

October, Big Sur (On Time)

By Sarah Rose Leonard (she/her)

10/16/20

I think the best thing about dramaturgy is no one has any idea what it is.

I've been lucky enough to be a working dramaturg for ten years and I've defined what my work every single time.

I love dramaturgy because it blends, bends, self-defines, is collaborative by definition.

Making worlds up with other artists has been my escape and my joy.

(I should warn you that I've been following Taylor Mac's advice of not taking in news that is predictive, so I it follows that I am unable to write a predictive or prescriptive essay. I can only write intimately, in the immediate now.)

I have nothing to say about the future of theatre that hasn't been said by the beautiful echo chamber that is our theatre community.

I guess I'd add that I want more international theatre, desperately.

Get me out of here please.

Take me somewhere else.

As often as possible.

I was furloughed from my job as the Literary Manager at Berkeley Repertory Theatre in May.

I needed a break, wanted a sabbatical, so like many of us theatre folk, the first half of the pandemic was a big exhale. I did all the things except bake bread. I made a garden, read novels, biked a ton, took up dance class, lamented the deer eating my garden, threw myself into mutual aid and anti-racism work, ignored all the plays I said of course I'd still read, began my career journey visioning work in earnest, started learning how to mix audio, went on long walks.

I was permanently laid off in August.

Anxiety made itself a home in my body and I learned what a panic attack felt like

And then, suddenly and unexpectedly, I got a job in October.

Relief so big I sank to the floor and cried when they called to tell me

Yes.

I should say I've gotten better about reading plays. It's funny. I thought once the pandemic grounded us, I'd read plays. But no, I've just been reading graphic novels for levity and thick old classic novels for the perspective. I crave new visions for in-person life, I want nothing to do with technology. I want audio walks, opera singers in parks, dancers on barges, theatre that's a conversation on a phone, multilingual experiences. Anything that bends time.

All I've learned from this time is that time is not real.

Truly and utterly not a real thing.

We invent it, every time.

So why in theatre are we always late, scrambling, stressed.

We blame money, production, personalities/

But really. We make shit up FOR A LIVING.
Let's reinvent time.
Which is partially why I want more international theatre.
Every culture has its own relationship to time.
Let's learn from each other.
Scramble shit up.
Implode when it's time to end.
Try again in a new language.