



Statement from Ginger Dayle on the play *ROSEBURG* for Roseburg, Oregon area media

My name is Ginger Dayle and I am the Founding Artistic Director of New City Stage Company as well as the writer and director of the new play *Roseburg*. While the play has been met with great critical acclaim in Philadelphia where it is currently receiving a workshop production, there have been several people in the greater Roseburg, Oregon area who have been questioning the existence of the show and are attempting to censor myself and the company. I would like to clear the air and explain what the show is about, what it is intended to do, and the greater theatre community.

First of all, I am an established theatre-maker who specializes in historical theatre. I have written, directed, acted in, and produced plays about history and historical events regionally, off and on Broadway, as well as plays dealing with contemporary issues for over 10 years. I received the 2013 Broadway World Award for Best New Work for my direction of *RFK*, a one man show about Robert F. Kennedy. I also received multiple accolades for my original play *Hinckley*, which used the facts of the case along with my own creative speculation to determine what led John Hinckley, Jr. to attempt to assassinate President Reagan. I have a lifelong affinity and personal connection to the Kennedy legacy and wanted to bring back the character of Bobby Kennedy after our 3 successful runs of *RFK* concluded. I also wanted to showcase the extremely talented actor, Russ Widdall, whose portrayal touched many of the over 6000 people who saw the show. So I started researching a play to show a different side of Bobby, and to also featured other actors. I started with his presidential campaign and when the tragedy at Umpqua Community College happened several news outlets showed the speech he gave in Roseburg less than 2 weeks before his assassination. That speech was about increasing gun control laws and a crowd of hecklers held up anti-gun control signs. I knew right away that needed to be part of my play. And when I looked at how the Umpqua shooting and so many others have played out, I realized that in the nearly 47 years since that speech was given, not much had changed.

Gun control is an issue that has always been close to my heart. I have lost relatives and friends to gun violence, and I grew up in the wake of the Columbine tragedy. The intention of this play is to use specific incidents — namely Bobby Kennedy’s gun control speech and the Umpqua shooting, both which happened in Roseburg — to explore the issue. I also brought in our educational ensemble, Voices for a New City, to get the perspective of recent and current college students on school shootings.

With all art based on history, there are artistic liberties a playwright or screenwriter can take and I make no illusions about weaving my interpretation into factual evidence. Peter Morgan did this with the drunken phone call former President Nixon makes to reporter Davis Frost in *Frost/Nixon*, an event that never occurred. Steven Spielberg certainly did this with the majority of *Saving Private Ryan*. Lin Manuel Miranda took some historic liberties in *Hamilton*. Even *The Laramie Project* is full of interpretations and opinions on those interviewed on the attack of Matthew Shepard.

I used factual evidence obtained from publicly available news sources. For the characters of the shooter and his mother, I researched school shooters in general and used that as a platform to show the many the similar qualities they have. It was never my intention with this piece to offend or harm anyone. I set out

to write about Bobby Kennedy and found a correlation to that speech and the awful shooting that happened in your hometown. I wanted to show that the more things change, the more they stay the same. Other shootings are referenced in the play.

Additionally, all of the work myself and the ensemble has done in *Roseburg* falls under the purview of “Fair Use.” The United States Copyright Office describes it as following:

“Fair use is a legal doctrine that *promotes freedom of expression* by permitting the unlicensed use of copyright-protected works in certain circumstances. Section 107 of the Copyright Act provides the statutory framework for determining whether something is a fair use and identifies certain types of uses—such as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching, scholarship, and research—as examples of activities that may qualify as fair use. Section 107 calls for consideration of four factors in evaluating a question of fair use.”

The writing of this play falls under the first factor:

“Purpose and character of the use, including whether the use is of a commercial nature or is for nonprofit educational purposes.”

More information can be found here: <http://www.copyright.gov/fair-use/more-info.html>

Without fair use *Saturday Night Live* wouldn't be able to create their timely sketch comedy, the award-winning movie *Lincoln* would have never been made, and the local newspapers wouldn't be able to report on any story without getting the permission of every single person mentioned first. It would be a world where no one could speak of anything that they didn't solely and exclusively create or experience themselves.

New City Stage Company is a 501(c)3 non-profit theatre company based in Philadelphia. We have a budget of less than \$250,000 and less than 25% of our revenue comes from ticket sales. The rest of the money must be raised through individual donations, fundraising events, and foundational grants. I often donate thousands of my own dollars to make projects I really believe in happen. All of the money raised goes to the company expenses, such as rental of the theatre, technical elements, marketing and printing expenses, and salaries for our performers and designers. For those who think we're “making money off of a tragedy” you couldn't be any further from the truth. Yes, the actors have been compensated and if the ticket sales are reasonably high then I may be compensated as a director and/or playwright but within the realm of industry standards, which are set by the performing arts unions.

With all of my projects I pour my heart and soul into them and hope they lead to thoughtful and civilized discussion. Through the research I did, I grew a strong affinity for the town of Roseburg, past and present. It is a shame that there are people there who are ill-informed about the play and the healing effect of art, instead using this as an opportunity to attack the company and me personally. I have received death threats, hate mail, have been called misogynistic names, and there have been demands to shut down the play from people who haven't even seen it. People have attacked me via phone, emails and social media, even about things that have nothing to do with the play. It is unfortunate that there are people who have turned their anger at the deceased shooter toward a living person who only trying to bring more light to the larger issues in the play. I am disappointed in the vitriol that has been used to try to harm me as an artist and person.

On the other hand, I have also received many messages that invoke support and intellectual curiosity about *Roseburg*. Several emails have been from people who were at the rally RFK spoke at in 1968 and were thrilled that this event has not been forgotten. There are those who understand the need to talk about school shootings and gun control together because of what little has changed since 1968, and especially since the Columbine shooting.

Since the play is not published I cannot email it to anyone for copyright infringement issues but am talking to my representation this week about publishing a portion. We cannot film it without the permission on Actor's Equity and that involves a cost to the company that has not been factored into the budget. Perhaps we will be able to bring the show to your community at one point but for now productions are focused on the east coast. When the script is published it will be available for purchase to be read and licensed for performance and readings.

I do hope the attention your community has received helps to unite you all. As the Democratic National Convention approaches less than a mile away from our theatre, we realize how the presidential campaign of 2016 is not that much different than that of 1968. This is a time to unite as a country and talk about our gun epidemic. Let's use the power of social media to inform and debate, not destroy and attack.

Sincerely,

Ginger Dayle

*Playwright and director of **Roseburg***

www.NewCityStage.org