



# Library podcast

## **Come From Away: A Journey from Gander to Broadway**

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[00:00:35] Thank you again for coming on behalf of the 5th Avenue Theatre we're really excited to be here and thanks to The Seattle Public Library for hosting us. This is our second event like this. We're calling them community conversations. Our first Community Conversation was last season. During our run of the Hunchback of Notre Dame and we had an amazing space here. Looking at musical theater and deaf audiences so I'm excited to be continuing community conversations tonight.

[00:01:06] Talking a little bit about our production of comfortable way and its connection to the northwest and people who actually live through those stories. So hopefully this is something that you come back for in the future we hope to do community conversations for each of our upcoming shows. If not here at Seattle Public Library at other great partners. We have such as the Northwest African American museum. I think we have one coming up for any. So keep your eyes and ears out for that. These really are events that are meant to create intersections spaces for dialogue and spaces for us to tell stories to each other and spaces for us to understand the stories that we're putting up on stage and how musicals actually do influence our lives and intersect with our daily life. So happy to be here. All that to say comfortable way is a very special production for us at the 5th. As you may know we did take part in its early inception at the 5th in partnership with Seattle wrapt. So that's that's one source of intersection but as musicals do often provide other places for us to layer's some some richness and some storytelling on top.

[00:02:22] In an unique way come from our way is a production that does that like no other. We've had up on stage because it's based on a recent true life events so the events that happened in Newfoundland in 2001. So we actually have people in our community that lived through those events that we are happy to have with us tonight and that's going to be a great opportunity for us to extend that story and to go right to the horse's mouth on some of these these things. But before we do that we are also really fortunate to be joined by a talented emerging star here in Seattle a performer who is beloved by the Fifth Avenue stage. And she's going to give us a little piece of comparable way before we even get started so I'm going to please help me welcome Chelsea live Valley HLC I'm going to give you the microphone and maybe you can setup the song that you're going to sing a little bit.

[00:03:23] Yeah hi I'm Chelsea and I was a part of the original cast when we were when it was here at Seattle Rep. I was the understudy for all six women. So we'll talk about that a little bit more later but for now I want to tell you that this song is sung by one of the people on the planes there where this story of come from way is about all these planes that were rerouted to Gander Newfoundland on September 11th 2000 11 2001.

[00:03:56] Yes. And so this is one of the people who were on the planes and this is a story that's transcribed from an interview that they actually did with Beverly Bass who was the first female American pilot parents must have thought

[00:04:14] They had a crazy kid. Because I was one of those kids

[00:04:21] Who always knew what I wanted. They took me down to the airport to see all the planes depart and watch them fly. Something inside of me was starting. I was eight when I told them that I'd be Pyett but I was too young and too short. And there were no female captains. And my dad said be patient. You said Just see what happens.

[00:04:47] So after I landed came down from the sky and told my father I fly for the rest of my life. Then I got my first job fly in for a mortician in a tiny bonanza just the corpse and me five dollars an hour for flying dead bodies. I had to climb over their faces just to get to my seat.

[00:05:09] Then and only then will slip off the Grüne do is falling backwards. I am suddenly a sudden in the cockpit. Suddenly everything is

[00:05:30] Suddenly I'm not too young or too short and the passengers in the back don't complain.

[00:05:38] So fly in company charters. Suddenly everything is

[00:05:44] Suddenly there's nothing between me. American Airlines

[00:05:57] Have the prettiest planes.

[00:06:01] So I applied as a flight engineer. But the world war two pilots they all complained they said girl shouldn't be in the cockpit. Hey lady hey baby. Hey. Why don't you grab a drink and the flight attendants weren't my friends back then. And they said Are you better than us do you think. But I can't get in hired.

[00:06:27] And the World War II crew they were tired and the girls off thought much higher of me. 1980 six the first female American captain and his. Son. In the cockpit

[00:06:44] Said I've got my way. Suddenly those pilot protests in me. Well they can get their own drinks. Suddenly. No one's saying stay grounded. Looking down. Passing them by. Suddenly there's

nothing between. An all female crew that the news that made headlines across the world suddenly. Stopped. No. You can't or you won't hear anything cause your other girls. Start getting married and we're put in where we alone suddenly a mother and suddenly shocked at how much they have grown. So I'm wondering how my parents would feel see me teaching men to be pilots to a senior instructor somehow 51

[00:07:52] Suddenly I'm flying in Paris to Dallas across the Atlantic and feeling calm when suddenly someone on air to air traffic says it 846. There's been a terrorist action and the one thing I'm off to more than anything was used as a bomb. Suddenly I'm in a hotel suddenly something has. Suddenly there's something in between me. Sky

[00:08:52] I forgot there were photos. This is the number in this show. It's quite a beautiful number. Sutil so you were part of the original company what was it like.

[00:09:02] So this was that Seattle Rep if you could talk a little bit about where that wasn't the development because it wasn't at the very beginning but it was still a little bit.

[00:09:09] Yeah it started as a workshop production at Seattle wrap and after that weeklong session it ended up going to La Jolla Playhouse where it had its first production and then La Jolla Playhouse in Seattle Rep partnered together to do a coproduction and the same cast minus two people and then two swings came up to Seattle Rep and did the production just the same as Seattle Rep with the writers were present with us and so they they made adjustments every step of the way and we were really fortunate to at the fifth to be host to some of these workshop experiences as well.

[00:09:47] So what was it like in those early days. You were at the Seattle Rep when they really were just starting to understand how much this was engaging with audiences. So I wonder if you could talk a little bit about what that was like at that time.

[00:10:02] Yeah absolutely. You know the director Christopher Ashley gave us a really vivid story that I will never forget as a performer and it became really important for the coloring of how do you handle the amount of emotional depth that is present and doing a story that occurred on such a national tragedy. And the story he gave was he talked about this research study that they did where they showed off an image of a man and his face to a group of a group of people and said and the person running the test said this is a photograph of a man who just saw his newborn baby. And the the people listening said Oh my gosh you can see the elation in his eyes you can see the joy in his eyes how much he loves this his newborn. And then the research scientist went away and came back and brought another image.

[00:10:57] It was the same image.

[00:10:59] And said this is a photograph of the same man who just saw his wife killed in a car accident. And the people in the study said you can see the terror in his face and the the sorrow in his eyes you can see he's about to cry. And so Christopher actually talked about how we're handling

such fragile such deep material that can really trigger a lot of people. And so it would be important for us to make sure we're not putting our own emotions too far into the material and just allowing the words to be said. Allowing ourselves to feel it but to fight against any sort of overwhelming amount of emotions that we might feel that way the audience can have their own experience and their own emotional journey on our faces just like on the faces of that that photograph will cut a journalistic or the about that.

[00:11:56] And these are based off of interviews that the writers did at that year. Was it the 10 year anniversary it was a 10 year anniversary.

[00:12:06] So in 2010. And what was it like being in a production where you knew that most of the people who you're portraying on stage or you know kind of in aggregate way portraying those that are still walking around alive.

[00:12:24] You know this is very exciting especially because so many of the characters are the people who the characters are based upon. Came to the show night after night and their families came and they'd come up on stage with us and do talkbacks and so we'd get to meet them and it is really remarkable how similar they were to the characters that were written. So there comes a responsibility for sure in portraying somebody with all the complexities that they are and yet also I think it's big of the people who were interviewed to allow these actors to reinterpret their stories.

[00:13:00] Yeah that's that's really interesting. Remembering how I sold the show to my parents. They were like asking should we go see that and I was like Yeah it's like it's like podcast's the musical. We really like podcasts and it doesn't work with high school students are like pass but my parents it really worked. And I think that's a really unique type of musical there are only I can only think of maybe two or three that are based off of interviews. Can anybody does it. One really famous one. Oh said yeah chorus line right a chorus line actually based off of interviews that yeah a bunch of ensemble people had in somebody's garage. I think they got high and talked about stories of people on stage and then the other one that is out there it's a little less known is working with Steven Schwartz was a writer on that. And Craig Carneglia I think was also right around that that's based on a Studs Terkel work of at graphy and then.

[00:14:01] But those were the only two that I can think of so come from way is part of a really small genre that those families still continue to come to see the production in New York the last couple times I've been up there and the cast can still welcomes me as part of the family because of where it started from and it's a lot of the same performers and I think it's a beautiful thing that this this family of strangers which is what the story is about actually is lived out in the in the cast and in the way that the whole production team brings people in and doesn't let them go.

[00:14:35] There seem to be like a big family. The they have what they called a family reunion down in our IN THE FIFTH AVENUE space a couple days ago.

[00:14:43] It was great. They call it a family reunion without too many spoilers what things have changed. Did you know. So you saw in New York and you saw it. You know you saw it so many times here because you were part of that but like what. Were there any things that you noticed were like Oh that's that's different yes.

[00:15:01] Well one thing is the character that Q plays I can't think of her name. Now they changed her name Hannah. Hannah Skerrett superfans. Hannah's character has a solo now. She didn't have a song before now she has a full song and a duet. And I love that because she's she's representing mothers who lost their sons. So it really gives her a new weight to the piece. The other thing I really noticed is the way that the audience responds. It's incredible how the audiences received this story differently in New York than they did here. It just lands on a whole new way and it's really powerful that it's the story of human human triumph out of goodness in the midst of such tragedy. And so the amount of joy and the amount of pain that you can feel in the in the audiences in New York is palpable. And here I think people were overwhelmed by this new kind of storytelling. If you've seen it you know that it's basically a full musical told with twelve chairs that get rearranged and there's a turntable and they these chairs become butlers.

[00:16:21] Oh no they become buses and beds and anything you could imagine that's one thing to really appreciate about the show is the ensemble aspect of it and how it takes a really well tuned group of actors to pull this off because there's 12 actors right. And they play. I don't know how many parts. Everybody has at least two tracks so yeah and more so. So that's that's part of the trick of this and also a really unique. Are

[00:16:56] There other shows that do this but I love that premise because there's kind of this sense of oh yeah this is everybody's story. Everybody creates the story we make the story you know out of chairs and it's something that's that's that's really really human. There's also very challenging as the swing was like you had to learn everybody's track.

[00:17:19] So everybody had double tracks and then I had quadruplets. It was one of the most challenging and probably a career defining experiences for makes it showed me nothing was too hard. So I had the rehearsal room to myself and I would set up all these chairs and put numbers on them and then I'd lay them out on the spike marks that used to for a while were still there. And then when the turn and when the turntable would move then I'd swap them and I try to keep up with it and keep the Monitor on so I could hear what people were doing onstage. So every night I just chose a different track and I the chairs that weren't in that track and just make sure that I knew what I was doing at all times.

[00:18:00] That's terrifying.

[00:18:03] What is your favorite track. This is my last question. What was your favorite track.

[00:18:07] You know I really loved the fact that I got to play all these different people so it's hard to choose because my favorite thing about it was that I got to use my my instrument and more fit to be a

dozen a dozen at least different characters and trying to make them different enough and believable enough as as the people that I met the characters as they were defined by. Was such an unending challenge for me in that little rehearsal room.

[00:18:37] All right I like that answer you like that you don't have a favorite. Don't have a favorite.

[00:18:42] Well thank you Chelsea Chelsea just came. She just got here from San Antonio so literally from the airport to Seattle Public Library and I appreciate you so much. Thank you. Give it up for more time.

[00:19:00] You're going to hang around so we might we might call her back up here in a little bit.

[00:19:03] Ok so a little bit of background information. How many of you have actually seen this musical. I'm just curious. Oh OK. So there's a lot but for the benefit of those who didn't. I'm just going to bear with me I'm just going to go through some some baseline information here. So on September 11th. 2001 an unprecedented decision was made to close all American airspace following the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. So hundreds of flights were diverted and forced to land in airports throughout Canada. 38 planes and nearly 7000 passengers ended up landing in Gander. These stranded visitors were called plane people and then also on the show you see them referred to as come from all ways which is kind of a local colloquialism for for strangers. People from out of town. They were there for just a few hours. They were there for up to three days. Oh you were there for longer. We'll get to that. So at least three days and they weren't allowed. Were you allowed to get your luggage this thing says you were allowed to get your luggage. So you really had nothing. Each passenger registered with the Red Cross and a loose network of volunteers from Gander in nearby communities providing thousands of hot meals toiletries and prescriptions bus drivers who were on strike came back to work to drive them around town. That's a key plot point in the musical and this was a dog that gander was built to do. I had only 500 hotel rooms but 7000 guests so residents stepped up and took people in. Some of the stranded press passengers ended up forming strong bonds with their hosts. And at least one marriage came out of this and many friendships between the people in Newfoundland and the comparable ways. So as I mentioned before we are fortunate to be joined by two community members Seattle lights I guess you both live in Seattle. All right Seattle Seattle people who live through the events in Newfoundland in 2001 and I'm excited for them to share their memories with us tonight.

[00:20:59] So please help me welcome mocap men and Lori Geier.

[00:21:09] So I'm going to have you just talk before we go into what happened in 2001 just a little bit about your SO. You were on staff at the Fifth Avenue theater. You talk about other coincidences here but tell us a little what do you do with the fear. What do you see. I see her every day.

[00:21:27] I do what they call production logistics coordinator. I coordinate all things time in space and vehicles when we need to rent trailers or trucks to get scenery here and there. I like to call myself the

logistic caterer. It sounds so much cooler than production logistics coordinator which is a mouthful. I'm going to change that.

[00:21:49] This is Decatur and you've been up a fifth for how long in this job 12 and a half year and a half years and you've been working in the theater industry for how long.

[00:21:56] Oh a lot. Now you can make me do math.

[00:22:04] Thirty eight thirty. Thirty four years.

[00:22:07] All right. So since you were negative five. That's right. Great. I was a child prodigy. I went to school when I was four I graduated when I was five. Well I'm so glad you're here. And Laurie tell us a little bit about your. So the rumor is that you were a performer at heart as well.

[00:22:27] Yeah yeah. I have my degree and dabbled a little bit in the city here with some of the Opera crowd and I. Had four children. So really I'm a mother of four and I drive a lot of places now.

[00:22:47] It's very important. OK so I'll go any further Do mo going see you too. But where were you on September 11th 2001.

[00:22:57] I was. I had been in Scotland in Ireland and that day I boarded a I boarded a flight out of Dublin and was heading back to Newark to. I can't remember honestly if it was Newark or JFK but we were on the flight.

[00:23:15] Were just on a plane and we were the first plane to land at Gander which was great. And as much as they said well we're going to stop here. You know there's only so many hotel rooms. If you're willing to share a room with anybody you know let us know so we were my seatmates and I won't go. We can share a room. No problem.

[00:23:43] Dreams.

[00:23:45] Because we were on a on an American flight and they were treating those flights as as suspect that terrorists were on those planes.

[00:23:57] So we stayed on the plane and the flight crews got the hotel rooms which is fine. And I stayed out at the Salvation Army Church in Glenwood Newfoundland which is outside of Gander. It's almost as far as St. John's so I would say I'm between Gander and St. John's and then Laurie how does your story begin.

[00:24:22] Our story begins in Paris. We were wrapping up a very extensive honeymoon and we had probably a dozen boxes that we had packed from our trip and I had finally checked everything in and we were on route on our flight from Paris to New York. I'm pretty sure it was to New York but after this longtime my husband I have honestly started thinking Now wait a second.

[00:24:50] But but.

[00:24:52] So we were we were on route and it was about an hour or two outside of U.S. airspace that the captain came on.

[00:25:05] Well I don't know. Do you want me to go further. Yeah right.

[00:25:10] We the seats behind us we heard mutterings behind us and we could tell there was something that wasn't right and it was flight attendants who were behind us and so we were concerned about what they were whispering and soon enough the captain came on and said U.S. airspace has been closed and we're instructed to land in the nearest airport outside of the U.S. and we're waiting instructions and so we're going to circle for a while until we know. And I looked at my husband and said because he's a he's a traveler he travels all the time I said Does this ever happen.

[00:25:57] And he says No maybe it could be that Air Force One is flying through and they need to clear the airspace because otherwise we must be at war. And my heart dropped to my stomach and I looked out the window and as as high as you could see and as low as you could see there were planes circling like a funnel and very close to each other

[00:26:31] Unnervingly close. And at a certain point the pilot came on and said Don't be alarmed if you see fluid on the window we need to drop some fuel before we land. And and so that was nerve wracking as knowing our plane had I don't know. How little fuel to go before we landed. And ultimately after a few hours of taxiing or circling we landed at St. John's our our airplane finally got to

[00:27:06] Park in their tiny little airstrip. So we were all on grass probably like you were.

[00:27:14] And then there we sat for 13 hours on the plane because they had such an overwhelming number of people that they didn't know how to filter us through and. And of course they had to.

[00:27:29] I'd check and recheck everyone who was on the flights in so we were thankful to be in first class from our honeymoon and we were early fortunate to have some leg room and after the third to Urd actually I should say after after the flight landed as we landed.

[00:27:50] The captain did come on and tell us what had happened.

[00:27:53] So we didn't know until until we had landed and we didn't know the extent of it really until the next morning.

[00:28:02] Mose your story is similar in how you found out about what had actually happened.

[00:28:08] Actually we had the pilot had the captain and said we've been ordered to land to clear air space. A plane has hit the World Trade Tower. Now do you remember years and years ago there was



a Cessna or some smaller plane that his wing had. No what the heck he was up to but his wing during the World Trade Center. So. I'm thinking OK it can't possibly be foggy it's September but whatever. How do you miss that. It's huge because that's my point of reference. And we my captain never came over and said exactly what had happened but I heard about it through flight attendants of well you know a plane a jet plane hit the World Trade Center. They were very careful not to say at that point deliberately flown in. And I appreciate that because again that makes you think oh what happens next. So I would hear snippets you know you would ask the flight attendant something and they were very cautious. You know what to say. But one of the women of that one of the flight attendants had friends who was on one of the flights that went into the world trade tower and I remember hearing when the first tower went down we had said the woman sitting next to me Francesca her son lived in Battery Park City which is very close to the towers and she saw Francesca said I'm worried about my son. Have you heard anything about the people who live around there because he lives by the towers and the flight attendant said there are no more towers. Again we're not seeing anything on the plane. You know there were nothing no there's no news. And that's such a concept that I mean there they're huge you know word that they go but not knowing exactly that planes had hit into that. So you know that was weird to me. But I don't know why the pilot chose not to share that information.

[00:30:19] But you know I didn't see anything on the news until seven o'clock the next morning because the TV wasn't on yet. You know back in the day when they used to you know they didn't broadcast 24/7.

[00:30:35] So when we got into our place to stay the TV the channels were off. You know you didn't have anything which is out of so bizarre to talk about today.

[00:30:45] You know in the world of 24 hour seven Yes so from the really terrifying moment now then just moving into this whirlwind of OK we're going to stay. Who are these people. What was that like kind of making the transition into kind of where you were going to have to stay for the next couple. So you ended up that Laura you ended up at the Salvation Army.

[00:31:13] Yes. So.

[00:31:15] So after we boarded the plane and they said you can't take anything off the women could have a small purse. I couldn't even bring couldn't bring our camera. So we ended up getting a little you know disposable one at some point along the way but we basically just had the clothes on our back. I was happy to have my contacts and my person and they filtered through security. There were of course armed guards outside of the plane and we got through security and then they bussed us to the hockey stadium and there were thousands of other passengers there as well. And the Red Cross did a brilliant job of organizing everyone and making sure that people's needs were met.

[00:32:02] They had a line of about probably 60 telephones that any passenger could go use any time to call anywhere in the world for as long as they needed and that was so thoughtful and special that we could just call our family right away to let them know that we were safe and. And then from there we all got our assignments and we were assigned our flight was assigned at least most of it I think to

this St. John's Citadel The Salvation Army's St. John's citadel where we spent the next five nights on the floor of the church. Many people slept in the pews and we were in a room with about 20 other people and finished off our honeymoon.

[00:32:51] Did you know anything about Newfoundland before or is it a little bit about Skander used to be.

[00:32:59] From what I understand the 50s that was the refueling point before you went across the Atlantic I think in the 60s and 70s that planes were able to make that crossing without necessarily having to stop a gander. But there is this whole history of candor being this multinational intersection of people and that it wasn't that for a while but I didn't even know that until I read it.

[00:33:24] But did you have any kind of yeah. Nothing.

[00:33:28] I had been as far east as Nova Scotia that it's as far as I had gone. So Newfoundland was like you know the next place over. But it was you know over there and little further than I was ever going to go.

[00:33:45] So what did you learn about about the people while you were there and kind of their culture.

[00:33:50] Nicest people I have ever met. Salt of the earth selfless people. And it wasn't an act. It wasn't like all put on a good face because you know we'll muster through this genuinely concerned welcoming to our land. You know it's it was just quite an incredible thing for them to do that. And when we got off the plane in Gander he wanted to talk about logistics. I mean they had to get sandwiches and toiletries and you know bedding and everything you could think of.

[00:34:28] And they had to find places before they let people off the planes which made sense. And any plane that was an American plane going into New York and then we were the last to unload because we were treated as suspect.

[00:34:45] Just given everything else that had happened and again none of us knew that. But when you finally got off the plane and we could take carry ons off. Silly me was just carrying Irish whiskey back and my bag was checked

[00:35:01] Well hello I was going to land in New York. Whatever. Who needs underwear. Just going home. But they gave you all sorts of things like that you know are everything you needed.

[00:35:12] And again nobody knew how long we were going to be there. So but just everywhere you went people you know hey can I get you anything. We didn't have phones set out for us. But there was a library and there was internet. And it was just great. We could reach out that way.

[00:35:32] So you do either you have a really vivid memory of that time just something that you to this day kind of think about when you think back on that.

[00:35:44] The thing I think of most is that we as passengers stranded we had money and we had the internet. Many of us had cell phones. We had plenty of communication and some of us thought you know if we rent a car could we could on a boat.

[00:36:06] Could we. I don't know. Can we.

[00:36:08] Can we just start making our way back and even mid thought we would catch ourselves because we were in this with everyone else and it didn't matter what our resources were that we we felt a really strong bond and connection with the other passengers and with the people there. And like most said the people of Newfoundland were remarkable. They rose to a call so quickly and were selfless and stepped outside of themselves and just overwhelmingly loved on us.

[00:36:50] And they didn't need to think twice.

[00:36:54] Whereas none of us had seen anything of the television that you all saw firsthand. And as it was happening they saw that too and they heard it on the radio and the composure that they experienced that they put on their faces and it was hiding something but I'm sure they all thought we have we the passengers you know are scared we don't know what's happening. They're doing their best just to to provide us the creature comforts you know and it sounds so simple. But it's amazing what you know a pair of underwear or a really you know toothpaste a little toothbrush anything with that means to you when you're scared when you really don't understand or when you hear it you don't have a point of reference for it and that they you know talk about a poker face you know I don't want to play cards with them but. But they were so composed and there is a moment in the in the show where a woman welcomes people to one of the shelters and says You know we've got this and this. And passengers are saying what happened. We don't know. And then she realizes Oh right. You know can you tell us what happened and she takes a moment and says well let's get you situated get your you know all together and then you know I'll take you to the TV.

[00:38:31] And again having to hold that together knowing what they knew. I think for me that's what I remember most. You know other than I tear up a couple times during some songs. But you know I do that with the little mermaids

[00:38:49] To musical theater fans both probably love these golden age musicals or things like the little mermaid that are about mermaids or you know going to hide it. What is it like to go watch the musical. That is about something basically that you're kind of implicated and you were a carrot you were one of those characters that that is represented up on stage. What is that. What is that like.

[00:39:15] I thought for the first time on Friday night and I was floored. I followed through almost all of the numbers. It was so moving to see such an accurate description of what we went through. I just kept shaking my head yes yeah yeah

[00:39:35] Yeah. Like. Yeah that's what that's what it was with a couple of discrepancies but I mean they didn't pass out like an hour flight.

[00:39:45] We were so on the wrong flight. I didn't. I did not stop at the duty free. And I couldn't open the whiskey because I promised my brother in law. Of course I didn't think about later bought some on the way.

[00:40:02] Yes. I mean it was so accurately represented I told all my friends after you want to know you want to know what happened.

[00:40:11] Go and see this show and Mo you were there when we were having workshop productions down. So this would be actors with scripts you know really early on in the process. You were able to sit in on some of those readings where you saw that the first presentation was rehearsed down in our rehearsal studio.

[00:40:32] And then they were going to do a presentation at the Leo K at the Seattle Rep. So this was before the Seattle Rep had teamed with La Hoya and logistics. I got rehearsal props over there and such and stuff band gear. But I remember watching a couple of rehearsals and there was talk about well where do we put an intermission. Do we have been in such a short show but where do we put it. And I thought well you can't have an intermission because nobody gets to leave until everybody gets to leave because part of that is you know building up and you first get to the theater and you're comfortable and you're having a good time and then there's a little bit of a Fitchett factor and not because people are bored but because you're getting anxious and you know when can we leave.

[00:41:23] And if somebody has to go to the bathroom they don't want to get up and leave. But it's it also builds up all of that moment so that it's such a release when the planes take off and when they decided in that rehearsal room not to take the break I thought absolutely. So it was exciting to go through those moments too. I was telling Orlando this when we did the original workshop and some of the people who were cast members in that show Rich Gray was the mayor and a fellow named Eric ank from was Oz who played the who plays the constable and their essence of those characters at the wrap some of them played those role still when they came back to do the production. But when I say I've not seen the New York show but to watch the two were casting is very similar to those original cast members.

[00:42:20] There is an essence to them that is really endearing but very. It just shows that the casting was so right on and they absolutely captured a moment that the essence of those people and that's really fulfilling to see that and to go that's what made it special and it's interesting how the DNA of Seattle and so in some of these musicals because they have their start here

[00:42:47] We have some time for questions. So does anyone. Oh yeah we do have some questions. I'll probably repeat it back to you. I don't know if it tilts or do you have insight into that because you were in the room. I have. This is the Seattle Rep production right there. No a little bit.

[00:43:02] I remember they were afraid to talk about 9/11 too much just in general. In fact there's only that one scene where they they turned on all those TVs and we stood watching for hours and everybody just lines up on the front of the stage.

[00:43:18] And then there's just a someone finally turned it off that was it. And they thought if we talk about it anymore if we show anything we're going to be

[00:43:29] Not honoring people's own experience and not allowing them to have their own projected emotions and experience with their with their own lives. On that story so they were very nervous to talk about it too much and that was the one place. Again that story about not being too emotional. That was especially the moment where he would say we don't want to have too much emotion shown here so that people can experience it for themselves.

[00:43:57] I can speak to that a little bit.

[00:43:59] Oh and also continuing on with that. That's not what the show is about. This show was always about the people. Everybody has a 9/11 story. Everybody does this one just happened to be captured in a musical which sounds bizarre and yet there it is but because of that it wasn't about 9/11. People knew that. Again we didn't need to talk about that. The whole thing is about how we take care of these people that have come in. And it's I often wondered how whatever happened to the people of Gander how did they. Because none of us really. I didn't process this until I was back in the States. I couldn't because I had to keep flying. But when they left when everybody left and they were left behind you think yeah whatever happened to them. Did they catch their breath. And when did they get there. Time to process it.

[00:44:59] I had a little conversation with you Eisendrath who's the music director of the original yeah he was I think he's playing the accordion up there and I do remember early on where he was like I was like well you know really 9/11 musical just facetiously I was teasing.

[00:45:18] He was like a 9/11 musical 9 12 write the story. So yeah we all have 9/11 stories but this story is very specifically about well you know from eons and now my point of view you can have whatever you think it's about you what you think it's about but about that community building afterwards and kind of positing this idea of like what does it look like to build community out of nothing. So that's that's one of the things he shared with me. I don't know if we are similar. Yeah I just want to add to reiterate when I saw the musical I realized that

[00:46:00] One of the reasons I over the years have really only shared my story with close family and friends and I think that it's not something that you want to brag about. It's not something that you just don't announce at a dinner party. And one of the reasons is because we you know amongst the fear and the terror that our nation was experiencing. We. Had a very unique and poignant experience that we were almost kind of in a bubble and act and really experienced such love and joy and friendship that came from that. And truly the musical is about humanity at its best.

[00:46:51] And when I saw it I wanted to hug everyone on the way out of the door. It was so moving. I can imagine in New York it might be that way.

[00:47:02] And can I just say that in Seattle I feel like maybe people need to step outside of themselves more not try to be so autonomous and to love your neighbor.

[00:47:17] Right. For me it's a reminder of the goodness we all have goodness inside of us and we get tied up with our everyday moments and yes our electronic devices and just live traffic. Oh I have to go pick up my kids. So many things but it I mean I think musical theater has such a great opportunity to to share a lesson or to share a moment. But of all the moments I've seen in theater I think this is one of the most positive and important and real people. And it's enlightening. And it's I think a reminder of the good in the world.

[00:47:57] We have good in us and sometimes we are surrounded by things that aren't so good but we don't have to give in to that. Let's remember the compassion that we have the capacity to give to one another.

[00:48:13] There's that line in the show. You would do it. So you would also say that kind of what you would have done the same.

[00:48:22] Right. Yeah.

[00:48:23] That that kind of that that idea that you're like oh yeah yeah we have that within within ourselves we have time for probably one more question another question to appear. Oh yeah how did you feel about getting on a plane after all of it.

[00:48:39] I personally was very apprehensive and my wonderful husband said Honey this is the safest time to go on a plane ride. You don't have to worry.

[00:48:49] I had to. I was flying into New York or Newark and then I had to fly to Houston and then I had to fly to Utah and then I flew home. I had the milk run. But when we first got on the plane in Gander you know we were all just glad to be on the plane and leaving. And then when I got on the plane in New York to fly to Houston I remember getting on the plane and sitting next to somebody and there was this moment that we both looked at one another and there was something in our eyes that said Are you ready to take this plane down if you have to. And I have to tell you there was that essence of you bet because you know the flight 93 that that did that. How brave that was to know what was going to happen to them and they still did it.

[00:49:41] But seeing the devastation and not wanting that to ever happen again you know 200 people versus 3000 he were just it was just something that and maybe if the time came we wouldn't. But there was such a determination that I've never looked at a passenger a fellow passenger before until the days after 9/11 and there was just this moment of we got your back.

[00:50:06] And that's that's so interesting because even my when I look back on that time in my life to see that that idea of like oh yeah I will take care of this person or the person next to me my my my neighborhood.

[00:50:20] And we're in right now we're lucky to have I think eight residents is going right now in public schools high schools so we're working with seniors in high school to learn about oral histories and about 9/11. And it's interesting for me to think about well they were infants when this happened and so this story which you know for everybody just to get a quick visual survey of this room which we do have memories of and we do have an effect on our lives for this generation of seniors that's graduating here they have no idea they have no reference. And so I think it's really important.

[00:50:56] I think this is this generation's Pearl Harbor.

[00:51:00] That's how I liken it to what it must have been like for the seniors who remembered that when they were younger or whatever age they were and they were old enough to comprehend that that's what I think that's what we this is what we have to like and that. And even though kids you know were toddlers hearing those stories now at least it puts it a little more real even though you didn't see it. I mean what 20 years after Pearl Harbor I came along so you you didn't really know it when parents and your grandparents talked about it. They had been there. So you go OK well this isn't just something in a history book. It was something they lived through. And so for this generation that's what they get to live through.

[00:51:50] So everyone here please take some time to record your stories. Talk to people and get those stories preserved as well because you never know they might make great musicals someday or at least you know help teach the next generation. Also please please share your own stories and thank you to Chelsea Mo and Laurie for sharing your stories today. Thank you so much. And thank you for being such a great audience

[00:52:18] We hope to see you at future community conversations and thank you again to Bob and Scott for hosting us here at Seattle Public Library.

[00:52:28] Give it up for them. The final announcement.

[00:52:34] Just thank you all. That was fantastic and thank you all for coming. Please check the library's Web site SBL dot org for a calendar of events for all of upcoming programs. And yeah. Really appreciate you all being here. Thanks.

[00:52:50] This podcast was presented by the Seattle Public Library and Foundation and made possible by your contributions to the Seattle Public Library Foundation. Thanks for listening.