

Note from Editor:

Global Partners in Education is an organization that unites partner institutions around the globe through technology so students can learn about each other from each other. The primary activity of this organization is the Global Understanding program (Chia et al, 2011). However, additional activities have stemmed from these collaborations. Patricia (Patch) Clark, a Theatre professor at East Carolina University, reports on one such activity. In 2008, Prof. Clark began working with GPE partner institutions in the Global Classroom to enhance her Youth Theatre Course. Since then she has worked with partner institutions in Peru, Russia and Beijing during which time students exchange folk tales from their respective cultures. This report focuses on the collaboration between Patch Clark and her students and the students of Universidad San Ignacio de Loyola in Lima, Peru which resulted in a youth theatre production called "All Aboard South America!"

Expanding Global Understanding Through the Theatre Arts

Patch Lee Clark¹

East Carolina University, USA

Abstract

The School of Theatre and Dance in the College of Fine Arts and Communication at East Carolina University (ECU) collaborated with Universidad San Ignacio De Loyola (USIL) in Lima, Peru gathering children's stories, folktales, fables and myths which were then transformed into theatre performances for school children, teachers and families across Eastern North Carolina. In 2009, the collected stories were used in an original children's musical, *All Aboard South America!* produced at ECU and the Turnage Theater in Washington, N.C. The value of sharing the dramatization of folktales, fables, and myths gathered in the Global Classroom with intergenerational audiences across the state of North Carolina served not only to expand the educational experience of all participants, but also broaden audience exposure to the artistic interpretation of collective tales indigenous to South America. The exchange between theatre students enrolled in Youth Theatre I at ECU and students enrolled at USIL and the subsequent development of a children's theatre musical is the focus of this article.

¹ The author wishes to thank Liliana Cheneder Rueda, Maria Luisa Mu Hoyos and Karin Sialer Perez, students and personnel at Universidad San Ignacio De Loyola in Lima, Peru for their dedication and contributions to the class and the sharing of their folktales, fables and myths. Also appreciation is extended to Dr. Linda High, East Carolina University School of Music who prepared the music and served as Musical Director for *All Aboard South America!* and Dr. Jon Wacker and his students also from the ECU School of Music for their musical accompaniment.

Introduction

All countries and cultures share in having folktales, fables, and myths and legends as part of their oral and written cultural heritage. Many cultures share slight variations on the same children's stories. In linking with Peru and learning about the folklore of spirits chasing wanderers in the jungle, we were able to compare our popular tale of the headless horseman created by American short story writer, Washington Irving in *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*. The sharing of children's stories creates a bond of understanding with various countries, students and cultures as they have all had experiences either as children or young adults in listening to stories told to them by mothers, fathers, grandparents or other members of the family.

The examination of both similarities and differences in fables and folktales improves understanding of new cultures by comparing variations of the story as it relates to its corresponding culture. The popular children's story of *Cinderella* is universal and has many culturally specific versions. For example, in India the title of this popular story is *How the Cowherd Found a Bride*, while in China it is *Yeh-hsien*, *Aschenputtel* in Germany and *Poor Turkey Girl* from the Native American, Zuni Tribe (Sierra, 1992, pp. 114, 6, 20). All have in common the story of an unfortunate character who, through various circumstances, becomes the celebrated heroine in the end. Each of the versions also offers the readers and viewers a glimpse of how the journey of the characters and the moral of the story is expressed through cultural experiences and vision. Sierra attests to the longevity and, thus, continuing significance of these childhood stories:

The first Cinderella story to be written down, in around the year 850 A.D., was the Chinese tale of Yeh-hsien. Even earlier, nearly two thousand years ago, a Greek writer told an Egyptian king who searched for the unknown owner of a beautiful sandal. Neither of these seem like the fairy tales we are used to reading in books, but they give us an idea of how old and widespread Cinderella tales really are (Sierra, 1992, p. 4).

Support for the study of tales indigenous to certain countries and cultures are expressed by one researcher performance artist who, while gathering Kurdish tales concluded, "The stories, poetry, songs, ritual speech, literature and syntax of language store the collective intellectual achievements of a culture and supply us with unique perspective on fundamental problems of the human condition" (Edgecomb, 2008, p. xii).

The second phase in studying multicultural tales and the subsequent sharing through live performance is highly supported by numerous expert directors and playwrights in the area of children's theatre.

In good theatre for children it is essential that both playwrights and directors *show* the story through dramatic action rather than *telling it* through talk and static pictures. The director, along with the actors, must plan for continual, motivated movement illustrating the dramatic situations

of the characters. Children are uninterested in dull, motionless scenes and become bored with characters who wander about the stage aimlessly, moving just to keep the production lively (Jennings & Harris, 1998, pp. 8-9).

Many of the multicultural stories gathered from the linking sessions with Peru, such as *El Tunche*, *El Tunche* and *The Three Shovels* contain this very type of animated and interesting action and characters which actively engage children's audiences in the performance. Once children become interested in the story being acted out on stage, they then begin to learn and experience knowledge about other cultures through the dramatization of global tales.

With this premise in mind, the sharing and performance of global stories, that The School of Theatre and Dance at ECU conducted videoconferences or "links" with USIL for three years. The goals for this classroom linking were to gather stories from Peru and transform them into dramatic scripts to be shared in the public schools and the community at large. A second goal was to encourage cultural exchange between students at USIL and ECU through in-class video conferencing and e-mail exchanges including discussion of not only childhood stories and theatre arts, but politics, food, economics, education, family traditions, and day-to-day life.

Students and faculty asked partners at USIL for stories they remembered from childhood, folktales, fables and myths that might have been passed down from generation to generation. Once collected, stories were transformed into performance pieces for children and the community and shared through live presentation both in the schools and in larger theatre venues.

Throughout the collaboration, students shared stories, music, dance, children's games, ideas about politics, religion, the arts, customs, education, and ecology. We also explored global awareness through a unit entitled *Your Footprints on the Earth* and videos prepared by the students at USIL. Further ideas and topics which students created in the Youth Theatre I classroom at ECU which they then explored through videoconferencing and e-mail with partners at USIL included becoming a leader in one's own country, ideas for long-range collaborative projects, similarities and differences in education, family upbringing and customs, creation of a new poem or story and learning phrases and words of each other's languages.

Methodology

This project has become part of an already established course, Youth Theatre I, in the School of Theatre & Dance, and continues, when possible, into Youth Theatre II class. In preparation for the linking process, students in Youth Theatre I at ECU brainstorm to develop questions students would like to ask their partners in Peru and discuss what ECU students already know about Peru.

During linking sessions with USIL, ECU students posed their questions, responded to questions asked by partners, listened to stories and songs, and learned about children's games in Peru. The information collected regarding stories, songs, and children's games was then discussed. Outlines for scenes were then created by ECU School of Theatre and Dance faculty, Patch Clark, who, upon completion of the outlines, then collaborated with Dr. Linda High, School of Music faculty at ECU, on scene development and music. The development of the final version of the script took approximately six months to research, develop, rehearse, and then finally perform. The process included collecting, researching and reviewing stories, dances, and information recorded during linking sessions and the gathering of additional information found in Joyner and Music Libraries at ECU. Once the script was near completion, a writing contest for Eastern North Carolina public school students was implemented to encourage research and playwriting with South America as the theme. Over 80 stories were submitted by school-aged children and reviewed by university theatre and music faculty with 7 being chosen for inclusion in the script. Theatre faculty revised the stories the children had submitted, crafting them into scenes which then became a part of the finished script.

Upon completion of the script, ECU students researched, compiled and prepared a teacher's study guide which was sent to all schools attending the production of *All Aboard South America!*. Finally, the original children's theatre musical was presented at Wright Auditorium on the campus of ECU in Greenville, N.C. on November 13th and in the schools in eastern North Carolina and at the Turnage Theater in Washington, North Carolina on November 14th, 2009. The resulting dramatized fables and folktales continue to be shared with children in the public schools, at libraries and arts and educational conferences.

All Aboard South America!

Theatre students at ECU embraced the opportunity to hear Peruvian stories passed down through generations that encompassed the jungle, the cities and towns, rainforest and ruins of Peru. Students from USIL discussed the importance of Lake Titicaca and shared the many versions of tales which surround the lake. They also talked about the magical quality of dragonflies. One Peruvian student shared that if one saw a dragonfly on a certain day, the next day or two would bring good luck. Yet another stated that her grandmother passed down the belief that the dragonfly came bearing a message from a recently deceased loved one. Stories and myths about dragonflies developed into the character in *All Aboard South America!* (Clark & High, 2009) named Libelula who led Professor Pontificator and his students through the ruins of Machu Picchu on a search for the hidden diaries of an early explorer.

The story shared in class about Lake Titicaca became *The Three Shovels* and was performed for over 3,000 children in eastern North Carolina. Appendix A contains a scene from *All Aboard South America!* illustrating how the myth of the dragon fly, which originated as a discussion in the Global Classroom between ECU and USIL students, was transformed into an actual major character in the play. This excerpt also illustrates

some of the research and information students learned about South America including Carnival, penguins, and Machu Picchu. Also included is the full story of *The Three Shovels* which, again, originated as a shared story in the Global Classroom and then became fully developed as one of the representative stories in the full script.

The musical went on to present several stories indigenous to South America. *The Three Shovels* was one of many stories shared with children in Eastern North Carolina and became a favorite tale. The story, told by students at USIL in Lima Peru to ECU students via the global classroom, had a huge impact not only in the theatre, but in the university and elementary classrooms as well as this one particular story was performed throughout the schools, thus exposing children to a story from Peru. University students were actively engaged in the research for costumes, set, props, music and performance aspects as part of this project and production, thus exposing them to the geography, customs, textiles, language and music of Peru. The professor and ECU students transformed the tale into a Storybook Theatre drama (See Appendix B) which, in turn, became a part of the children's musical, *All Aboard South America!* and toured throughout the elementary schools in Eastern North Carolina. To see a recording of the performance of *The Three Shovels*, please go to <http://myweb.ecu.edu/cfac/clarkp/AASA.html>.

At the end of the play, the characters sing yet another song of departure, *Goodbye My Friend* to the Dragonfly which can be viewed at the following link: <http://myweb.ecu.edu/cfac/clarkp/AASA2.html>.

The Power of Collaborative Global Storybook Theatre

The power of a live performance, the participation by ECU and USIL students and the elementary and middle school students all add to a world community effort of understanding through artistic interpretation and performance. Curriculum goals for theatre arts in the public schools were also included as part of the project, parts of which are defined as:

A theatre art in the public schools teaches the basic life skills, thinking skills and personal qualities which develop an understanding of the ideas, attitudes, beliefs, and feelings of diverse people in different times throughout history as communicated through literature and theatre (NCDPI, n.d.).

Aesthetic and artistic appreciation for theatrical performances was shared with the students from USIL as they were shown a DVD of the production, *All Aboard South America!* which included the stories they had originally shared and also dances and the development of the major character of Libelula the dragonfly. Jennings (2005), a children's theatre director, discusses the importance of live theatre as a vehicle for sharing and developing creative performances:

The theatre is a place of possibility, of hope, of transformation. It is a home for your imagination. I hope that the theatre becomes a launching pad for their dreams and plans, ideas and arguments. The theatre is that great place where you get to collaborate with others to make a kind of magic that brings people together; that lets them see themselves anew and breathe in the bigness of what it means to be human in all its mad complexity (Jennings, 2005, p. xxiii).

ECU Student Responses - Global Classroom - Youth Theatre I

Students from the ECU classroom enjoyed the exchanges and reported in their journals that they discovered how similar they were to students at USIL, learned a wealth of information about Lima, Peru and South America in general, and gained a new appreciation for a country foreign to their own. Their responses included the following testimonies to the success of the linking process:

I will definitely be keeping in touch with my global pen pals as well as Masha and Matti, our foreign exchange students. What an enlightening and humbling experience this semester has been. It has taught me that we are not alone in this world. There are many others out there that may not speak the way we do, but they love the same things we do and cherish the same values and experiences. I hope to carry on the global linking next semester in the youth theatre class as well. I believe that every field of study could benefit from these linkings, professionally and personally.

The global experience and exchange with Peru was amazing! I learned a great deal about their culture, interests, and lifestyles through our connections. I also learned a great deal about my own culture and country through the connections I had to actually think about the history of our stories and tall tales. That is something I've not done since I first learned the tales in grade school! It ironically made me more patriotic and understanding of our differences in cultures.

I feel that I was able to give an actual personality and face to Peru by interacting with the students there. It is so important for us to be able to connect visually and to interact with other students to really make an impact and to make it real. The experience humbled me to an extent because it allowed me to physically see that there are other students in other countries furthering their education as well. Our country is not the center of the world. We are all in it together. It was amazing! I can't wait to link again this semester. With more time and connections, I think we'll be able to form more meaningful relationships and conversations to further the education of everyone involved.

The Impact of This New Methodology on the Teacher and Students

The importance of this collaborative model reaches beyond the walls of the classroom at the university level as young students in the elementary and middle schools are involved in the process of learning about another country either through researching, writing, or as an audience member viewing tales from around the world. University students gain a broader appreciation for cultures other than their own through the shared appreciation of stories and cultures. They also learn new vocabulary associated with the stories. This kind of expression may help in the area of cultural understanding as the stories which are indigenous to each country are passed down either orally or in written form via e-mail and shared with classes at other universities, thus preserving cultural tales and the tradition of the storyteller as the author.

The advantages of this model include the addition of the Global Classroom experience which enhances the curriculum beyond gathering tales from books. Students learn about the country and culture from where the story originated by extending their learning to not only hearing the stories told by those in the original country, but also by discussing other related topics. The results of the course reach beyond the campus and classroom as the stories are carried out into the schools and performed for children, teachers, and the community at large. And the effects are ongoing. ECU Students paired with USIL students continue their interaction beyond the class via e-mail sharing stories and exchanging information about their respective countries, thus continuing their building of understanding and sense of community.

There are challenges to this type of collaboration. However, through cooperative planning and e-mail exchanges between faculty and students, many of those challenges can be overcome. For example, the change in the United States to Daylight Savings time, required schedule changes in order to accommodate the change in time and linking sessions with Peru. Efforts to coordinate linking sessions were also sometimes a challenge due to holidays, school closings, and unscheduled interruptions. Providing each other with school calendars is a tremendous help which aids in the overall planning of linking sessions and helps to avoid missed sessions due to conflicting schedules.

The impact of this new methodology on teacher's work includes a renewed vision of learning and discovery as the shift transforms from that of teacher directed to teacher and student shared learning and discovery. The teacher becomes the moderator and rather than presenting an expert model, instead leads through the modeling of discovery and inquiry while involved in the linking process. Thus, the teacher models learning through interaction with the partner country and subsequent culture. The impact of the global classroom on the development of theatre arts performances has been far-reaching in its capacity to transform stories to the stage, engage children and audiences in cultural heritages other than their own and bring about an understanding of another country through rich and entertaining tales of wonder. Sharing global stories with children shapes the understanding of future juveniles and adults and brings about a whole new culture of world view. Impact upon teacher training includes the study guides prepared by students and the research and writing conducted by elementary and

middle school students as they to contribute to an original script. And finally, it gives a sense of pride as the stories are passed down for generations and reaffirms a cultural heritage to be shared by all through theatre arts performances of folktales, fables and myths. Future best practices for theatres arts includes working towards a collection of stories from around the world to be shared by all for further understanding and appreciation for a global culture rich in heritage, tradition and stories.

References

- Chia, R., Poe, E., & Yang, B. (2011). History of Global Partners in Education. *Global Partners in Education Journal*, 1, 3-7.
- Clark, P., & High, L. (2009). *All aboard South America!*. Produced at Wright Auditorium, ECU and the Turnage Theater, Washington, N.C. for ArtsSmart and Family Fare Series, Rudolph Alexander Performing Arts Series, College of Fine Arts and Communication, School of Theatre and Dance.
- Edgecomb, D. (2008). *A fire in my heart: Kurdish tales*. Westport: Libraries Unlimited.
- Jennings, C. (2005). *Theatre for children*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Jennings, C., & Harris, A. (1988). *Plays children love* (Vol. II). New York: St. Martin's Press.
- North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI). (n.d.). *North Carolina standard course of study: Theatre arts curriculum*. Retrieved from <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/curriculum/artsed/scos/theatrearts/index>
- Sierra, J. (1992). *The oryx multicultural folktale series: Cinderella*. Westport: Oryx Press.

Appendix A

Scenes from *All Aboard South America!* including Libelula as a major character and *The Three Shovels*

Mark

Oh, yes. We'd all like to know your name.

Libelula

My name is Libelula which means...

Mark

Dragonfly in Spanish!

Libelula

Yes! Yes! That is correct! And I have come with a message – You must go to the ruins of Chichen Itza in Mexico to receive the next clue to help you find the lost journal of Violet Cressy-Marcks. From there we will travel into South America into Brazil and from Brazil into Bolivia and then on to Chile and you must look for the penguins!

Chris

You mean they have penguins in South America?

Libelula

Oh, yes! They live along the coast of Peru and Chile and they will have a clue for you!
And you must go to Brazil in time for Carnival!

Jamie

What's Carnival?

Chris

I remember reading about Carnival. It's a great celebration that's held once a year.
With lots of singing and dancing.

Libelula

That is correct! And from there we will finally go to Peru to the lost city of Machu Picchu.

Jamie

The lost city! Just like El Dorado?

Libelula

Yes, but you must be very careful and never go to the next point before you get a message from me. I will always be the one to guide you on your journey. So, for right now are you ready to go on an adventure?

Everyone

Yes!

Libelula

(gesturing out to the audience)

Is everyone ready to join us on our excellent adventure?

All

YES!!!

(MUSIC "All Aboard for South America")

All Aboard for South America, we're going to have some fun.
All aboard for South America, our journey's just begun
Mysteries and wonder and mayhem is going to be our quest.
We don't know if we'll find them, but we're going to do our best.
We'll take a train
We'll take a boat

We'll take a plane
We'll go by goat
We don't know how we're going to go (and we're gonna' make a showing,)
So come on now let's all go. All Aboard!

Libelula

Excellent! Now – I must be on my way to find our next instructions. So, I will meet you at Chichen Itza! Come quickly and, oh, there's one last thing I forgot to tell you. Be very careful not to talk to any banditos!

Jamie

Banditos?

Libelula

Yes, Banditos! They are also in search of the lost journals and if they find them, they will sell them for gold and they will be lost to the world forever!

Mark

We'll be careful, Libelula!

Libelula

Adios! And be careful! I will see you in Mexico!

The Dragonfly Song

The dragonfly is calling, calling, calling, calling,
Calling, calling, calling, us to come.
And we must follow, follow, follow, follow, follow, follow, follow, follow, on.
The dragon fly, the dragon fly must hurry, hurry on its way.
The dragon fly, the dragon fly, we must follow it today.

Appendix B

The Three Shovels

A Peruvian Folktale collected during the Fall 2008 Semester of Youth Theatre I in the School of Theatre and Dance at ECU by Patch Clark, and link with Liliana Cheneder Rueda, Director, Language Department at USIL

Characters:

Narrator
Farmer
Farmer's Friend
God or Goddess of the Lake
The Water (two people to hold the fabric to represent water)

Narrator

Once upon a time there was a young man with an old rusted shovel that was very dear to him. One day while walking by the magical lake in Peru, he dropped his shovel into the water and it sank.

Everyone

Kerplunk!

Young Man

Oh, no! I can't swim. How can I get my shovel?

Narrator

Then suddenly, the goddess of the lake rose up out of the water.

Goddess of the Lake

Young man, why are you so upset?

Young Man

I have lost my shovel in the lake and I shall never see it again!

Goddess of the Lake

Why is your shovel so important to you?

Young Man

I am very poor and without my shovel, I will not be able to feed my children.

Goddess of the Lake

I will dive down into the water and look for it!

Narrator

The Goddess of the Lake disappeared into the murky waters of the magical lake. When the goddess reappeared, she presented a shiny silver shovel to the young man.

Goddess of the Lake

Here you are my child. Here is the shovel you lost.

Narrator

The young man's eyes widened as he admired the shimmering silver shovel.

Young Man

Goddess of the magical lake. I am pleased that you have found such a wonderful shovel. But I am afraid to say that this shovel is not the shovel I lost. My shovel was rusted and full of holes. This shovel is made of pure silver and while it is worth much, it is not my own.

Narrator

The goddess of the lake smiled at the young man's honesty.

Goddess of the Lake

Forgive me, my child. I will search some more.

Narrator

The Goddess of the Lake went into the depths of the lake once more but this time she returned with a shovel more splendid than the one before. The Goddess presented a shovel made of pure gold, encrusted with the finest diamonds and rubies.

Goddess of the Lake

Here you are my child. This must be the shovel you lost!

Narrator

The young man could hardly speak. He had never seen such riches.

Young Man

I regret to say that this is not my shovel. It is very beautiful, but my shovel is rusted aluminum and its handle is made of wood. I am sorry to have troubled you.

Narrator

The young man began to weep and turned to walk home. He wondered how he would be able to provide for his family. The Goddess of the Lake called to him.

Goddess of the Lake

Young man, stop your crying. You have shown that you are honest and true of spirit. For that, you shall be rewarded. Here my child, I give you all the shovels, including the one you lost.

Narrator

The young man was so overjoyed that he went to tell his friend. (Young man adlib telling friend about his experience.) His friend wanted to have the same riches so he took his old shovel and purposely threw it into the lake!

Everyone

Kerplunk!

Friend

Oh no! My shovel is lost in the lake! How will I ever provide for my family?

Narrator

Once again the Goddess of the Lake appeared from out of the water.

Goddess of the Lake

Dear friend, what is troubling you?

Friend

I have lost my shovel in the lake.

Goddess of the Lake

The goddess of the lake reached into the depths of the lake and brought up a shovel
made of pure gold and silver.

Friend

Yes, yes! This is mine! Thank you for finding it for me!

Narrator

The Goddess of the Lake knew that the man was not telling the truth and was furious!

Goddess of the Lake

For your dishonesty, you will receive nothing...not even your own shovel!

Narrator

So the young man learned his lesson the greed does not pay!

Song

THREE SHOVELS

I've got three shovels
And I've got none.
I've got three shovels.
Not even one.

To have three shovels, as you can see,
You must be as honest as you can be.

I've got three shovels
One's made of gold
I've got three shovels
Not even mold

To have three shovels, as you can see,
You must not lie, but tell the truth, and be as honest as you can be.

Song

GOODBYE MY FRIEND

Goodbye my friend, it's time to go.
The dragonfly has lead us on our way.
Adios my friend, now we must part
We hope to come another day.

Goodbye my friend, it's time to go.
The dragonfly has led us on our way.
Adios my friend now we must part
We hope to come another day.

About the Author

Patricia "Patch" Clark, is an Associate Professor and coordinator for the Theatre for Youth and Theatre Education Programs at ECU. She is the founder and Director of the ECU Storybook Theatre which tours to schools, libraries and festivals and appears as part of ECU's ArtsSmart and Family Fare Series. She has directed *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*; *James and the Giant Peach*; *Seussical the Musical*; *The Stinky Cheese Man*; *Charlotte's Web*; *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*; *The Jungle Book*; and *The Secret Garden* and written and directed *Tales From Around the World*; *My Hero Reaching for the Stars*; *The Runaway Bear*; *All Aboard America!*; and *All Aboard South America!*.