

A Sermon on Theater

Sermon by Rev. Minister Angela Smith of COPE for September 26th, 2021 (and beyond)

The first play I ever read was “Othello” by William Shakespeare. I read it when I was 9 years old during the summer at PapaSam’s house. I studied drama and theater in high school and college. I’ve read, written, directed, and acted in multiple plays throughout my life. For me, I believe a quality performance in terms of acting rests on the ability of the actor to empathize with the role he/she/they is to play/perform. In my opinion, the best actors are those who can consider all perspectives of a script before being assigned any role who can then effectively and authentically play any role of a given script. And, for any role in a script (i.e. for Law and Order: Special Victims Unit) that I, or any actor, might think “I’d never do that and have no empathy for any who would”, respecting the purpose or moral of the story in full context helps bridge any gap caused by lack of empathy in a given script. In such a case, one might see the role assigned as that of a monster thereby dehumanizing the character they are to portray even if the script does not involve supernatural although certainly does involve preternatural elements.

Thankfully, there are cues, positions, choreography, and direction to help where one is more inspired by the story than the character to which they’ve been assigned or the role they’ve accepted. And, there are plenty of living preternaturally-inclined humans that many, if not most, see as soulless, evil, or worthy of the label criminal in or out of prison actors can study who otherwise would be at a loss on how to play such a role with any authenticity.

Part of the issue too becomes how to read a script. How well do you know the playwright or their body of work? Do you have a good idea what they intended in terms of tone, theme, or moral of the story? Do you feel if it is your production that the playwright’s intentions don’t matter? Do you feel the right to make the play your own even if it was written by someone else? What if you aren’t even representing the work as intended by the original artist? Does that stop you?

The above is one reason I tend to love theater that is written, produced, and directed by the same person who may also be cast in the production. I find those as authentic as it gets in terms of the art of it.

With many of my sermons, you have likely noticed quite a few are in dialogue format which is also script format with exception to staging or set design which is sometimes implied by the dialogue but not expressed outside of it. This is because I write with the intention that the script itself is subject to interpretation, which may include tones, themes, and/or morals applied by those who read and/or may perform them. My reason for that is to promote equality and invite other artists to exercise poetic or artistic license when incorporating my body of work into their own. In addition, my goal with the scripts/dialogues I write for sermons or church services is for those to be the basis of discussions following the reading or performance on the vices and virtues present in any given vignette, play, performance, or showing. Right now, this is done primarily virtually via e-mail feedback, Twitter comments, and Youtube comments. However, I

am focused on vice and virtue even if that is not the express basis or nature of the feedback or commentary.

At least one of my dialogue/script sermons has an alleged rapist. That one is available at <https://www.cope.church/intelonestsermon.pdf> . How would you play that role? What actors would you cast to play it, if any? Would you still recognize the humanity of those actors if they accepted the role of Predator in that sermon? I would, because I'd know it is just a play and that I can stop suspending disbelief for the sake of the story at any time.

For those interested in starting #TaoFu Self-Defense Exercises, please see <https://www.cope.church/taofu.htm> and begin at any time.

There are opportunities to send messages, receive mystery bonus blessings, and more with or without donating available now on our "Pass the Basket" page at <https://www.cope.church/basket.htm> . Thank You.

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32 KJV Willful blindness is an abomination.

COPE accepts Feedback, critical and complimentary. Learn more at <https://www.cope.church/feedback.htm> . For the sake of keeping myself and others humble, a sense of humor is welcome on all sides.

For More About COPE and the HEAL Mission, see:

<https://www.cope.church> and <https://www.heal-online.org>