



SOUTHCOAST Artists Index

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These transcripts were produced using the Zoom transcription feature.

Interviewer Name: Ron Fortier Storyteller Name: Karen Chace

Ron Fortier

Here we have another Skype assistant podcast. We do have technical difficulties. Thank you for listening through. It and we're trying to improve the quality, but every day is a different day. Thanks so much. Hi, this is Ron Fortier, your host of the Artist Index podcast. Brought to you by the South Coast Artist Index, better known as the in focus. Podcast and we're on our next episode and we have a special guest, an old friend and also the first storyteller that we've had on the podcast. And with that in mind, I'll let you let her introduce herself. Go ahead.

Karen Chace

Hi Ron. So great to talk to you again. It's been a while. My name is Karen Chace. And as Ron said, I am a professional storyteller and teaching artist. I grew up in New Bedford and now I live in East Free.

Ron Fortier

I'm. I'm gonna ask you something about storytelling, just like I asked photographers, because with photographers for example. There are artist photographers, there are commercial photographers, you know, fine art photographers, commercial photographers, winning photographers, all kinds of photographers. How does that break down when it comes down to storytelling and is it really more of? A verbal performance genre than it is anything else.

Karen Chace

Absolutely. A lot of times what people will say to me when they ask what I do and I say I am a storyteller, they assume that I read to children because usually the only contact they've had growing up with someone. Who called them? Still, the storyteller was in a library. A librarian would have story time, and and that's a whole nother skill in itself. Being able to capture an audience while you're reading. But storytelling is a performance based art. It's part of oral tradition that goes back centuries. Some storytellers. Tell only traditional folk tales, such as, you know fairy tales, myths, legends, folk tales like Jack tales. And then there are others where their focus is personal. Stories I happen to do both. My heart is really with the traditional stories. A lot of children nowadays do not know some of the old stories, and I also do storytelling for adults. And by that I don't mean stories that have a little bit of a blue content, but longer. More sophisticated folk tales and fairy tales.



Ron Fortier

OK, now. When it comes to the. Fine Arts. Is it something that's still not categorized as a fine art?

Karen Chace

Yes, you're right. When I'm applying for grants, it's very difficult to find a category that says, storyteller, we are usually lumped into the performer section that isn't. Broken out, and if it is, it would be something like ballet musicians. Singer, dancer. They don't have a category for storyteller. Although the national Storytelling network lobbied and did a lot of work to get a storyteller into the Fine Arts category in some areas, because it is a fine art, just like any other fine art. And as I mentioned earlier, it does. It goes back. Centuries, when I'm teaching my students, I always make sure to tell them that a storyteller in ancient times was a very revered part of the king of Queens court. So they are carrying on history through their stories.

Ron Fortier

I I was just thinking of a parallel to illustrators, in particular Norman Rockwell, but most illustrators are painters. You know, the majority of them. I mean, there's the. Woodcut illustrators in in in in other other media used, but particularly painting, and he was always frustrated because he never. He always wanted to be considered as a painter, and that was one of his biggest frustrations from. From what I've read now I. See a parallel between that and a storyteller. Because if we go back to the Greeks, where pretty much everything was born, storytellers were.

Announcer

That's right.

Ron Fortier

It was. It was. It was part of theater. I mean, that's a fine art.

Karen Chace

Yes, absolutely. And that back then is how culture and history was passed on from one generation to the next. So without those stories, cultures lose a sense of who they are. So it's extremely important to carry on the stories and and one group in particular, the Native American culture. Their stories are are sacred to them because it was passed on from Elder to Elder. And if you are not Native American. You really should seek permission before you tell Native American stories. Because a lot of them are seasonal, certain stories you shouldn't tell in the winter, certain stories you shouldn't tell in the summer and their stories passed on a lot of their sacred information from nation to nation.

Ron Fortier

That just triggered something in my head. If you say it, it is so. I don't know where it came from. I mean, what memory or you? Know spark of genius. But I but I got it. But I I've heard that someplace. If you say it, it is so.

Karen Chace

Hmm, so I've I've heard a version of that. Yes, yes, you're right.

Ron Fortier

Which brings me to Ghostbusters. The first thing the first thing you shall think of, the first thing you think of shall destroy you. And that's where we got to stay. Puff.

Karen Chace

That's right.

Ron Fortier

Marshmallow man. Ohh my.



Karen Chace

Oh goodness.

Ron Fortier

Boy, do I have a lot of questions. I always ask painters. When was their first? Consciousness, when did they know that? Oh, my God. This is what I want to do for the rest of my life. Or wow, this is something I don't ever not want to do. You know, it's that thing that, that thing that drives us, that that you're going to say. Ah, uh thing. When? When did that happen to you?

Karen Chace

Oh, it's funny that you you asked that because you're right. You you just know the exact moment when it happened. I was actually working at my local elementary school, not in a teaching capacity. I was working at a preschool as a in a teaching capacity. In my second job. At the elementary school and my son was young at the time. And I was on the PTO board and there happened to be an upcoming conference for talented and gifted children in New Hampshire, and the principal asked if I would go with some of the teachers and be, you know, parent liaison. And I happily went. And during that weekend, at lunch one day we had a storyteller at the end of our luncheon as. And I just remember being so totally entranced by this woman. She was a fabulous storyteller. But also, I was thinking, I can't believe that you can do this for a living. And she had me so mesmerized the entire time. And some of my friends who are at the table. With me, you know, decided to go and take a walk or do something else. And before the next session. And I just sat there. Overcome by what I was hearing and seeing and when I came home, I mean, this was in Google's infancy and I immediately started to Google and find someplace where I could go to learn more. And I happened to come across a storytelling conference in Iowa. And I booked a ticket and put myself.

Speaker

On a plane and.

Karen Chace

Went to the conference and that's how it all began.

Ron Fortier

Talk about being bitten by the bug, huh?

Karen Chace

Oh, absolutely, absolutely. I just, I I, I couldn't wait to learn as much as I could to begin to learn about this art. And from there, you know, I took a wonderful four day workshop in in Marblehead with. A wonderful international storyteller called Judith Black. Luckily, I did not know who she was at the time, or I would have been too intimidated. To go. And when I emailed her and she told me what the requirements were for the workshop, I wrote back and said I, I'm just dipping my toes in the water. I think this going is going to be above my pay grade and she said no come, we'll have fun and I went and I did and actually Judge Judith and I are good friends now. It was just a wonderful beginning.

Ron Fortier

It's something so simple, yet something so complicated and I think sadly. I think we're losing it on one hand and another hand I see something. I see it coming back. I'll try to explain myself. My Portuguese side. I grew up with stories because that's the only way I could get to know my grandparents that I never met. They died. One died before I was born and the other remained in Portugal until. When she died, but my mother had these stories, and especially about her dad. And you know, I've been trying to. Trace my Sephardic Jewish ancestry through him, which is almost impossible because there's no DNA markers, but the stories of him and his character. You know, my mom painted him so well that he's alive to me and. So there are other stories I think you and I had this



conversation a few years back about the story, about how the elderly were were treated back in ancient days where the story of a of a son who was whose duty was because of the culture, the cultural norms. To bring the father to a place outside of the village to die because he was no longer an asset to the village, he was not a liability. And the father, this is. And this is the story my mother told me. And the father requested that the son felt some remorse and and and very uncomfortable. And so he took a quilt with him to give to his father to keep him warm until he passed. And the father said that you have a jackknife. Or a knife and the son said yes, I do, he says. OK, I want you to cut the quilt in half. And he said why? He says. Because I want you to keep half so that when your son brings you here, you'll have something to. You are. At at which time he brought his father directly home. Now you told me you've heard that story. And that's the point of my story, of the story. So this story does exist in other in other cultures.

Karen Chace

Ohh my goodness it that is. It's called half blanket in the Irish culture. I I've I've read and heard that story from so many of the Japanese culture, Chinese culture. Italian. Yes. And that's that story like folk tales. Travel. So you will see versions or adaptations of the same folk tale in different cultures. A lot of times when I'm reading anthologies to find new stories to share, I'll say oh wait a minute. That's the story of the Czechoslovakian clever. Anka. But it's called something entirely different in Greece. So that's the fascinating thing to me, and I'm so glad you brought that that story up because it's a. Perfect illustration of how stories travel. I tell a number of different versions of the story of Cinderella, and there are over 700 stories of Cinderella from around the world. The motif just carries and carries the in the Chinese story of yeah. Jen instead of a glass slipper, she wears golden slippers made out of fish scales, so it it they they adapt to whatever culture they're in. So that's a perfect example.

Ron Fortier

Yeah, in Italian luchino. I can't say it now. There it is. One of my allergies act up and it blocks out my sinuses and I can't. I can't say some words, but yeah, it's it is amazing how how that happens. And when I was talking about the. Me and if if we go back to 50s and 60s and even 70s television. There was storytelling there and I think people are like, rediscovering that there were more. There were more on the six stories there and they were well written, whether they were comedies or or or or straights, you know, dramas and somehow in my estimation and it's the question is have we lost?

Karen Chace

Have we lost?

Ron Fortier

Yeah, I mean we, we we we now call it a narrative instead of a story, you know, a narrative is what. Is what?

Karen Chace

Ohh well, you know, a narrative is a story. They're really one in the same, but I think. What can be lost sometimes and what we what tends to happen is some of the stories. I don't like this expression, but I'm trying to find a. Different way to. Say it dumbed down, we take away the meat of the story and we don't trust the audio. It's to formulate their own opinion. We're spoon fed too much when when I'm storytelling, I I rarely, rarely use Aesop fables because as you know, they all have morals at the end. And that's to me, that's telling what the audience to think I would rather. Share A story and let the audience decide for themselves what it means to them. Let them take away what they need at that moment in time. It could mean something entirely different to you than it does to the person sitting next to you, and that's OK. People should take what they need and and we like to say it as storytellers. If we're doing our job correctly. We actually somewhat disappear in, in front of the audience when we're telling the story because our goal is to get the audience to step into the story with us. So that's why it's a little different than theater because there there is no 4th wall. We will sometimes step out of the story. And invite the audience in by asking a question or some of the storytelling I do with children. I'll even invite them up on the stage with me to be part. Of the story. It's important that as storytellers, we don't make the story about us



and our performance. It's about the story I had. I was doing an adults show a few years ago, a show. I I put together called wise, wicked and witty women. And it's all stories of strong women, and it's about a 50 minute performance. And when I was done, this gentleman came up to me and he said, I, I want to tell you something, but I don't want to insult you. And I thought Ohh right away. Hey, what did I do wrong? And I said, well, go ahead. I'm happy to hear what you have to say. And he said when you began, I was watching you and I was listening. And you know, I I was interested, he said. But as you kept telling different stories, he said, I realized I wasn't. I forgot to look at you. I was in the story with you. And I told him, I said that's the greatest compliment you can give a storyteller, because it's not about me. It's about the story.

Ron Fortier

Yeah, I can. I can see that. There are certain songs, for example, that the same thing happens. You totally forget. You almost even forget about the music. It's it's you become one. Is that? Wonderful metamorphosis. Where? Where? You. You. You're joined on some other plane. Some other level. UM.

Speaker

I think.

Ron Fortier

Have got.

Karen Chace

I was gonna say we were talking about the moth the other day and and how sometimes we pull our cars over or stay in the driveway to finish listening to a story. It's just so immersed in the story. You don't want it to end.

Ron Fortier

Yeah, exactly. Yeah. And, you know, the never ending story. I mean, you really. Yeah. You just become so immersed in it for whatever reason. UM now. If I remember correctly from English, you know one-on-one, there's four different kinds of stories. This comedy, this drama, this irony and this romance, and what romance is, was romance back in the day was adventure. It wasn't like, romantic love. So is. Is that still the same with storytellers?

Karen Chace

For categories you mean for different categories of stories? Well, I I guess to some extent because you, well, you have stories say you folk tales are are can be broken down. So for instance a category of folk tale might be a noodle head story which is a funny story. Something silly some. Someone is usually really silly, isn't very bright. It and it's it's humorous and then you have Jack tails a lot of students. When when I asked, does anybody know a folktale with somebody named Jack in it? Their first thing is Jack and the Beanstalk, which is true. But there is also a whole version, a whole set. Of jackals with this character. Who is? Less than bra. Right, who usually goes out in the world in search of adventure and all these mishaps happen to him, but he ends up coming out in the end the winner. So there's also what we call poor coast stories. Those are folk tales that the title will usually begin with. How or why. Like how the bear lost his tail, that sort of thing. And those are poor choice. Being the French word for why so folk tales are broken down into Riddle stories, that sort of thing. So yes, there are different, different categories for folk tales.

Ron Fortier

Like his. OK. Do you have any moments that are seared in your memory? You know, you just, you just started off the day. It's a gig. I mean, I guess that's what you would call it in, you know, in the jargon, you got a job you want to go tell a story and then something. Totally unexpected occurred to you that day. Could you have any any stories about that?



Karen Chace

It may encourage me from someone in the audience or something that happened to me while I was telling a story.

Ron Fortier

Exactly, exactly. A A moment. You know, one of those moments that you just can never recapture, but it's there, seared into your.

Karen Chace

Well, I think you. Know going back to what I was just speaking about how having the audience take what they need from the story I had been hired to do a school assembly and one of the stories I was telling was the King's ears. This particular version is from Serbia. There's a number of different versions and the gist of the story is this young Prince is born perfect, except he has donkey ears, and so his parents, you know, covered that up throughout his life. Because they fear he'll be ridiculed. And of course his parents pass. He becomes king. He keeps the secret. And then there's a little bit more to the story. But the secret finally comes out. And in the end, even though he was so afraid that people would no longer respect him as King they you know they. Realize it doesn't matter what he looks like, he's still the same person, the same honest king that treats them well and takes care of the realm. And so it's a funny story because you know, the children get to sing along with me, this little ditty about the king as he is of a donkey and and. So it's a fun story, but there is, you know, an underlying message to it. But again, you take what you need from the story. Well, after I was done and everybody was going back to class, the teacher came up. To me and asked if this little boy could speak with me and I said yes and he came over and wanted to tell me how much he enjoyed the stories and thanked me and and I didn't think too much of it. You know, that was lovely. Children often do that. And then she sent him back to class, but she stayed behind. And she said and. And the boy was wearing a cap, which I thought was a little unusual because usually they can't wear hats in school. But I didn't pay too much attention to it. And she said, you cannot believe how much that story has impacted him and will impact the other students. This little boy had alopecia and had lost all of his hair and had gone through a lot of teasing. And then his hair came back and things went well. And he recently had just gone through another bout. Of alopecia. And that's why he had the cap on his head because he had absolutely no hair. And she said that story, you know, was about loving people for who they are, not what they look like. And how much that meant to him and would. Impact him and the other students in school. Now I came with that story that day. Not knowing that not even thinking about the underlying meaning of that story. Because it wasn't one of my programs on bullying or peacemaking. It was just that time and day it was a fun story. And I always think that that little boy. I always think of him. Oh, he's probably a young man now. This was quite a number of years ago, probably 10 years ago. So that's one that stays with me, the power of.

Ron Fortier

Yeah, yeah, yeah, I all I can think of is I flashback on my dad. Who was crazy in his own right ways? He thought my ears were far too large for my head when I. Was a child. So he taped them back at him. He taped them. Before I went to bed, I just did that. So what you started saying that it's like, Oh my God, I was waiting to to hear. About the little boy, you know. Have have you ever heard a story that? That you know, as a storyteller, I mean, sometimes we can get distant, we can get not cynical, but clinical, you know, you see, you see other people's art, and either it turns you on or does nothing for you or it's just absolutely horrible. But have you ever had a situation where? You heard someone else's story that really just. UM. Throws you in your tracks or turned you around or impacted you in a way that you never imagined.

Karen Chace

Oh my goodness. That's a tough one. I I would have to say it's probably. Maybe not so much. Well, let me think. Yes, now that now that I'm, I'm there. There was a wonderful, wonderful storyteller who became a treasured friend of mine. I'm sad, but he's no longer with us. His name is Pat Mendoza from Colorado. And there's a whole



back story to how the the funny way he and I met, but. We became good friends and he was not only a storyteller, but a musician and a beautiful singer. He did a story on the Marines that were lost on Macon Island and. It's it's you could actually Google it on YouTube. It's he did a whole video for one of the generals in Washington and it's so moving. It's a personal story, not his personal story, but it's a story of. These soldiers and then. Has the power to move. Anybody who listens to it. While it didn't affect me personally, it's just such a moving story of our history that has been set to story and you know, it's always been said that if our history was set to story, we would never forget. Because there was something very powerful about taking pieces of history and and taking them out of. The just relegating them to the dates and times and names of people so that that's one that was very powerful to me. It didn't change me personally, but it. Was just very powerful. Trying to think of. A personal way that's a story affected me. I'm not coming up with one right now, but what I do know is that going to live performances. Of other storytellers who have really honed their craft and their art. Can be incredibly moving. As a storyteller myself, because it helps me try to be better and reach for a higher goal in my storytelling. So in that way, other storytellers sharing their work is really motivating.

Ron Fortier

I've heard. I've read. Heart and red Europeans, for example, laugh at us. Not all of them, but they laugh at us because they say we have we they say we have buildings that are older than your country, you. You have short memories and I think that was also part of the narrative of the terrorists, you know, Middle Eastern terrorists around the time of of, you know, the Libyan terrorism which is documented in, believe it or not, back to the. Sure. And that was part of the storyline and and then all of the. Interactions that we've had, violent interactions that we've had with with the world of Islam and one of the things that they refer to is that we have very short memories. Is it possible that. The reason why we have short memories is because. I mean, does America have stories anymore? Do they have stories that are handed down? You know, as they? Once were or have we lost that and that is that where memory really resides as in stories?

Karen Chace

You know, I think story is a powerful, powerful tool. We we don't have the types of stories that come from European culture, but we do have stories that were carried over from the, from the African culture, coming to the United States. Through sadly, the the slave trade, and though the Brer Rabbit stories, those are cultural not not American, because they have come from another culture. But if you look to. What stories from the United States, the the the Brer Rabbit stories? But they came from another country. I do think. And you and I talked about this the other day about personal stories and how that's how we remember where we came from. You're talking about doing your genealogy. And how genealogy has really? You know, exploded the last last ten years or so, you know, with their DNA mapping and and people wanting to know where their ancestry came from. So collecting family stories, I think for us here in America because we don't have a broad based cultural. Content of folk tales and fairy tales that came from this country because we are such a young country. I think that's what makes family stories all the more important, because that's how we get to know people that we never had the opportunity to meet in, in, in your case, your grandfather. So I urge, you know, your listeners, that if they can, while their parents or grandparents or great grandparents are still. With you do collect their stories. That there are.

Ron Fortier

You dropped you? Yeah. You. You dropped out again.

Karen Chace

And whether you.

Ron Fortier

Do ask your grandparents to tell you stories you know. Listen to them.



Karen Chace

Listen, listen to your your family stories, because once those people are gone, you cannot get them back. And if you do not know how to begin, that how to start online, you can just Google questions to collect family history and you will come up with many, many resources. One of the things I told you that I do with my.

Ron Fortier

Drop that again.

Karen Chace

Of it is we do a Once Upon a generation program where we match local senior citizens with my student storytellers and they perform stories from the seniors lives, you know, from the ages of say 5 to 25 because we are losing our elders and. Things have changed so rapidly they don't know what a Rotary phone is. They don't know what a typewriter is. They don't know what it's like. To grow up on. A farm one of my students was sharing a story. From a gentleman in Lakeville, Pat kerning, wonderful man. Who's been with the program from the beginning? We've been doing it for five years and he is his first story was about growing up in a tenement in the Bronx, and the young man who was going to tell his story asked me. He said, missus chase, what's a tenement? Because he grew up in Lakeville, he has no idea what a tenement is, and so even those little minor things that we take for granted are being lost. So it's so important to collect family history.

Ron Fortier

It is and and I. I'm thinking about Alex Haley wouldn't have been as successful. I don't believe it. As as as he was without. The stories that actually guided him, because those stories were passed down through all the generations, from from their, their their capture to their freedom.

Karen Chace

Right. And and I remember when root out, I remember when roots came out and how popular it was. Of course back then we couldn't record. So everybody was around the TV making sure I didn't miss a segment every week.

Speaker

Go ahead.

Ron Fortier

Yeah, and it was. It was absolutely amazing. And I, you know, I really do think that he was he was the. The the one that dropped the the the stone into the to the glass like pond and the ripples just, you know, carried out and then now with DNA it's it's so unbelievable other stories you talk about family stories and. Fractured fairy tales in families. You've heard this story repeated so many times. And then. And there's also the non stories that I'd like to get into. You hear the story repeated so many times that it becomes truth and then you find out that you find out that. It was all a lie or it was manufactured to cover something that was not socially acceptable. You know, an out of wedlock birth or or a murder or or or some other horrible thing, you know, by their standards and and still by our standards. Are there those kinds of stories that that you hear and that you tell?

Karen Chace

Family stories. I I don't tell. I tell my family stories. I don't tell anyone else's family stories. You know folk tales, fairy tales. You know, people make their storytellers make their own adaptations, but it's pretty. Rare and shouldn't be done without permission to tell another person's personal story. You know from from the stage, that's just. Frowned upon so.

Ron Fortier

Yeah, yeah.



Karen Chace

But but I do tell my own family stories. My mother came from. Irish family of 12 and plenty of funny stories that happened around here growing up, so I have a few that I do tell.

Ron Fortier

Yeah. No, I was just wondering if you know people who relate or or their stories to you and, you know, openly and then I mean, so where do stories come from? I mean other other than listening to other storytellers or listening to people tell stories? Ohh where where? Where do you get your mate?

Karen Chace

Well, I you know, I am more of a traditional storyteller. I really love telling the old folk tales and fairy tales, so I don't, you know, have to worry about copyright unless it's someone's. Adaptation, their own adaptation of that story, because as storytellers were also write. And so if I, you know, read a story that has been adapted by another storyteller. And I really love it. And I want to tell it as they wrote it, the very first thing I need to do is contact them for permission to tell the story. Storytellers are extremely generous. I've contacted a number of different people for permission for certain stories. They've always said yes. Then there are times when I have found an adaptation and I'll contact the teller and say, where did you initially find this so I can try to find a more traditional source and from there research and put my own adaptation together for instance. I was. I found a a folk tale, a New England folk tale called Meg West and the Witch of Cape Anne. It was a very, very short folk tale and it was written in this book that was, that was a cop copyright book and they. I I loved it so much, but it was very, very short, so I started researching about her and a lot of the the things that take place in the story are historically correct. They even mentioned Governor Shirley of Massachusetts, who really was one of our governors way back when. So I started looking around and. Finding other pieces of this story, but all of them were quite short and in the story, the main character she's around, I would say 40. They never give an age, but my assumption is she's around 40. And she's a witch, and she's a wicked witch. And the children of the town are. I was teasing her, and it goes on to how she exacts her revenge. Well, the more I started to think about the story, the more bothered me that. They never gave you any background on her. How did she come to this point where she was such an evil, nasty woman? And so I wrote a back story for her. I started out the story of when she was young, living with her grandmother because she had been abandoned by abandoned at birth by her parents because she was disfigured at birth. And so now that short little 4 minute piece is now a 12 to 13 minute piece. So I've adapted it so much and worked on it for so long. Probably a revision 20 right now, because every time I tell it I go, oh, I think I want to change this or that so that. Particular story is specific to me, so if someone heard me tell it and wanted to tell it, they would ask me permission. Because I've revamped it so much.

Ron Fortier

So basically what musicians call covers? In other words, they're performing a a song that they didn't write, but someone else did, so they're covering them. So storytellers in, in, in, in a way do the same thing.

Karen Chace

Right, right. But as I said, if it's someone's adaptation, then you really need to ask permission or or or even something if it's original. Robert Munch, who is a wonderful author and used to be a teacher and would always tell his students stories in this particular.

Ron Fortier

Right, right.

Karen Chace

Sorry, he would just number them and this one was number 99. And he ended up turning it into the book called the Paper Bag Princess. And it's a wonderful fun story. And I wanted to tell it, but it's an original tale. And so I



wrote him and asked him permission. And he said yes, go ahead, tell it. But I always make sure when I tell that story to let them know this is an original.

Speaker

Right.

Karen Chace

Story he is the author. He's given me permission.

Ron Fortier

You you said that that particular story about the witch evolved and and so that's my keyword. The evolution of story. By the teller and then the evolution of the story by the tellers. In other words, another Roman Roth Rockwell thing. He did a back in the days when we had the. Yellow Pages come. Out every year, I think it was a Atlantic Bell or or. Ma bell. They would have illustrations on the covers that I remember. One year. It was Norman rock. Wells, I don't know if it was called gossip or the story where he had a series of heads and the the top left corner there was someone speaking to someone to their left and then that just kept on going all the way down the line. And I think we had a shampoo commercial and they told two people. And they told two people and they told two people, right, right.

Karen Chace

Yeah, the telephone game they call that.

Ron Fortier

Uh. The telephone game. Yeah. So, so stories will evolve by the teller because you have those epiphanies where, oh, my gosh. You know something you hadn't realized before. And that's sometimes the power of. Tradition. And then the same thing when stories are passed on either things get added on to or dropped off. What? What are your thoughts on that?

Karen Chace

You know, and it's just, that's true. You know, when you're what we try not to do as storytellers, we're adapting is to change the ending and that and that by that, I don't mean changing the words, but changing the essence of the ending because some things do need to be adapted from modern times. Language needs to be adapted, that sort of thing. So yes, we we we need to we. Need to. Make sure that we maintain the essence and and purity of the story, but there are things that do get dropped off for either may it's maybe because the story is 12 minutes long, but we only have 5 minutes to tell it, and so you have to edit, edit, edit. Ohh, you may tell the story and realize ohh that really didn't work when I was I didn't get the reaction from the audience and you would have tried that out a number of times in in false flat each time or sometimes. You're telling a story, and in the middle of a story because we don't memorize our stories, that there's a saying that any good storyteller never tells a story the same way twice. So we we're not memorizing the story. We know the outline of the story. We know some of the major details, but sometimes when you're in the middle of telling the story. And all of a sudden. Something really interesting, a piece of dialogue, or maybe the way you describe something changes and you think ohh that works. I'm going to keep that next time, so we're constantly revising even as we're on stage telling. It can be kind of interesting when that happens.

Ron Fortier

Yeah, especially trying to get back onto the onto the track.

Karen Chace

Right, right.



Ron Fortier

Last question is we're gonna wrap this up in in just a bit. I heard something really interesting today and we had this conversation last week about during this pandemic. You know, we're making we're making. We're we're being more inventive, we're being more creative. We're making accommodations. And one of the accommodations for storytellers is that they have to now present their stories as we are doing now, we're communicating over Skype.

Speaker

All right.

Ron Fortier

And you said that it was difficult for a storyteller because it's really not a one way. It's not a one way flow.

Karen Chace

That's right. I I always say. And and it's just not me. Other stories tell us because we've. Had this conversation before. If you're in front of an audience and. It it for. Whatever reason it's falling flat and you could have told those same stories 1/2 an hour before. And the audience love them. And then you get a new audience and you're telling the same stories. And the reaction is flat. I I liken it to what a comedian must feel like when they bomb on stage. Uh, but when you have an audience that is with you and with the story, you can physically see the shift in their body language and you know how they lean forward their their eyes are are fixed on you and they relax their body language. Relaxes. That's such a wonderful moment for the storyteller, but also what happens is. Is if the audience is made-up of people who are appreciating the stories. They give you a there's an energy flow back and forth between the teller and the audience. It doesn't have to necessarily be in the form of laughter, or if the story is right, but obviously if the story is funny, that's wonderful that they laugh in the right places. But when you finish your performance, you're invigorated. You have so much energy, but if you're in front of an audience where it's flat and you're not getting anything back from them in the way of facial expression or body language, you're exhausted at the end because it's like pushing a stone. Up the hill, it's going to be very difficult for storytellers to replicate that on a screen. I hope it works. We shall see.

Ron Fortier

Well, look, I thought of you this morning because the Supreme Court for the first time ever is going to have to be doing live. Streaming and one of the attorney said. I don't know how the heck we're going to do this. I can't see body language. I can't see, you know, glances from one to the other. Little nudges, you know, it's going to be quite, quite difficult. And therein is, I guess, where communication skills and. And and and. You know human traits and whatever it's going to be really, really interesting to see.

Karen Chace

Well, I think. Part is it part of this pandemic? You know where we're we're wearing masks all the time. And people can only see half of your face. It's so important to still smile because the smile will come through your eyes. It's still so important to use your facial expressions because we as a society get so many cues from facial expression and body language. And I always tell my students. And I'm teaching storytelling. You bring this story to life not only with your voice and. Your emotions that you're using in your voice, but also your physical being and and it's amazing to watch them when they finally understand how you bring that all together to present a story and it's just the same way in life. It's it's nothing. Magical. It's just paying attention to what you need to do to best convey emotion through body language, facial expressions, and voice. But it's it's the feedback, it's the feedback that's important too.

Ron Fortier

Yeah, there's a there's a word for that. But this gives me completely right now. And then finally. Uh, Karen, I I



asked this of. Uh, majority of the of the guests on the show. How would you like people to remember you? Especially as a storyteller.

Karen Chace

Geez, that's a good question I will. Would well. I would like them to Remember Me as a storyteller, as someone who was generous and mentioned others, because she remembered what it was starting out and not knowing the first thing about this. I didn't even know what the word Olio was when I began, which is, you know, a performance of a number of storytellers together, telling separate stories. So I think generous as a storyteller and, and I think that also applies to myself. In myself, outside of being a storyteller, my personal life, I would like people to think that I was generous and kind.

Ron Fortier

Yes, I I think so as well because. Yes, I would say that that from you know from what I know of you, I remember you coming to my classes and giving your time and and trying to get these young people to think. In a way that that they didn't think was possible to. To to to to think. Or to think in a way that they thought was something that was, you know, one time was considered juvenile and and that the stories are powerful. They're not just for little children or for entertainment purposes. They have an enormous power. And in that power comes whatever kind of success. It is that you seek. Karen, thank you so much. This is quite pleasant as I tell everyone this, there is never A1 and done. I'd love to have you back on the show.

Karen Chace

Oh, that'd be one. I enjoyed this talk about. Story all day.

Ron Fortier

Yeah, yeah. And you know, I I when you know, when you speaking, you trigger certain memories or or keywords. For me, you know, I'm. I'm trying to tie together things that that that are in my head that I'm. I'm hoping you know, I was correct about and also you know one stimulates the other and that's what conversation is all about. And I think that is unfortunately something that's been lost in in in our culture is the the art of conversation.

Karen Chace

Well, we you just you talked about trigger, you just triggered something for me, my colleague Andrea Lovett and I work together a lot and she always says one story calls another and that's exactly what happens in conversation.

Ron Fortier

Exactly. Exactly. Yeah. Thank you so much.

Karen Chace

Thank you. It was a great pleasure, Ron.

Ron Fortier

You're welcome. And once again, we're wrapping it up. This is round 40 here with the In Focus Podcast brought to you by the Arts index. Thanks so much. See you next time.