

Interviews with Cassie Sim and Richard Huber about their play, *Fluids, Bodily*: When the script fragments and instinct guide the way

The two interviews tell the story of the way the natural instincts of a creative young playwright guide her through the process of recovery from traumatic childhood experiences. Yesim Sokmen interviewed Cassie Sim, playwright and director of *Fluids, Bodily* and Richard Huber, the co-director and Sim's mentor. Sim and Huber also explain how they approached this sensitive material in a safe manner and transformed it into an aesthetic creation for stage performance. The factors that contribute to healing and transformation are examined. *Fluids, Bodily* was performed as part of the Lunchtime Theatre Programme which is organised by the Theatre Studies department at the University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand. Sim's play is about her experiences of childhood abuse.

Keywords

Dramatherapy, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), abuse, sexual abuse, trauma, arts therapy

Whenever illness is associated with loss of soul, the arts emerge spontaneously as remedies, soul medicine (McNiff, 1992, p.1).

Introduction

I had the privilege of knowing Cassie Sim through my work as an occupational therapist last year. When Cassie told me what her new play was about, I was curious to learn more about her process of reclaiming her wellness. I thought that her courageous initiative to undertake the creation of a play dealing with her trauma experiences during her recovery could offer new insights to me as a student in arts therapy, as well as to the arts therapy community.

I met with Cassie on 15 April 2014 at the University of Otago campus in Dunedin, New Zealand where her play, *Fluids, Bodily*, was being performed as part of the Lunchtime Theatre programme organised by the Theatre Studies department. Cassie co-directed the play with Richard Huber whom I interviewed the following day. Cassie kindly agreed to talk with me about her experience of writing, directing, and watching her own play so that I could share it with the wider arts therapy community. Cassie's play is about her experiences of childhood abuse.

Interview with Cassie Sim

Yesim Sokmen: Hello Cassie, thank you for making time to talk to me about your play, *Fluids, Bodily*. Can you tell me about your background and how your play came to life?

Cassie Sim: Hi Yesim. I have studied Theatre at the University of Otago and have previously written plays for their Lunchtime Theatre programme. For me writing is a way of expressing something that is very personal, with the artistic liberties drama provides. The initial script was written for a playwriting paper, but after a period of struggling with some symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), the script became much more focused and part of my healing and recovery process.

The first draft that I wrote for the playwriting paper came out all fragmented. I was given an A+ for the draft, but after having gone through a period of being unwell, I returned to the piece and I decided it didn't directly represent the reality of my situation, which is what I ultimately wanted to present. I sifted through the first draft and identified the common themes of PTSD symptoms and references to childhood abuse. At the time I wrote it, it was very raw and thus authentic. I didn't want to change that. I wanted there to