

(Author's Angle: 2.26.09)

### **Rose Colored Glass: From the Page to the Stage**

Ever wonder how a play gets from an idea, to a written play, to a fully produced performance? Local Woodland playwright, Sue Bigelow, and her New York co-author, Janice Goldberg, gave us some behind-the-scene glimpses last week as part of the festivities for Woodland Reads 2009. Their play, ***Rose Colored Glass***, which has played in numerous venues—including New York City—will be produced locally for the first time May 15 through June 7 at the Woodland Opera House.

“**Rose**” is a story of Lady O’Riley, an Irish immigrant, and Rose Fleishman, a more recent Austrian immigrant, who share an alley—but live very separate lives. That is, until the events of another continent—and the will of a 13-year old girl—cause them to come together as friends. This intimate 3-character drama is juxtaposed against the backdrop of violent events in a war-torn 1930’s Europe—which would have implications on the entire world.

**Research:** Sue and Janice conducted extensive research for the play—and the authentic dialogue is informed by their attention to detail. For example, they obtained some of the pictures used in the play from the Holocaust Museum. These pictures clearly illustrate the complete degradation of the Jews in early-30’s Europe, which the playwrights wove into the play—including the letters Rose received from Europe, and the news reports they found hidden in the back of the American newspapers.

**Rewrites:** Eureka, Salt Lake City, Seattle—each production gave them feedback for additional rewrites. Janice sits behind the stage and watches the audience throughout each performance. She looks for an audience member to glance at his watch; notices the two women in the corner begin to whisper; watches for a lapse in energy. In addition, after each play, the audience would often stay and chat with the authors. Between reading the audience and talking to them directly, Janice and Sue garnered the information they needed to edit the play before their final, polished version, which they produced in New York City.

**Recycling, Borrowing and Getting’ around the Rules:** Sue and Janice told us that when building a set in Eureka, one can just pop next door and borrow a vintage phone from the local antique dealer. In New York, however, they don’t know what the term ‘borrow’ means. And even if they did, you’d have some union worker in your face telling you it was *his* job to go get the prop. Being the creative women that they are, they quickly got around this dilemma, by driving over the border into Connecticut and hitting the flea markets! In Salt Lake City, they could play some period music from the 30’s on a record player—in New York, they had to hire a musician to write an official score for the play. In Seattle, they projected an old picture (which they downloaded off the internet) of Nazi soldiers marching onto a screen in the background—but before New York—they met someone who had live footage of Nazi soldiers, so they were able to run that in the background.

**Nobody doesn't like Sara Lee:** When they began writing this play, they had two major goals in mind. The first was that they would build toward a NYC production, and the second was that they would publish the play. Shortly after achieving the first goal, they saw their chance for the second. They read an article about the new 'first-ever female' president at Samuel French, one of the larger play publishing houses in New York, and decided it would only be polite to call and congratulate her. Not only did she personally take their call, but she also said she would send one of her associates over to see their play. That next weekend, Roxanne, a young woman from the publishing house, arrived with her boyfriend in tow. Not only did they love the play, but also when authors served strudel at intermission (inspired from a scene in which Rose teaches Peg to make strudel,) 'the boyfriend' wolfed down the strudel in delight. They were IN.

**Looking Forward:** Sue and Janice are working on writing their next plays—which will also be set in WWII. The first is a spy piece focusing on women in the French resistance; and the other will be about two women working in the radar towers and chatting on the beach before D-day. Both plays seem like potential vehicles to display these two women's talent for strong character development—and lively dialogue. I can't wait.

You can purchase ***Rose Colored Glass*** for your book group at [Samuel French](#)—I hear they have a grand new gal in charge. For tickets to see ***Rose Colored Glass*** live, contact the [Woodland Opera House](#). For ideas on how your book group can participate in a One Book community-wide reading program, see The [Tip of The Week](#) on our home page.

Read On!

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