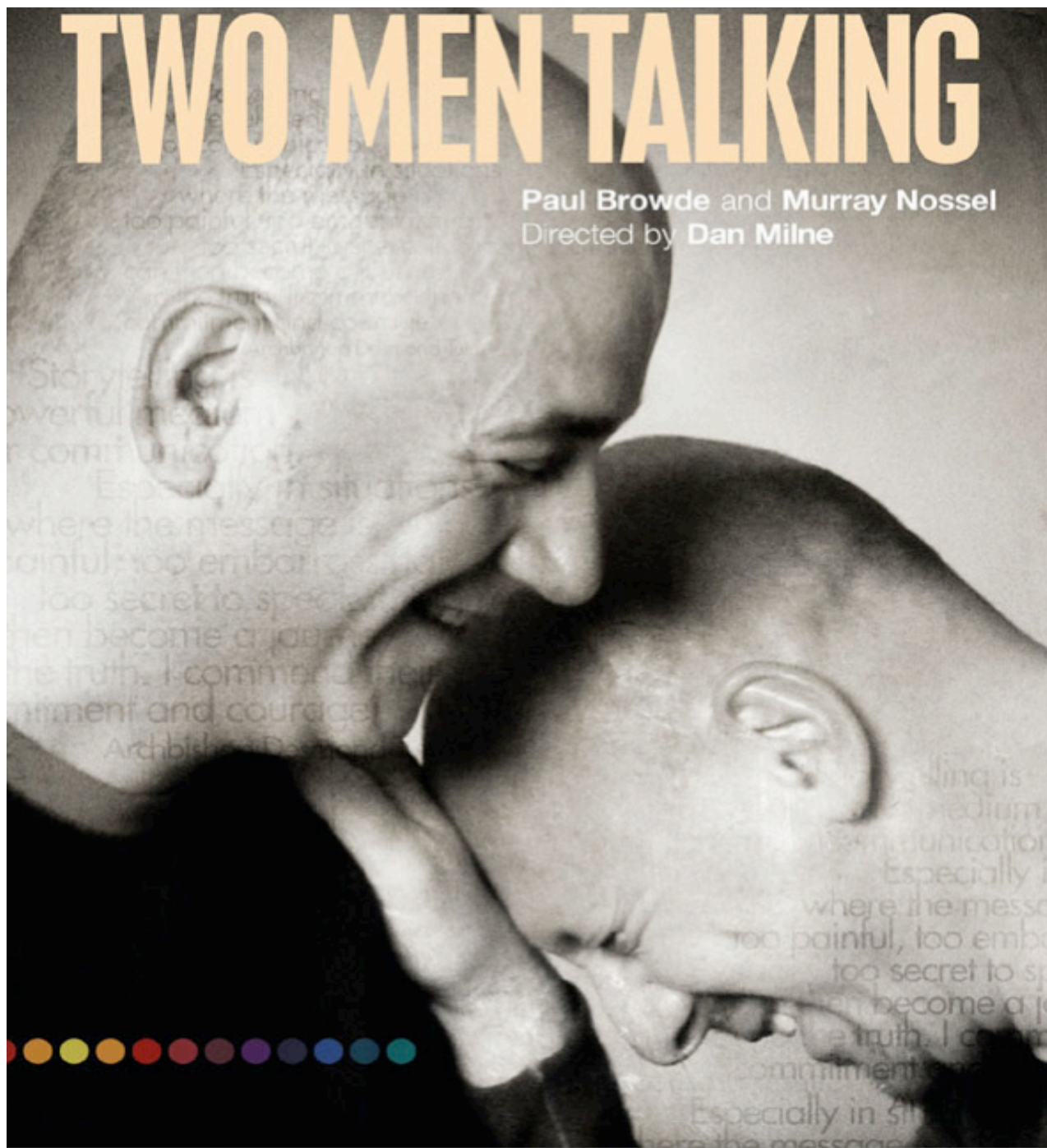


Two Men Talking

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narativ

TWO MEN TALKING

Written and Performed by
Paul Browde & Murray Nossel
Directed By
Dan Milne

Johannesburg 1974: A teacher asks two rival schoolboys to tell each other a story. Decades later, they meet by chance in New York as Oscar®-nominated filmmaker and psychiatrist and set out to transform the world through their real life storytelling.

Two Men Talking

What is Two Men Talking?

Two Men Talking is a live unscripted performance in which two men weave their life stories into a production that captivates audiences. Their story takes place between South Africa and New York City touching on issues of personal identity, HIV/AIDS, being Jewish in South Africa, and the creation of a lifetime friendship.

“Two Men Talking is our way of making sense of growing up white, Jewish, gay, and privileged under apartheid. Over the many years of creating our storytelling performance, we have listened to one another openly and non-judgmentally so that anything can be spoken. Our stories deal with difficult issues including harassment, homophobia, racism and AIDS, each of which has deeply touched our lives. We invite audience members to intimately share in our experiences. Two Men Talking combines elements of theatre, therapy and real life.

Our intention in performing is to create a sacred space, a moment of possibility that is healing for people and inspires audience members to tell stories of their own, and to value their own relationships. Each unscripted performance is absolutely unique in this continually transforming theatrical experience.”

Paul Browde & Murray Nossel
Creators & Performers of Two Men Talking



Photographs by Judy Schiller

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Who are Two Men Talking?

Paul Browde, M.D. (Creator / Performer)

Paul Browde is a psychiatrist in private practice in New York City, and Assistant Clinical Professor at New York University. His practice as a psychotherapist and psychopharmacologist is grounded in the ethics and values of Narrative Therapy, which views individuals as expert authors of their own life stories.

After completing medical school in South Africa, Paul trained as an actor at the Drama Studio London. Paul teaches at Columbia University for the Master of Science in Narrative Medicine. Over the past twenty years he has taught at the postgraduate level on ways in which therapists can mindfully use their own lives to deepen listening and empathy.

The story of TWO MEN TALKING continues to shape his life and work.

Murray Nossel, PhD (Creator / Performer)

Murray Nossel is an Academy Award®-nominated documentary filmmaker. Prior to filmmaking, Nossel practiced as a clinical psychologist in his native South Africa. He received a Ph.D. from Columbia University, where he serves on the teaching faculty of the Department of Narrative Medicine at the College of Physicians and Surgeons. He currently conducts storytelling master classes in New York City and develops storytelling training programs in organizations through Narativ Inc. Murray's many films have screened in major film festivals across the world and have aired on HBO, BBC, and PBS. *Why Can't We Be A Family Again?* was nominated for an Academy Award® in 2003. He is currently in post-production on *The Letter Carrier*, a feature documentary slated for release in 2013.

Dan Milne (Director)

Dan Milne trained as an actor following an English degree at Cambridge. He was a member of the Young Vic Company who created the award-winning *Grimm Tales*, touring internationally and culminating in a run at the New Victory Theatre, NYC. Dan also played Dromio of Syracuse in *The Comedy Of Errors* for the Royal Shakespeare Company and Gilgamesh in *He Who Saw Everything* for the National Theatre Studio. As a director, London Productions include *A Servant To Two Masters* (Assoc.Dir.-RSC); *Postcards From Maupassant* (Old Red Lion). *Perpetua* (Latchmere); *One (Of Us)* (Truman Brewery); *Scary Fairy* and *Big Space* (BAC). In 2007, Dan directed the world premiere of Stephen McNeff's opera, *Strip Jack Naked* for the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra which will tour the UK in Autumn 2008. Dan is currently working on a short film, *Wash*, and a theatre piece, *J&D Live In Bed*. Since 2001, a constant in Dan's work has been the collaboration with Paul and Murray on *Two Men Talking*. This journey together continues to be one of discovery and delight.

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Two Men Talking

Two Men Talking Press and Praise from Around the World

"Silence kills the spirit; storytelling opens the world. What Two Men Talking reveals is the tremendous importance of stories."

London Times, June 8, 2007

"Their performance invites you to see how they are long-term witnesses to each other's lives. Never less than totally sincere, they are also theatrically and imaginatively much more than that."

Time Out London, Critics' choice

"Undeniably moving."

The Guardian, UK

"One of the most complex shows to hit the stage in recent years"

The Mail and Guardian Theatre Pick of the Week, South Africa

"Funny, moving, and inspirational...a show that can not be missed. If you do, you will lose the opportunity to have your life changed for the better, even if just for a bit."

Broadway Baby, UK

What People Have Said About "Two Men Talking":

"Storytelling is a powerful medium for communication. Especially in situations where the message is too painful, too embarrassing, too secret to speak it. Storytelling can then become a journey to the truth. I commend their commitment and courage."

Archbishop Desmond Tutu

"Two extraordinary actors reach deeply into our complex common humanity in a shared world of misunderstanding and division."

Nadine Gordimer, Nobel Prize winner for literature

"Open confrontation of our personal histories as South Africans, is an important part of healing our country and securing its future, free from the evasion and secrecy that characterized its oppression under apartheid. Browde and Nossel's storytelling has profoundly affected audiences in North America and Australia. In South Africa their impact will be immense."

Judge Edwin Cameron, Judge of the Constitutional Court, South Africa

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Two Men Talking & Narativ Storytelling Workshops for students and faculty of educational organizations

Narativ's work with corporations, non-profit organizations and groups is informed largely by co-founders Murray Nossel, PhD and Paul Browde, MD's experiences of performing their own personal stories in *Two Men Talking*.

Two Men Talking is the representation of Narativ's storytelling methodology and an ideal vehicle for opening eyes, hearts and discussion about topics that are often painful and embarrassing. It serves as the perfect springboard for lectures, discussions and storytelling workshops around the following topics:

- Identity
- Diversity
- Sexuality
- Advocacy / Community building
- Medical community
- Bullying

Two Men Talking performances and Narativ workshops have been conducted at:

- Columbia School of Social Work
- Narrative Medicine Group at Columbia University
- Dickinson, Franklin & Marshall, Gettysburg Colleges in Pennsylvania
- Macaulay Honors College at the City University of New York

"The students at Dickinson and Gettysburg were enthralled by Two Men Talking. They couldn't wait to tell Paul and Murray their own stories, which were inspired by the show. We would love to have Paul and Murray come back again."

Ted Merwin, Asst. Prof. of Religion, Dickinson College

"The Narativ workshop was both a constructive and truly enjoyable event for the young alumni base at Macaulay Honors College. Macaulay alums were able to better integrate the story of their college experiences with their life experiences. The alums took away a number of different lessons. For some it helped them think about the next step, for others it helped them craft their personal story for applications and interviews, while others were simply thrilled that they had gotten back in touch with their creative sides. I would recommend Narativ very highly within academic circles as the program is flexible to your goals and can be beneficial in a number of different ways."

Sophie Muller, Macaulay Honors College '07, Former Coordinator of Alumni Relations

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Two Men Talking & Bullying:

Special performances at King David Schools in South Africa, May 2009

An article about *Two Men Talking* in the Cape Times on March 8, 2004, related the relevance of the performance to the subject of bullying in these words: "Bullying takes place without consent. There is a cloak of silence shrouding bullying. Secrecy shrouds everything in bitterness, hopelessness. By telling your story in an affirmative and positive way, hopelessness can be transmuted into hope. From hope comes belonging. The two men in *Two Men Talking* use storytelling as a medium for growth."

In May 2009, Murray Nossel and Paul Browde returned to South Africa to take a stand against bullying and open up discussions around this difficult topic, through performances of *Two Men Talking*, workshops and discussions with students and faculty of King David Day School, the Jewish Day School where Murray Nossel and Paul Browde met.

They performed for 1,000 students over 2 days and another 1,000 people during a public performance.

This is a sample of what people said about their performances:

"All who saw Two Men Talking expressed being extremely moved and inspired. This was a truly historic moment in the life of the King David Schools. One of the mothers commented that her son was a "new person" from this experience and that she was so grateful that he had witnessed it. Thank you to Paul and Murray for having the courage and artistry to show it like it was and is and for having the ability to wake us up!"

Meryl Malkin, School Psychologist and Counselor

"May the positive and cathartic energy you have spread be rewarded with ripples of change into the future of our wonderful schools."

Rabbi Kacev, General Director, South Africa Board of Jewish Education

"I admire your honesty, brutality, and courage – not only for forgiving (each other and yourselves), for speaking out against bullying and discrimination, but also for going back to King David ... I looked around me in the King David school hall, at all the teachers and parents, standing, clapping, tears in their eyes."

Janine Shamos, Founder, Respect Me, South Africa

"Your performance last night was one of the most brilliant I have seen to date. Your story moved me beyond words."

Ashleigh Elad Glenhazel, Audience Member

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Two Men Talking & World AIDS Day

Special performance sponsored by the International Center for AIDS Care and Treatment Programs (ICAP) at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health

On December 1, 2009, Paul Browde and Murray Nossel performed at Columbia University in New York for World AIDS Day.

The performance was sponsored by ICAP and was part of a larger symposium in which **former President of the United States Bill Clinton** featured as a guest speaker to highlight the challenges that remain in the fight against AIDS.

Two Men Talking was performed that night in front of a crowd of 600 people.

This is an excerpt of an article written in Columbia University's newsletter:

"In Two Men Talking, the two friends recount personal struggles, some of which illuminate the stigma of being gay in societies marked by fear and homophobia. During a performance at Barrow Street Theatre in October, Browde shared the challenges he has encountered being HIV positive. Nossel asked the audience for some water to drink while Browde watched his friend sip from the bottle: "What if I had drank from that bottle?" he said to the audience. "I have HIV. These are the things I think about."

Beyond the stage, Nossel and Browde have taken Two Men Talking and Narativ, the company they founded, to communities in need of open dialogue around sensitive issues. Last summer, Nossel went to Kenya to help transport workers with AIDS tell their stories. They have also been invited to India to run a similar program for people with AIDS and recently went to Croatia to help patients with intellectual disabilities.

In the work they do, on stage or in class, Browde and Nossel emphasize how both telling and listening to stories can introduce new ways to see ourselves and others. "Story," Nossel says, "is synonymous with one's sense of self and one's being on the planet and one's political right to be."

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The New York Times

Two Twosomes, Not a Script in Sight

By ROBERT SIMONSON

Published: June 15, 2008

THE improv duo of T J Jagodowski and David Pasquesi, better known as TJ and Dave, do not speak to each other on the day before a show. They think any sort of contact detracts from the spontaneity of the performance. Murray Nossel and Paul Browde, the two men in "Two Men Talking," meanwhile, won't shut up. Before facing the audience, they confide intensely with each other for up to two hours (longer than the actual show), pouring out the thoughts and events of the day.

The two duos, however, experience the same sensation before they walk onstage at the Barrow Street Theater, their home whenever they're working in New York. They don't know "what the hell is going to happen," as Mr. Nossel puts it.

Mr. Jagodowski, 36, and Mr. Pasquesi, 47, who hail from Chicago, create a one-hour comic playlet ex nihilo every night, not knowing a single line beforehand. Mr. Nossel, 46, and Mr. Browde, 47, who were born in South Africa but have lived in Manhattan for many years, share a wealth of personal stories with the audience but don't know which tales the other one will tell at any given performance or if new ones will be introduced.

During a four-month stand at the Barrow Street that ended May 3, for instance, Mr. Nossel began relating a disturbing teenage experience in which his father verbally abused him as "nothing." Mr. Browde, who is a psychiatrist, had long encouraged his friend to enact the memory. Nonetheless he was shaken the first time Mr. Nossel asked him onstage to play the part of his father; he knew what was coming.

"The biggest transformation for me has been the telling of that story," Mr. Nossel said. "I was worried it would get back to my father, that people would judge him for it, people would judge me for it. I'm a traumatized person for what happened to me. My father was quite brutal in many ways. He was a sick man."

If "Two Men Talking," which is next performed on June 24 and 25, sounds a bit like theatrical therapy, it is in a way. Mr. Browde is influenced by the narrative therapy movement, which advocates the use of storytelling to address childhood traumas. Additionally, the first raw version of what became "Two Men Talking" was presented at a family therapy conference under the title "Friendship and Community in the Age of HIV."

The experiment was born of a quarrel between the two friends about whether Mr. Browde should make public the details of how he contracted HIV.

"We thought it would be an interesting argument to present at a conference, about who owns a story," Mr. Browde said. "People liked it, but they wanted more context."

The context is that both men had grown up in Johannesburg, where they met as children and attended school together but didn't become close until they met again many years later in New York. They began to fill in the missing years by compulsively exchanging stories from their pasts. "It was like meeting a kindred spirit," Mr. Browde said. "That was the impulse for telling stories, to form a bond."

They started writing the tales down after the conference, but when Dan Milne, a director

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Two Men Talking Press Kit

friend, invited them to develop the project at the Young Vic in London, the first thing he did was throw the script out. If the actors were going to be telling a story again and again, he reasoned, they had to remain alive to the moment.

“The listening aspect is crucial,” Mr. Nossel said. “I cannot take my attention off Paul for a second when he’s telling a story. I’m not sitting there planning which story I’m going to be telling next.”

Mr. Nossel and Mr. Browde at least have their actual experiences to draw from during a show. Mr. Jagodowski and Mr. Pasquesi — who next perform at the Barrow Street July 25 to 27 — have to pull an hour’s worth of story and anywhere from 5 to 12 characters out of thin air. They’re not even assisted by plot suggestions from the audience, something they see as the tired gimmick of many another improv outfit.

“When you take suggestions, a lot of it is to prove to the audience that you’re making it up,” Mr. Pasquesi explained. “But it doesn’t prove it. Also you do it engage the audience into thinking they’re participating in the evening, which I don’t think we need anymore.”

The two were first thrown together at an improv festival in 2001. Mr. Jagodowski was delighted by the accident. “If you’ve ever improvised in Chicago, you know the name David Pasquesi. He’s in the pantheon.” The experience led to a regular Wednesday night gig at the iO Theater (formerly the ImprovOlympic), where their antics have made them a cult attraction.

The two men have spent much of their energy fighting off improv clichés. “Sometimes with improvisers,” Mr. Pasquesi said, “something occurs during the day, and they think, ‘This would make an interesting scene,’ and they bring that to the show.”

But that kind of works against what we’re doing, which is reacting to this thing that’s only here right now.” What’s more, they’re convinced their extremely attentive audiences would instantly smell a rat if they tried anything so premeditated. “They will recognize that you came out with an agenda,” Mr. Jagodowski said, “and it feels terrible for everybody.”

Once the shows are over, the four men’s artistic paths again diverge. The two Chicagoans painstakingly weigh the success of their effort. The South Africans never mention the show again. “I don’t even recall it sometimes,” Mr. Browde said. “It feels like a dream.”



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Reviews By Caroline McGinn

Two Men Talking

Critics' Choice



Trafalgar Studios WE

June 13 – 19, 2007

The two men talking are Academy Award-nominated filmmaker Murray Nossel and New York psychiatrist Paul Browde. What they're talking about is what they share: white Jewish South African roots; homosexuality; a beautifully laid back sense of humour; and a deeply personal conviction that HIV-sufferers, by telling their stories, can humanize the face of the 'gay plague'.

More than anything, this persuasive and shapely little show is a performance of their abiding friendship. Murray and Paul act out their stories in an adroit series of anecdotes: nifty links take you from the ten-year-old schoolboy pinned to the corridor wall by bullies to the grown-up documentary maker pinned to the Jerusalem's Wailing Wall by the furious dogmatism of an elderly Rabbi.

Each man plays all the bit-parts in the other's lives: Paul hilariously provides an extra pair of arms in the episode where the student Murray, quasi-mystically stoned, stands in-front of a mirror with his girlfriend and the beautiful boy he's secretly lost his heart to, imitating a multi-limbed Hindu Goddess to the sound of Jean Michel Jarre's 'Oxygene'. The way they physically enter into each other's stories is also a brilliant dramatic format for their friendship: one of the most remarkable things about this devised piece (which alters nightly) is the depth with which the two men listen to each other; their performance invites you to see how they're long-term witnesses to each other's lives.

Sincere production values and Dan Milne's quietly sympathetic direction let them speak for themselves. Whether they are bouncing round acting out their daily phone-chats as a hummed duet version of Beethoven's Minuet In G, or describing the moment of Paul's HIV-diagnosis, they're never less than totally sincere, but they're also theatrically and imaginatively much more than that.

Caroline McGinn

Critics' Choice

Two Men Talking
Trafalgar Studios WE

A sympathetic,
imaginative account
of a friendship
between two gay
men who share
white Jewish South
African roots and a
sense of humour.

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Two Men Talking

Oral Therapy ★★★★★

By Lindsay Corr

August 17, 2006

Storytelling is a powerful medium for communication. In situations where the message is too painful, too embarrassing, or secret, it becomes a journey to the truth.

Two Men Talking defies categorization; part storytelling, part conversation it portrays a live relationship between two childhood friends/foes who reconcile and find they've much in common. As they go back and forth through their present and past, reliving successes and failures, they discuss racism, sexuality and AIDS with refreshing openness.

Emotional yet unsentimental, humorous yet self-revealing, it forces you to make connections with both them and your own sense of self. Paul Browde and Murray Nossel successfully dive into our universal humanity in a world of misunderstanding and division



Two Men Talking

Top Pick at the 2006 Edinburgh Fringe Festival

★★★★★

By Martin Walker

August 1, 2006

You'll get the maximum benefit from this quite brilliant play by going in cold. Seriously. You should put down this magazine, take the most direct route to the Assembly Rooms and simply enter Murray Nossel and Paul Browde's space having no idea what's going to happen next. Let the whole thing unfold in front of you. Still reading? Well, I'm gonna try not to spoil it.

Murray and Paul went to school together in South Africa. When they were 12, they were challenged by a teacher to tell each other a story. Unsure at first, they soon got the knack and their tales of school days gradually unfold before us. By chance, years later, they meet as adults in New York, where they resume the storytelling. Their tales are full of humour and drama. Tragedy and success. Wonderful moments of love, liberation and forgiveness.

What we soon realise though, is that it is all real. *Two Men Talking* is not a work of fiction, but the real experiences of two very close friends who have great stories to tell. What we are seeing is improvised theatre, based on the men's own stories. It works because it's honest. The whole audience really does hang on their every word. I've never felt so alive during a stage performance.

Utterly beautiful.

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Past Performances of Two Men Talking

- Barrow Group Theatre, New York City, On-going since 2010
- The Hotkiss School, Connecticut, January 2012
- The Robert and Judi Newman Center, University of Denver, January 2012
- The Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center, University of Maryland, March 2011
- Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, November 2010
- Phillips Academy, Andover, MA, October 2010
- King David Schools, Johannesburg, South Africa, May 2009
- Barrow Street Theatre Fortnight Festival, New York City, January 11-19, 2008 & January 31-February 1, 2009
- Tusten Theater, Narrowsburg New York, September 6th 2008
- Trafalgar Studios, London, June 2007
- Pulse Festival, Ipswich, June 2007
- Mumford Theatre, Cambridge, June 2007
- The Lowry, Salford, May 2007
- Colchester Arts Centre May 2007
- Hat Factory, Luton, May 2007
- Letchworth Arts Centre, May 2007
- Weston Auditorium, University of Herts, May 2007
- Old Town Hall, Hemel Hempstead, May 2007
- The Assemblyrooms Theatre, Edinburgh Festival 2006
- West End Theater, New York City, March 2006
- Lucille Austin Memorial Lecture, Columbia University, February 15th 2006
- Soho Playhouse, New York, January, 2005
- Benefit for Friends In Deed, New York, December 2004
- Bank Street Theatre, New York, December 2004
- Easton Mountain, New York, September 2004
- Wits Theatre, Johannesburg, March 2004
- Baxter Theatre, Capetown, March 2004
- Theatre on the Square, Johannesburg, February 2004
- Sandglass Theater, Putney Vermont, March 2003
- Two Men Talking Putney Artists Retreat, Putney Vermont, September 2002
- Narrative Therapy Conference, Spelman College, Atlanta, June 2002
- National Queer Arts Festival, San Francisco, June 2002
- Young Vic Theatre, London, March 2002
- 'La Vigna', Volterra, Italy, July 2001
- Dixon Place, New York. July 2000
- WJFF National Public Radio, Jeffersonville, New York, June 2000

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Narativ, Inc.

Founded by Murray Nossel and Paul Browde, Narativ, Inc. is a company that trains individuals, groups and companies to communicate powerfully and effectively through the timeless and universal art of storytelling. Narativ's corporate story trainings focus on leadership development, team building and global communications. Recent clients include Columbia University Business School, Time Warner, The Walt Disney Corporation, The Open Society Institute UNICEF, the International Transport Workers' Federation, and the City University of New York. In addition, Narativ conducts monthly action oriented storytelling workshops for individuals interested in developing their own stories, and turning dreams into results.

To inquire about Narativ's corporate trainings or to register for our next story workshop, please contact Jerome Deroy at 646.632.3710 or at jerome@narativ.com.

Workshop Testimonials

"You will benefit first and foremost from the quality of mind and character of Murray and Paul –and the precision and generosity of their insights. This one day can really get the ball rolling if you are trying to find your voice and explore ways to gain access to the richness of your own experience."

Maura Spiegel, PhD

Professor, Columbia University Narrative Medicine Group

"I have a sense of greater aliveness and possibility. I also have increased my presentation skills, to become more effective in communication. This is an extraordinary method of getting to know others and creating intimate, profound, honest, real and truthful exchanges in the shortest time I have ever seen."

Mary Marino

Psychologist and Training Facilitator

"WOW! I was amazed by the level of comfort and intimacy that the group was able to establish in such a short period of time. If you are looking to improve your presentation skills, or simply want to improve your communication style, this is the place to go!"

George Fesser
Social Worker

"Very highly recommended. It is an event that will change your outlook on communicating with others...but more importantly, with yourself. The value of this workshop proved itself tenfold in just the first 2 hours."

Charlie Garland
Business Author

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