

## Oral History Interview of Thomas A. Oldham

Interview by Pilar Harkless

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Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi

Transcribe by Pilar Harkless

**Pilar Harkless:** This is Pilar Harkless. The date is September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020. The city is Corpus Christi, state: Texas. I'm interviewing Thomas Oldham. Topic of interview is Terrence McNally and the theatre. Do you have your-I have your consent to record?

**Thomas Oldham:** Yes, you do.

**Pilar Harkless:** Alright! So how are you doing today?

**Thomas Oldham:** I'm good. I'm,uh,glad it's Friday. It's going to be a nice weekend, I think.

**Pilar:** Oh yeah! I'm really excited to interview you and-

**Thomas Oldham:** Good, I'm excited to be here.

**Pilar Harkless:** (Laughing) I'm glad. Before I get started, I want to tell the listening audience a little bit more about you.

**Thomas Oldham:** Um-hm.

**Pilar Harkless:** So, I want you to know that this is Dr. Thomas A. Oldham. He is an Assistant Professor of Theatre Studies at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi. He teaches classes in theatre history, script analysis, playwriting, and dramaturgy. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in English and History from the University of Nebraska, a Master of Fine Arts in Dramaturgy from Columbia University, and a PhD in Theatre History from Indiana University. His research interests include on stage representations of violence from early modern England and 1990s Britain. Tom previously taught at Colby College and holds dramaturgy credits from educational and professional theatres in Indiana, New York, Maine, and Nebraska. His writings on topics from revenge tragedy to *In-yer-face* theatre have appeared in Theatre Journal, The Routledge Companion to Dramaturgy, Ecumenia, and The New England Theatre Journal, amongst others. That's quite an impressive resume.

**Interviewee:** Thank you.

**Interviewer:** So, how have you been staying busy during this COVID-19?

**Interviewee:** Oh goodness, there is plenty to keep yourself busy with these days. What with teaching classes and trying to keep everybody together-uh, try to keep everybody engaged, and try to keep everybody in good spirits, right? I'm currently teaching three classes and just with all the masks and physical distance it takes a bit of energy, you know? So, I think it's going well so far but I-It does take quite a lot of planning and quite a lot of just sort of preparation.

**Pilar Harkless:** Yes. Have you been doing any binge watching?

**Thomas Oldham:** Oh, quite a bit. Being in the theatre, I was fortunate and happy to see that a lot of theatres have recently put a lot of their work, a lot of their plays, a lot of their musicals on streaming video services, online, or through sites like Netflix, or Disney Plus, or Broadway HD. So, that was-that has been a boom to both theatre lovers and theatre researchers. But, you know, I just kick back and watch some good ol' tv now and then. In terms of the binging, I definitely made it through, really fast, this great new comedy. It's been around a couple of seasons now. It's on Hulu and it's called Ramy. It's just a really eye-opening sitcom, but a sitcom with depth because it's about this young man of Islamic faith; a young Muslim man living in New Jersey, trying to navigate being a single guy, trying to navigate being a young man, trying to navigate his family and his faith. And it just asks a lot of really interesting questions about who we are as a country, who we are as a people, and who we are living in today's world, but it does so in quite, quite, funny ways sometimes.

**Pilar Harkless:** Okay, it sounds interesting. I'm going to have to look at it.

**Thomas Oldham:** Yeah.

**Pilar Harkless:** So, can you tell me more about your role as an Assistant Professor at Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi?

**Thomas Oldham:** Absolutely! Yeah, yeah. I've been here now for a little over a year. My,my-I started work here last fall. And I teach classes in what we like to call Theatre Studies. So, I'm not usually the one teaching an acting class, or a costume design calls, or a stage direction sort of class. I teach the classes that involve a lot of literature and history. You know, theatre history, script analysis, those sorts of things. So, anytime that there's a lot of books involved, and anytime there's a lot of reading involved, it's probably for one of my classes. Right now, we're reading a lot. We're studying-Right now, I just got finished teaching a class in classical Japanese theatre in my theatre history class.

**Pilar Harkless:** Wow!

**Thomas Oldham:** Yeah, I like to try to branch out and open student's minds to different things, you know? Different places, different eras, different histories. And that's my role here at the department, but there's lots of other people. We're a nice cozy family, I think. Everybody's been great! Like I said, I've been here a year and I feel at home already and everybody's super friendly, from the professors to the students, to the staff, and everybody you meet around this place. Just seems like a great place to work and a great place to live.

**Pilar Harkless:** Wow! Sounds wonderful. So, what would be the main lesson you would want your students to take away from your classes?

**Thomas Oldham:** I think I want them to be able to approach their art, their work, everything about who they are as a theatre maker. I want them to approach that with an open mind, right? A lot of the plays I teach aren't going to be things that they're super familiar with always. I teach plays that are 2500 years old. I teach play that were written in all these different languages and different cultures, different theatre going people, different art forms in general, different aesthetic styles and to be able to read, to see, to think about all these different plays, and writers, and styles and not immediately jump to a conclusion like "Oh, I don't like it because it's unfamiliar to me." I want them to back up a step and say, "What was this situation like? What was the culture like? Where did this come from and how can I better understand that? How can I inform myself by doing a little research, doing a little bit of reading?" And hopefully, "How can I learn from this and make myself a better artist in the future?"

**Pilar Harkless:** Okay, well what about you? Can you tell us a little bit about your background? Where did you grow up and where did you get an interest in theatre?

**Thomas Oldham:** Oh, sure. Yeah, yeah. That's a-That is its own story, I guess. You know, I grew up in small town, well big town, depends on your definition of these things, small town Nebraska. It's not going to impress anybody from a big city, but for Nebraska, it was kind of a big place. Like a whole 25,000 people, right? So-(laughing)

**Pilar Harkless:** What city was it?

**Thomas Oldham:** The name is Hastings. Hastings Nebraska, born and raised! From a pretty big family; youngest of five. And so, I just grew up. Most of my siblings were active in arts, performance arts, or musical arts somehow, right? Whether they played an instrument-but several of them did act in the high school plays. And so, I grew up watching all of my family do high school plays and then, of course, when I got to high school, I said, "Well, I want to do the same thing. That seems like a good time. Seems like a great educational opportunity." I did the high school musical, the high school plays. And you know, it's what they say, that the bug just bit me, and I kept on at it. I kept on going to school for it, going to graduate, and two different graduate schools, and just decided to keep making that my life from then on there.

**Pilar Harkless:** Okay, so what was your favorite role that you played?

**Thomas Oldham:** Oh wow! I must start off by saying it has been quite some time since I acted last. I have largely stepped off the stage and into the classroom for the most part, but back, back, back years ago, when I was still doing the acting thing, it was probably in a musical called, *Into the Woods*. That's a relatively, well known, musical. They made a movie of it a couple of years ago, right? It's about all these fairy tale stories. And they're set to song, and there's a lot of great twists on all these classic story tales. And I played Jack, as in Jack and the Bean Stock. And it was just one of those experiences. I think I was a sophomore in High School, so just really young, just energetic, and engaging, and fell in love with not just the song and the stories, and the being on the stage, but also just being part of a community. Being around the people who

were doing the same thing I was. Loving the same thing I was. That was one of my first major experiences and looking back on it, it's still up there as probably my favorite experience.

**Pilar Harkless:** That was a Sondheim musical?

**Thomas Oldham:** Yeah, Stephen Sondheim.

**Pilar Harkless:** So, you were singing?

**Thomas Oldham:** Great composer!

**Pilar Harkless:** Singing?

**Thomas Oldham:** Yes, yes, yes. I did a little singing back in the day. I'm not gonna say I was the next star, but I did a little. I did a little.

**Pilar Harkless:** Okay. So, let's talk about your research interests. That's very interesting: representations of violence and 1990s Britain and *In-yer-face theatre*? What is that about?

**Thomas Oldham:** Oh goodness, yes, yes. Well, to talk about *In-yer-face theatre*, I think, we should just think about the way we label things. Any time we wanna call something, put a name on something, we're making a decision; whether that's like, "This is a comedy," right? "This is a tragedy." "This is a melodrama." That takes a decision on our part, as thinkers, as scholars, as artists, people who just like to watch stuff. We think about these things and we label them. And so, in the 1990s a bunch of young, active, dynamic playwrights, were making a lot of big, bold, choices, and this is primarily in London that I'm talking about, but various places all over Britain and Ireland-A bunch of young playwrights were making waves, as they say, drawing attention to themselves, drawing attention to their writing, drawing attention to their theatres, and often times; being quite controversial, making headlines, causing disturbances, and causing boycotts, and that sort of thing. And so, after a few years of this, there becomes a sense that this is part of something bigger, right? This is a trend, these are people doing the same things, so let's put them in the same bucket, in the same category. And there's a very famous label that one particular critic, scholar, called them. And he said, "These people are making in-yer-face theatre!" They're bold, they're brash, they're shaking audiences up! They're causing controversy. They're giving us new experiences with their new dynamic playwrighting. And, ya know, like any label it can be useful, and it certainly draws attention to some of the things they're doing. But like any label, it can also be not what everybody expects; not what everybody wants. Some people hate the term in-yer-face theatre. Some people love the term in-yer-face theatre. And so, I just-I discovered a lot of these young writers, now not so young because the 1990s was several decades ago, but as I was studying, I discovered these writers. I decided I wanted to take a look at them a little bit more in-depth and see what all the fuss was about. And that's *In-yer-face theatre* and how I came on to it through my own studies.

**Pilar Harkless:** Can you give us some examples of what they did that was in-yer-face?

**Thomas Oldham:** Oh, sure, sure. And to set the stage, we should probably take ourselves back to the 1990s because none of these people were out to shock, or scare, for the heck of it. They were trying to make a point. When you look back then and you see all of the unrest in the world

and in particular people were talking about violence in the war-The wars of Eastern Europe like in the former Yugoslavia, or the wars in Central Africa, like in Rwanda, and all of these atrocities that people were doing to each other in these wars. And one particular playwright named Sarah Kane wrote a very famous, perhaps, I should say, very infamous play called *Blasted*. And in this play, it's set, it's set in England in a pretty nice, what the English people would say, posh hotel room. And these two main characters, and a third character, enters part way through. They just spend the whole play, and probably between 90 minutes and two hours, when you're watching it. They spend this whole time just doing terrible things to each other. They start by calling each other vicious names and they sexually assault each other. They commit violence, just horrible violence. There're acts of brutality that, for purposes of taste, I'm not going to go into details, but let me just say that multiple characters end up dead by the end of the play. And horrible violence is done to their bodies. Um, and people saw this play and they were quite upset, naturally, but I think the question is "What do we do with this upset?" Do we sit around and say, "How dare you put these vile things on stage?", which is what some people did. Or do we take a step back and listen to the playwright when she says, "I'm trying to bring that experience of those atrocities of Bosnia, the atrocities of the former Yugoslav war." "I'm trying to bring those atrocities into the comfortable lives of English people and to try to make them feel something." And so those are the sorts of experiences that the *In-yer-face theatre* can bring to even the most well off, comfortable, posh, rich, London spectators.

**Pilar Harkless:** Oh, okay. So, would you say um-Well let's talk about Terrence McNally. He would kind of be in-yer-face too, huh?

**Thomas Oldham:** Oh, uh, I can kind of see the connection there. Certainly, with some of his work he meant for audiences to take that step back and ask ourselves, "What are we doing here?" "Can I look at the world in a slightly different way?" Right? Because he [unintelligible] different stories between the violence of in-yer-face theatre and Terrence McNally's identity but-asking us to really look at theatre as an art form that has the potential to change people and change people's minds, to change people's hearts, and to change the world a little bit.

**Pilar Harkless:** Okay. Can you give us a little background on him? I know he was a prolific playwright. He wrote starting in the 1960s and wrote basically up to his death, which was recent in March from complications of COVID 19.

**Thomas Oldham:** Yes, yes. Sad, sad, death due to the Corona virus. Uh, yeah, but he is quite prolific, and quite prolific in a number of different styles, and genres, and just ways, different ways, of storytelling, different ways of playwriting. He wrote farces. He wrote musicals. He wrote very serious, realistic, dramas. He wrote, mostly he's famous for cataloging and describing, and holding up for society's benefit, his identity as a gay man. And, I think, he spoke a lot to this LGBTQ experience in America throughout the late 20<sup>th</sup> century especially, and asking mainstream audiences-remember there are big theatres-These are Broadway Houses, big commercial, award winning plays that he's writing to-and he's trying to give that experience a voice. And he's one of the most famous, most successful, in terms of financial success and winning awards. He's one of the most successful people to have done it in that time.

**Pilar Harkless:** Yes. Okay. I know that he won a lot of awards, but his most controversial play was *Corpus Christi*, in which he made Jesus and the disciples all gay men. And that was like in the height of the AIDS crisis. What do you think he was doing that for?

**Thomas Oldham:** Oh, I think absolutely, to bring attention to people; to his people really, um, this, this, this LGBTQ, and he specifically as a white gay man, where this time period of the 80s, and into the early 90s was just a devastating series of deaths. Entire generations of young gay men were wiped out from the AIDS crisis; the AIDS epidemic. And people for far too long ignored the problem. People didn't take action. They saw that community as other than me. Other than normal people and, you know, quote on quote, normal people. "I don't need to worry about them over there." Right? "Because I am safe over here." And he asked us in very, with *Corpus Christi*, in a very provocative way, to look at, you know, how we relate to one another as simple human beings, and especially if you are a person of the Christian faith. I think, he's asking you, "What does it mean to love each other, love my brother, love my neighbor as thyself, right?" And if, we step back and ask, "Who is my brother?" "Who is my neighbor?" All of the things that, you know, that people of the Christian faith should by rights be asking themselves. I think he's asking us to take a step back and say, "Well, isn't a gay man also your brother?" "Isn't a gay man as worthy of Christian charity as anyone else?" I think, this question of love, this question of support, this question of giving attention where it is due, in the midst of some of the most intense stresses, pressures, and devastating loss that the community ever faced.

**Pilar Harkless:** Ah, I find it interesting, he's actually the native son here, *Corpus Christi*, that he would use that name as the name of his play.

**Thomas Oldham:** Oh yeah, and honestly, I didn't even realize that McNally was from *Corpus Christi* until after I'd been here a few months. And I was just talking to one of my colleagues about this and he said, "Oh yeah, Terrence McNally is from here." And I said, "I didn't realize that." And, of course, the irony of *Corpus Christi*. But the intriguing thing, then this goes back to my theatre history classes, is that the phrase *Corpus Christi* has a long-standing presence in the history of the theatre because *Corpus Christi*, if you know your Latin, means the body of Christ. And it is a festival in the Catholic church. And part of that festival, over the course of time, and especially in the middle ages-but part of the festival has always involved theatre, to a certain extent always involved sort of like medieval pageants and medieval morality plays. So, the phrase *Corpus Christi*, if you'd say that to any theatre historian, their eyes are probably going to light way up.

**Pilar Harkless:** Um, how do you think that he affected the theatre?

**Thomas Oldham:** Oh, I think he has a long and profound effect. Again, as I mentioned before, a lot of very commercially successful and artistically successful plays. He wrote big statement musicals, like *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, or *Ragtime*, both of which, for one, both of which he won Tony Awards for, and so that fact alone puts him in the history books, right? And both of those musicals ask you to look at people and their social position, and their relationship and, of course, he absolutely chronicles the life of the gay man; the American gay man. And one of his award-winning plays, *Love, Valor, Compassion*, is a quite well known, quite often revived, and

quite studied play. And it's just this-we-I talked about how he works in several different styles, and several different genres from farce to the metaphor of Corpus Christi. But this is just straight forward realism, straight forward tugging at the heart strings, watching people live their lives while they live, while they love, while they laugh. And, you know, in some cases suffer. And I think any look at the theatre community in the United States, especially in the 1980s and 1990s, is going to have to deal with the question of the LGBTQ community because of the AIDS crisis, number one, but because a lot of people who work in the theatre are tied to that community, whether they're gay themselves, or lesbians themselves, transgender themselves, or whether they're allies and family members and loved ones. So, I think, speaking these, ah, these truths, talking about these experiences, bringing that to very large, very commercially minded theatres, I think, he will have a lasting impact for the issues of representation, at very least.

**Pilar Harkless:** Okay.

**Thomas Oldham:** And so, the question we've been asking ourselves with more and more frequency over the past few decades, and heck even within the last year itself with all of the things that have been coming to the foreground of society, coming to the foreground of news stories, we've been asking, "Who are the people who are telling the stories?" "Who are the people we are letting into the room?" "Who are the people we are giving the stage to, quite literally?" "Who are the people we're giving money to, to put on these stories?" "Well, are there better opportunities if we let more, you know, diverse stories be told?" "Should we give priorities to people who have not been telling their stories?" And so, I think, we're seeing, starting to see, there's still certainly, obviously, a lot of room to grow, but a rising prominence of African American voices, a rising prominence of certain Latino, Latina, and Hispanic voices, a certain rise in prominence of female voices, right? 51% of the population can't be a minority, right?

**Pilar Harkless:** Okay.

**Thomas Oldham:** So, I think that in terms of the content of the storytelling, I think this is certainly the most important change that's going on, been going on, for a while, but certainly will be going on well into the future as we start to challenge ourselves to be more equitable, be more diverse in exactly who gets to tell their stories. But, you know, content isn't the only way the theatre has change, by no means, because form, or the way that the story is being told, the way it looks, the way it feels, that also has changed throughout history as well, from ancient Greek tragedy with big choruses, right, to Shakespeare with rhyming couplets and-

**Pilar Harkless:** Okay.

**Thomas Oldham:** That sort of thing. But today we have a lot of new technologies that, I think, we're playing with; whether that be putting screens on stage, you know, to show that aspect of technology; whether that be using multimedia, like using the internet, using web streams-Heck, we could even turn this into a play, what we're doing right now. We could live stream this play.

**Pilar Harkless:** Right. (Laughing)

**Thomas Oldham:** In fact, that's what we're experimenting with right here at TAMUCC [Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi] in our theatre department. Our next couple of plays are going to be streamed through the technology of web video and the internet. But it doesn't have to be all this fancy multimedia stuff. Technology has also actually changed the way we do sets and lighting on stage, right?

**Pilar Harkless:** Um hm.

**Thomas Oldham:** You're probably familiar with big turntables; all these motorized apparatuses. These things have been growing and becoming more and more part of theatre for decades now. So, I think, big fundamental, technological changes can influence every aspect of the form of theatrical storytelling.

**Pilar Harkless:** Okay, so it's kind of, um, speaking to this generation that's more technologically involved?

**Thomas Oldham:** I hope so, yeah, yeah. And there are, I think, there's good things, and I think there's bad things about that. The good thing is broadening our horizons of what, I think, theatre storytelling can be. It can make us think in different ways. We see a screen on stage-does that make us step back and reflect a little more? "Oh, what is on that screen?" "How am I relating differently than I am relating to say, a person on stage?" "Is that making a comment?" "Are there interactions I should be aware of between screens and people?" I think, we can ask very interesting questions doing that on stage. I think, the fact that so many of our young people have screens as part of their daily existence, invites them to play a part in that theatrical storytelling more fundamentally than they might otherwise be engaged with. But I do think that there are certain drawbacks as well. All of this technology comes with a price obviously. And if we are raising ticket prices, for example, to pay for all of this new technology, is that limiting the people we'll be able to serve with our stories? I hope that we can find a good balance there, because at the end of the day this is a fundamental, unique benefit, a unique style, a unique experience, that theatre is. To be in the same room with somebody else-

**Pilar Harkless:** Ah, okay.

**Thomas Oldham:** Goodness, right now especially, that is part of our wildest dream to be in the room with somebody else, (both laughing), and to experience, to look the artist directly in the eyes, to breath the same air as them-That's a profoundly moving experience and I hope that that part of theatre never fully goes away.

**Pilar Harkless:** Okay, so we should say to the Netflix generation that they should at least try the theatre.

**Thomas Oldham:** Absolutely! Absolutely!

**Pilar Harkless:** Alright. Well let me ask you, if you were to write the very next play based on all the things that are going on in the world and addressing them, what would you write about?

**Thomas Oldham:** Oh goodness-

**Pilar Harkless:** What would you call it?

**Thomas Oldham:** (Laughs) What would I write about and what would I call it? I think I should start off by saying I primarily write about the theatre. I write essays and critical work, right? I'm not well renowned as a playwright myself, but if I were to sort of sit down and look at the world today, and look at the storytelling that our theaters need, I think I would have to write about inequality in some way; whether that would be inequality of money, or inequality of opportunity. And just sort of thinking about my life and my place in the world, how fortunate I've been and how much inequality there is in the world. I would like to explore that in some shape or form, to draw our attention to, kind of like the *In-yer-face theatre*, or Terrence McNally did, to draw our attention to some of the things we need to look at in society. And in terms of what I'd call it? Well, I've never been particularly clever with titles, so I think, I'm just going to steal a pre-existing title. There's a kind of famous play out there called *The Man from Nebraska* which I identify with clearly. My working title, if you'll allow me that, would be *The Man from Nebraska*.

**Pilar Harkless:** Okay, who would you get to star in that?

**Thomas Oldham:** Oh geez. Well, if somebody's gonna play me, um, gosh-I'm kind of hard to cast. I'm kind of short so-

**Pilar Harkless:** (Laughing)

**Thomas Oldham:** Many actors who are short don't make good leading men. They always want the tall, dashing, people so-But one of my favorites, shall we say not quite as tall as Superman actor, I could see Elijah Wood playing me. He's a good actor.

**Pilar Harkless:** Ah, okay, Elijah Wood! What do you think about the movement right now to get people of different colors-A woman to play a man-usually a man's role in a play-About changing up who plays these characters?

**Thomas Oldham:** Um, I think it has amazing potential and amazing opportunities to present the world as it is. I think, we need to be careful about who gets to speak for whom. No matter what we're doing, as long as we're thoughtful and take into consideration exactly what we're saying, and why we're making these choices, I think again, the more voices involved the better every single time. The more voices the better.

**Pilar Harkless:** Okay. Well have you met anyone, uh, famous?

**Thomas Oldham:** Oh goodness yes. I met-When you live in New York City, and especially if you work in theatre in New York City, you're gonna run across celebrities, and I think part of the challenge of working in theatre, or working in entertainment in general, or living in big cities, is to not, to not, lose your cool, right? To not freak out whenever you see them. And you can tell the new people in town because they get all gaga eyed and googly eyed whenever they see celebrities. And the people who've lived in New York for years just walk on by, right?

**Pilar Harkless:** (Laughing)

**Thomas Oldham:** So, it happens all the time. It really does and-but probably-Probably my favorite story involves actually another Stephen Sondheim musical. I talked about him earlier in this interview. I was walking down the street, past a theatre, I wasn't even going to see the theatre, I wasn't even going to see the show, but the theatre was playing the musical *Sweeney Todd*, another pretty famous movie, sorry, pretty famous musical. Walking past the theatre-I was actually meeting up with a friend who I could see just down the street about a block away. And I was walking past the theatre, not even thinking about it, walking towards my friend, but as I glanced over, the doors to the theatre were all glass, and you could look into the lobby. You could see into the theatre lobby and standing in the middle of the theatre lobby was Johnny Depp.

**Pilar Harkless:** Alright!

**Thomas Oldham:** I come to find out later, of course, he's preparing to play Sweeney Todd in the movie version. I didn't know that at the time. I just thought to myself, hm, isn't that Johnny Depp, and kept on walking because that's what you do. You don't make a big deal out of a celebrity, right? But I told my friend and he kind of freaked out and he said, "Let's go look!" By the time he got to the door, Johnny Depp had already ducked back, ducked back, into the theatre and you couldn't see him anymore, so-But the funny thing was that we hung around the stage door for a little while longer because my friend, actually, he wanted to get an autograph of the actress who was in the musical, another pretty famous actress, at least for theatre people. Her name's Patti LuPone.

**Pilar Harkless:** Okay.

**Thomas Oldham:** So, he's like, "I want to get Patti LuPone's autograph. And I was like, "Okay we'll wait for Patti LuPone." And the lo and behold, out walks Johnny Depp so-

**Pilar Harkless:** Alright!

**Thomas Oldham:** So my friend did-

**Pilar Harkless:** Persistence!

**Thomas Oldham:** after missing him the first time around, got to see him a few minutes later. So, that's a pretty entertaining, although, as I said, not that A-typical for living in New York. You see those sorts of things all the time.

**Pilar Harkless:** Oh yes. Well I would have been with your friend. I love Johnny Depp. Okay, well, I know you mentioned that you are doing something currently at the theatre at Texas A&M Corpus Christi. Can you give us a little hint about it?

**Thomas Oldham:** Oh, absolutely, and it is kind of thrilling to talk about this right now, especially to talk about this over a web-video chat, like we are right now, because we are staging a play in a streaming format. We're doing an all live video chat, and it's called- The Book is called, *The Book of Will*, by Lauren Gunderson, and it's running October 6<sup>th</sup> through 11<sup>th</sup>, so you-First of all, before I go any further, go to our website; get your tickets now. It will be streaming, which is a unique challenge for theatre people who are used to acting on stage, but I think it's a great fit for this play. This play, *The Book of Will* by Lauren Gunderson, is about

William Shakespear, and how his plays lived on after his death, how his plays were printed, and how his plays were published, and how his friends got together and tried to use a new and potentially confusing technology to continue to tell the stories, right? So, you can almost see a kind of parallel in our theatre embrace of the web-screen, the theatre embrace of the internet, as paralleled to how these actors embraced mas market printing the first time, in order to keep on telling their stories through a new technology. And it's a light-hearted comedy, but it's got some, some funny bits, but it's got some touching bits, and a little bit sad bits too, but it's quite a charming play. It's set in 1600s England, but don't let that worry about you. It's very fresh, very new, very alive, and very entertaining. And the cast and crew have just been working so hard to not only stage a play, but to figure out all the web-streaming capabilities as well. And I think we're going to put on quite a delightful show. Again, October 6<sup>th</sup> through 11<sup>th</sup>. Check our website right now!

**Pilar Harkless:** Okay, great plug for it too! (Laughing) This is theatre during the pandemic, I guess.

**Thomas Oldham:** A lot of places are doing similar things right now. You gotta roll with the changes, I guess.

**Pilar Harkless:** Ah, yes. Well, I want to tell you I have very much enjoyed interviewing you today, and I thank you for sharing your life with us, for this time, and it's really been interesting, and I hope everybody's going to just download this and love it.

**Thomas Oldham:** Well, thank you so much for allowing me the opportunity.

**Pilar Harkless:** Alright. Well, once again, we are sitting here talking to Mr. Oldham, Dr. Oldham, and we are very thankful. So, we hope you'll have a wonderful day and continue your work.

**Thomas Oldham:** Thank you, you too.

**Pilar Harkless:** Alright! Goodbye.

**Thomas Oldham:** Goodbye.

## References

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