

Proposal Written by Aspen Miller  
Project Advisor: Mona Kasra  
Drama Major, 3<sup>rd</sup> year  
02/29/16

## 10,000 Leagues Under the Narrative Sea

### PROJECT SUMMARY

I aim to explore and experiment with the effects that varying narrative media has on storytelling. My areas of inquiry are: Can media interact to change or enhance a narrative? Can different media influence how individuals receive and internalize a story differently? Or do they receive it based off of their individual life experiences? Do media factors influence the audience's response to a narrative? To explore these issues, I will tell the story "Big Wave and Little Wave" in four different ways using audio design, visual design, movement through dance, and finally as a written piece. I will survey to evaluate the audience's experience of each mediated version of this story, and make a film about the project built around the audience responses of medium effectiveness.

### INTRODUCTION

What was the last great story you were told? I remember the last one that truly moved me. I was sixteen years old, camping with two thousand other people in Great Smokey National Park, NC. My friends and I were all talking about who-knows-what, when a man stepped out of the woods, sat next to me, and started telling a story for no other reason besides to share. This was the story he told:

*Once, in a time not unlike ours now, there was a Big Wave and a Little Wave. They were the best of friends. Together, they would glide upon the oceans surface, exploring our world with nothing but time to spare for each other. Day and night, the currents pulled them as they shared stories and the sky flew past.*

*Then one day, Little Wave saw a dark blur in the distance. He looked up to Big Wave and asked "What is that over there, Big Wave?"*

*Big Wave replied, "That's the shore, Little Wave."*

*"Are we going there?" Little Wave asked.*

*"Yes," said Big Wave, "We will be there soon."*

*"What will happen when we get there?" Little Wave asked trembling.*

*"We will break upon the beach and go back to the ocean" She answered.*

*"I'm scared." Little Wave said, "I'm afraid to be without you."*

*"There's no need to be afraid, Little Wave. We are all part of the same ocean. I will always be with you and you will always be with me."*

*Little Wave smiled, though he was not sure Big Wave was right.*

*The beach grew closer and closer as the sun rose behind them. Soon they were rising above the surface of the ocean, curling into one another before the inevitable crash.*

*"I love you Big Wave."*

*"And I love you Little Wave. We will see each other soon."*

*She said this as they collided, together as one, into the sand.*

*The sun continued to rise over the ocean, welcoming another day, another wave, and another story.*

I found myself crying when the man finished. He thanked us for our time, asked for a little food, and walked into the moonlit forest. Though honestly one of the strangest experiences of my life, it was also one of the most important for my growth as a human being and an artist. It was the moment I truly accepted the death of my best friend. She had been killed three years

before when her hotel in India was attacked by terrorists. It was an aspect of my life that I struggled with due to my inability to accept her death, but this story helped me move on in the most positive way possible.

I have told this story a few times since. Once for an audition, another time for friends around another campfire, and now in this proposal. What's interesting is that my audiences have received it in various ways; confusion, laughter, smiles, and tears of all kinds. All of which I appreciated.

## **PROPOSAL**

I aim to explore the effects that varying narrative media, as a way to convey this story, could have on the audience. My areas of inquiry are: why do individuals receive and internalize this story differently? Do they receive it based off of their individual life experiences? What media factors influence the audience's response to a narrative? How do media interact to change or enhance a narrative?

My goal with this project is to study the impact of various media on narrative; I will tell the story I told above in four different ways using audio design, visual design, movement through dance, and finally as a written piece. Each medium will be presented individually or as a "layer." As an example, a single layer would be just audio being presented with no visuals. Another layer would be a dance performance without sound or visual. After all four media have been presented individually, I will begin layering the narratives to create duos, trios, and finally all four as one final performance. An example would be pairing audio and visual together to tell the story and observing the differences in audience reception. I think each narrative form will convey different aspects of the story and will be perceived differently by each audience member. My project experiment will allow me to gauge my prediction.

Each performance will only take 1 minute per and in total will take ~10 minutes. I will create characters through tones in audio, lights and color in visual projection, body and movement in a dance piece, and then written out similarly to as I have above. The characters will interact within the piece to create meaning, but will remain abstract rather than literal.

There will be three stages of the project.

- a) A live performance operated by me through the manipulation program, Isadora. This will involve video projections and a dance performance in a small to medium size educational space. At the end of the piece, there will be a survey to evaluate the audience's experience.
- b) The second part of the project will be documentation of the live performance that I will edit together for historical and outcome report purposes. It will also serve as a short film.
- c) The third stage will be a designated short film where I create a significantly more literal piece built around the audience responses of medium effectiveness. This last version will be finished after the showcase report, but is part of my final study.

This research will assist me with my understand of narrative as a process and a product. Film is about taking different aspects of a story and conveying them through visual and auditory means. Filmmakers often start with a script (written language) and employ the use of camera movement. All four layers of my project, separately, make up what film is in many ways. Studying these media separately and layered together will allow me to understand storytelling from a technical standpoint as well as an emotional one.

## **CONCERNS**

As a student, I understand that time is limited. My goal is to employ mostly art scholars for the work (dancers specifically), but I will have to be flexible. I worry that the dancers will not have time for a live performance. If this is the case, I will film them in a studio space, then integrate the footage into the live performance.

**PROJECT TIMELINE**

Summer 2016

- Purchase materials and equipment
- Gather source footage and audio (From the ocean specifically)
- Create team (primarily arts scholars)
- Solidify performance structure
- Write draft of survey
- Begin designing in Adobe After Effects

Fall 2016

- Begin finalizing AE designs
- Create mock up performance
- Locate and book space for Spring
- Work with Dancers to create a piece
- Work with Peter Bussigel on audio design
- Work with Mona Kasra on design and format of performance
- Finalize Survey
- Prepare for dress rehearsal (possibly with a focus group)
- Begin Publicity (All digital through Social Media Networks, no budget required)

Spring 2017

- Finalize complete performance
- Final performance will go up in March
- Take responses from audience to create filmed live performance
- Create short film for MAS Showcase

Summer 2017

- Finalize all responses and create narrative piece focusing on audience responses.

**PROPOSED BUDGET**

Item	Use	Final Price ( w/Tax and Shipping)
Canon C100 Cinema Camcorder	A camera dedicated to capturing, crisp colors, lush environments, and moving targets. Primarily will be used to capture footage for visual manipulation and the movement of the dancers. Also to document the final performance in a low light setting.*	\$2,438.99

Adobe After Effects	An effects and animation program that will be used to create the visual layer of the story.	\$239.88
Isadora (w/ USB Key)	The program used to create and operate the live projection performance.	\$480.00 (Student rate)
10% Contingency Plan	For unforeseen equipment issues and expenses.**	\$315.00
		Total: \$3473.87

\*This is the cost of the camera body alone. I have lenses and everything else I need to use the camera to its fullest extent.

\*\*Like with all projects, but especially those involving technology, there are risks. Tools break, equipment fails, and sometimes I will need an extra piece to make a piece perfect. I am asking for an additional 10% for those possible issues.

Thank you for your time and consideration