDIANS/TEACHERS?	WHY?
WHAT WORDS ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO YOUR GRANDPARENTS OR OTHER ELDERS IN YOUR COMMUNITY?	WHY?

DOCUMENT for your archive! Try creating an audio file of all the words in your language archive. Or post them around your classroom.

How do you express yourself?

Pre Show Activity: Design the Language Archive!

One of the important settings of the play is George's Language Archive for lost languages.

How do we create a set design for *The Language Archive*?

George describes *The Language Archive* to his visitors:

"Where we are now is the very heart of the Language Archive, a 500-strong collection of priceless tapes and recordings of languages whose users have all passed away. It is an absolutely irreplaceable archive, the last surviving remnant of worlds and cultures that no longer exist, or languages such as Arden, Potowtuck, Gissgin, and after this week, Elloway."

Before beginning your set design, consider the following:

WHERE is the language archive?

WHO works here and **WHO** visits here?

WHAT objects hold these priceless recordings and how are they played?

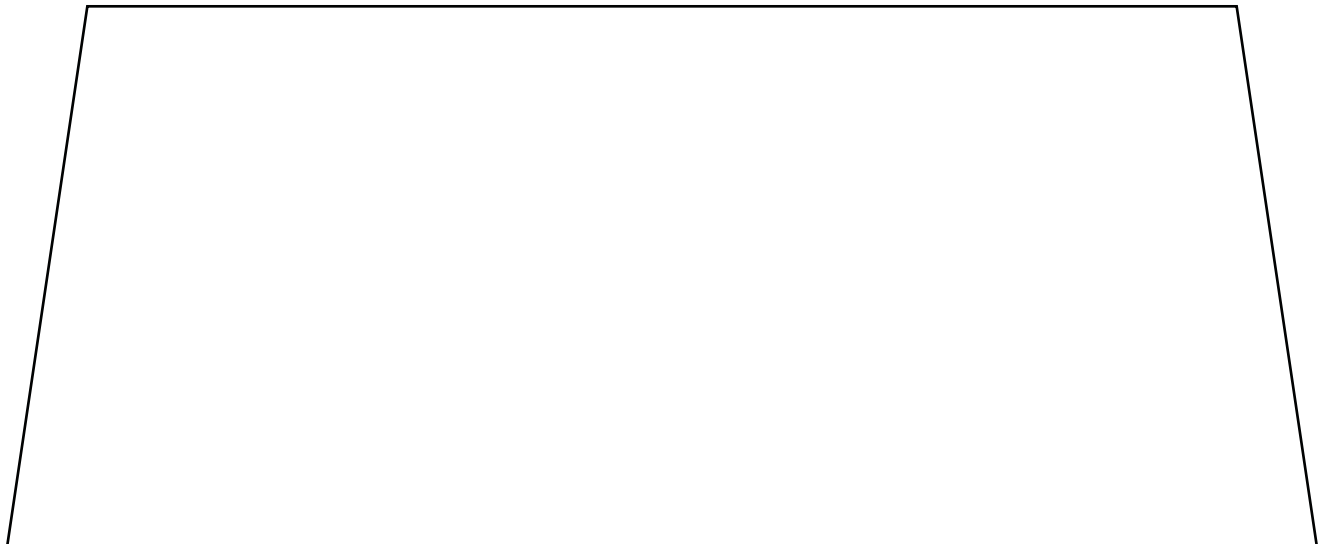
WHAT other objects, furniture, windows, doors, lighting, are in the room?

WHY does this language archive exist?

HOW does it feel to visit or work in this place?

Using your answers, draw the setting you imagine for *The Language Archive*.

BACKSTAGE



AUDIENCE

DOCUMENT for your archive! Display the set designs on your bulletin board.

How do you express yourself?

Pre Show Activity: Figure it Out!



All the characters in *The Language Archive* search for ways to express their feelings. Mary writes poems to express what she can't speak. How do we analyze the script to learn about a character?

Choose one of the following poems written by Mary in *The Language Archive*:

"She likes to visit other marriages like a tourist, But like a tourist, she knows she'll never get inside. Other marriages remain as mysterious as clocks, Whose pleasant faces hide gears she'll never understand. Is it comfort or woe that every clock, No matter how fine, eventually lags behind?"

"Husband or throw pillow? Wife or hot water bottle? Marriage or an old cardigan? Love or explaining how to use the remote control?"

"In a moment of sadness, sitting on the last, lowest note, she knew they both saw the fragility of their marriage when he said: Maybe we should try ballroom dancing."

Use the poem as evidence to make predictions about Mary's character.

WHAT events are happening in her life?

WHAT feelings is she expressing?

WHO is she writing about?

WHO is she writing this poem for?

HOW does she use figurative language to express her feelings?

WHY is she writing this poem?

WHY do you think the playwright has included this character in the play?

WHY do you think the playwright has written this play?

DOCUMENT for your archive! Challenge your students to turn their answers into an essay or scribe the answers on large paper.

How do you express yourself?

Pre Show Activity: Figure it Out!

Many of the characters in *The Language Archive* struggle to express feelings they can't put into words. How do actors use voice, expression, and physical gesture to express feelings without spoken language?

Vocal/Physical Warm Up:

Stand in a circle. As a group, explore the following sounds using voice and the body. Ask the students to make a gesture with the sound. After repeating each sound, discuss what feelings come up when making this sound:

AAAY ** EEEE ** AHhh ** OOOOH ** UUUUU

MMMM ** ZZZZ ** VVVV ** BUH GUH**



Gibberish Scenes:

Working in pairs, improvise scenes using the following scenarios in gibberish.

The rules are:

You cannot use real words.

You must express what you want and how you feel through your body, your vocal inflections, using only the gibberish words given.

You may allow a minute for partners to discuss the direction of the scene before playing it out .

Scenario #1:

A and B are married.

A wants B to say "I still love you." (A uses the sounds: REE KEE MAW, or any variation)

B want to leave A. (B uses the sounds: ZZEW WOE SHAW, or any variation)

Scenario #2:

C and D are co-workers.

C is in love with D.

D doesn't feel the same, so C wants to quit. (C uses the sounds: FAH BOO KEE, or any variation)

D does not know how C feels; D wants C to stay at the job. (D uses the sounds: HUH GOH ZZEW, or any variation)

DOCUMENT for your archive! Try filming the scenes. Students will enjoy analyzing their own choices of inflection and gesture.

How do you express yourself?

Post Show Activity: Stage Pictures



You've seen how George and Mary's relationship changes throughout *The Language Archive*. Imagine you are staging your own production of *The Language Archive* by creating tableaux (stage pictures) that show what happens in George and Mary's relationship. Each tableau is a frozen moment in time. Without speaking, use spatial relationships, levels, facial expressions, and physical gestures to show the status of George and Mary's relationship.

Working in pairs, create 1 tableau for each of these lines (3 tableaux total):

- 1) George: "She never wants to talk about it"
- 2) Mary "I'm leaving."
- 3) George "If you don't come back, I can't speak our language anymore."

Showing the tableaux, move from 1 to 2 to 3, holding each tableau long enough for everyone to observe what is happening (about 30 seconds per tableau).

Audience: What does each tableau tell us? What are the actors doing in each tableau that communicates this meaning? (Look specifically for choices in spatial relationships, levels, facial expressions, and physical gesture.)

How does theatre use tableau to tell a story?

Did you see any examples of tableaux in *The Language Archive*? How did it help tell the story?

Actors: How did you make the choices for each of your tableaux?

DOCUMENT for your archive! Take photos of each tableau and create an exhibit around your room showing the story your students have told.

How do you express yourself?

Pre Show Activity: Finding the Words Part 1

You've seen the story of George, an expert linguist who cannot find the words to express what he feels about his own marriage.

How do you think George would express himself if he could find the words?

Write about George's inability to express himself.

Consider the following questions:

What events happen to George as a result of his inability to express himself?

How does George react to these events?

How do you think he feels?

George says: *"Even with all my languages, there still aren't the right words."*

Why do you think George can't find the words to express his feelings?

If George could express himself through words, what would he say?

Write a monologue from George's point of view.

DOCUMENT for your archive! Share the monologues with others.



How do you express yourself?

Post Show Activity: Finding the Words Part 2

You've seen how the characters of *The Language Archive* search for different ways to express their feelings.

Look at this picture and try to remember what was happening in this moment:



Write 3 descriptions for this image, using language in 3 different ways:

1. Write a clear description of the scene.

2. Text it: How would you describe this scene in the language of text messaging?

3. Create a METAPHOR that describes what is happening in this moment.

HINT: a **METAPHOR** is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase that ordinarily designates one thing is used to designate another in order to make a comparison or express an idea.

In *The Language Archive*, Alta uses the metaphor, "This is not just about plane ride, not just about arm rest, no this is about much bigger fish. This is what my husband is like, not just on plane but in life. In life we are on plane, we are on journey, and always, ALWAYS he takes the window seat."

Write your metaphor!

DOCUMENT for your archive! Display these descriptions in sets of three.

How do you express yourself?

Post Show Activity: Strangers On a Train



In *The Language Archive*, several magical encounters occur as the characters take their journeys.

- At the train station, Mary meets the baker who provides her with the bread starter and the bakery, which helps her find happiness in her life.
- On the train Emma meets the inventor of Esperanto, who gives her a prescription to recover from unrequited love.

Use your imagination to think about a scene where a magical encounter occurs in your own life.

- You are on a train (**WHERE** are you going?)
- You need to get away from something or someone (**WHY** are you going?)
- You meet a stranger (**WHO** is it?)
- The stranger gives you something (**WHAT** is it?)
- This something will change your life in a magical way (**HOW** does this change your life?)

Write or improvise the scene between you and the stranger or write a monologue telling the audience what you received and how it changed your life.

DOCUMENT for your archive! Capture the scene on the train in written form or on film.

Glossary

Alacrity - a quick response

Basque - a region in northern Spain

Cacophony - harsh sounds

A coup - a brilliant and sudden act

Entendu - French term meaning “understood”

Fragility - easily broken or destroyed

Impenetrable - not able to be accessed

Inexplicably - cannot be explained

Insufferable - unbearable

Lugubrious - dark, dramatic, exaggerated

Monotonous - the same thing over and over again

Odious - deserving of hate

Operative - having power or effect; significant

Ophthalmologist - eye doctor

Precipice - a steep or overhanging place

Pre-ordained - to announce in advance

Prognosis - term doctors use to predict recovery from an illness

Rakish - stylish

Relegate - to assign to an inferior position, place or condition

Reprehensibly - worthy of or deserving

Shaman - someone who uses magic to heal the sick, control events and reveal what cannot be seen with the human eye

Sisyphean - endless work; refers to Sisyphus who was a king doomed to roll a large boulder up a hill for eternity

Social assimilation - people of different cultures are absorbed into the dominant culture

Susurrations - a whispering sound

Ticker tape - thin ribbon of paper that ran through a machine that printed out stock information before television and computers

Unrequited - not returned

CLICK HERE FOR
THE ESPERANTO
TO ENGLISH
DICTIONARY!

Resources

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When you get to the theatre...

Below are some helpful tips for making your theatre-going experience more enjoyable.

TICKET POLICY

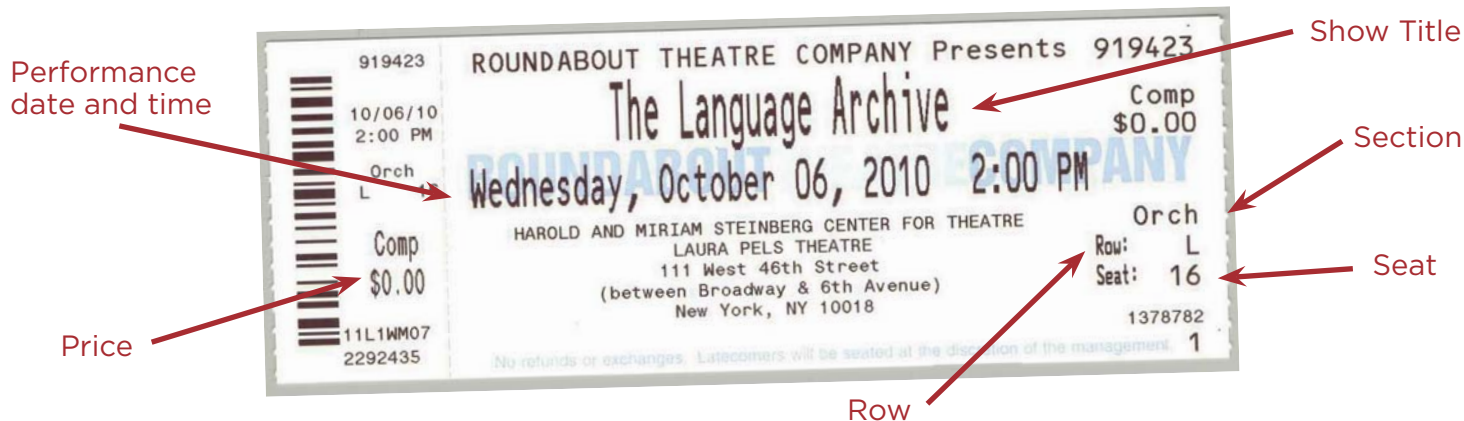
As a student participant in producing partners, page to stage or theatre access, you will receive a discounted ticket to the show from your teacher on the day of the performance. you will notice that the ticket indicates the section, row and number of your assigned seat. when you show your ticket to the usher inside the theatre, he or she will show you where your seat is located. these tickets are not transferable and you must sit in the seat assigned to you.

PROGRAMS

All the theatre patrons are provided with a program that includes information about the people who put the production together. in the "who's who" section, for example, you can read about the actors' roles in other plays and films, perhaps some you have already seen.

AUDIENCE ETIQUETTE

As you watch the show please remember that the biggest difference between live theatre and a film is that the actors can see you and hear you and your behavior can affect their performance. they appreciate your applause and laughter, but can be easily distracted by people talking or getting up in the middle of the show. so please save your comments or need to use the rest room for intermission. also, there is no food permitted in the theatre, no picture taking or recording of any kind, and if you have a cell phone, beeper, alarm watch or anything else that might make noise, please turn it off before the show begins.



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