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**BACKGROUNDER: the for/word company**

for/word grew out of a friendship and into a partnership.

In the summer of 2005, Jen Schlueter and Christina Ritter were in London. Christina had done her acting training at LAMDA, and was already familiar with the city. She and Jen were seeing lots of theatre—the work of companies like Shared Experience, Improbable, and Complicite—and tended to agree on what they liked and why. They found, above all, that they both—as trained historians—shared similar tastes about getting historical material onstage. Neither was particularly interested in docudramas or historical melodramas. They were drawn to something more...playful.

So Jen asked Christina if they might work together—try their hand at creating a new piece. Christina had recently read A. Scott Berg’s biography of Charles Lindbergh and had been especially taken with a description in the book about Anne Morrow Lindbergh meeting Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. And that was the seed. The two returned to the U.S., and began researching and plotting.

They read and talked and read and talked. And it became clear to Jen that only way to write the script was with the subjects’ own words. Writers all, each character had produced multiple books and had already crafted rich and moving prose. It didn’t make sense to try to write dialogue for them when their own thoughts and feelings had already been so eloquently expressed. And Jen had admired the way Chuck Mee crafts his plays out of found material. Finally, Jen built the first draft of what would eventually become *North* over the course of a few weeks.

Chris Roche came on board shortly afterwards: he was the only person Jen and Christina wanted for the part of Saint Ex. Next Brad Steinmetz, our designer, hung swings on stage, making the play fly—literally. And Christina inhabited the role of Anne herself. They got together in a rehearsal hall and started to figure out how to make these bits of found text *live* in the present moment.

It was pretty clear from the start that the four had found a working relationship and friendship worth keeping. And there it was: the for/word company began.

The company is now fully dedicated to crafting work out of material from the historical record. Their mission statement, which can be found at [www.for-word-company.net/a-miss.html](http://www.for-word-company.net/a-miss.html), states:

the for/word company is dedicated to dynamic stagings and innovative interpretations of material from the historical record.

We create our work by opening up the archive and the library, discovering stories and chronicles that, in some way, resonate for us, and building our performances exclusively out of the text we have unearthed.

Sometimes, to make it easy, we call what we do "adaptation," but it's really something more like reimagining, remaking, reanimating, or recreating.

So, we're not interested in historical reconstruction, documentary theatre, or biographical drama.

We are finding a way to get beautiful words and the fascinating people who wrote them onstage in vibrant, physical, and textured ways.

To do that, we work collaboratively, across traditional divides between actor and author and director and designer.

**Of for/word's previous work, *North, Timeout Chicago* says "the ensemble flies." The *Chicago Tribune* calls its work "nimble," "poetic," and "wise."**

the for/word company is  
CHRISTINA RITTER, Joint Artistic Director  
JENNIFER SCHLUETER, Joint Artistic Director  
BRAD STEINMETZ, Resident Designer  
CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE ROCHE, Artistic Associate

**TO PURCHASE TICKETS: online at <http://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/181507>**

Adults \$18 for PM performances, \$12 for matinees; Students and seniors \$12 all performances

**By phone at 800.838.3006**

**In person at the theatre 30 minutes before curtain.**

Please visit [www.for-word-company.net](http://www.for-word-company.net)

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