



COLUMNS

Column: Ex-newscaster Sasha Foo finds her voice as a playwright





Sasha Foo (lower far right) wrote a play, "Choice Words," presented by these actresses and director Terry Ross (center back) at the 2023 Fringe Festival. (Courtesy of Sasha Foo)

She wrote "Choice Words," a series of monologues related to the recent overturning of the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision on abortion rights.

BY DIANE BELL | COLUMNIST

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When newscaster Sasha Foo bid adieu to KUSI TV viewers on Oct. 15, 2020, after 17 years, she had covered topics that ranged from the Cedar wildfire, Petco Park opening, San Diego Opera revival and even a nudist resort during a heat wave.

The COVID-19 pandemic had erupted, pushed a pause button and was prompting people to re-evaluate their lives. Many were losing, leaving or changing jobs and, with heightened awareness of the fragility of life, re-ordering their priorities.

Sasha Foo was one of them.

Foo was refreshingly candid with her KUSI-TV audience: "Over the last eight months, I've had a chance to take stock of my life, and I realized there were interests and goals I had postponed saying, 'Oh, I'll do that tomorrow, or next year.'"

"It struck me that, if I wanted to do these things, tomorrow had to be a lot closer to

today.”

So, after 30 years as an on-air reporter harking back to an early anchor desk job in Atlanta for a fledgling news network called CNN, she walked away from what most people would consider a dream job.

The daughter of Chinese immigrants was emboldened by a paraphrased quote someone relayed to her: “If you want to explore new waters, you have to lose sight of the shore.” She concluded, “I’m ready for that adventure.”

The reincarnation of Sasha Foo is on display at the [International Fringe Festival](#), which concludes Sunday.

The annual festival functions like an arts lab where actors, entertainers, comedians and others perform in front of an audience who doesn’t expect perfection.





Sasha Foo, TV reporter-turned-playwright, shows her credential for the 2023 Fringe Festival where her play was well received. (Courtesy of Sasha Foo)

Foo directed the reading of her play, “Choice Words,” consisting of eight monologues on reproductive rights. Each was voiced by a different actress. The play was written as 13 monologues, but Foo had to condense it to stay within the one-hour time limit.

Veteran filmmaker Terry Ross, who is Foo’s acting coach, calls the writing powerful. “When I first read the monologues, I was astonished. It is really rare for someone who had never written for the stage to have created these wonderful, individual stories and voices that include humor, internal build and structure. ... It’s astonishing to me.”

One of the monologues related to a woman forced to carry a dead fetus to term because doctors feared removing it would violate the law. Another explored an elderly woman’s exchange with abortion clinic protesters.

“The effect on the audience was palpable,” says Ross, who worked with Foo as the director. “They gave standing ovations.”

“Lots of people came up afterward to tell me they related to a specific piece because of things in their lives that had happened to their mom, or their sister, or even to them.”

Foo long had been writing dramatic dialogues in her free time, and this idea had been brewing for awhile. But it didn't materialize until a year ago. Inspired by last May's leaked draft of the U.S. Supreme Court opinion on abortion rights, she started writing vignettes and viewpoints from different perspectives.

She completed 12 monologues in 10 weeks, then added a 13th set in the future at the suggestion of a veteran playwright.

“It seemed likely that the Supreme Court was going to take a monumental step toward altering abortion rights in this country,” Foo says. Her instinct was right. On June 24, the opinion was made official, overturning *Roe v. Wade*, the landmark 1973 Supreme Court decision affirming a constitutional right to abortion.

Foo contacted local theater groups. A small theater company, [InnerMission Productions](#), run by two women, facilitated a staged reading at the City Heights Performance Annex last September.

When friends suggested she present the monologues at the Fringe Festival with only five weeks to prepare, she was hesitant but relied on her years of deadline reporting to pull it off because of the topic's timeliness. Foo is seeking other staging venues. Ross believes it could become a traveling show similar to “*The Vagina Monologues*.”

But this is only one of Foo's pursuits.

Other postponed goals beckoned. As a kid, she was interested in the performing arts, but her Chinese parents didn't consider entertainment and show business as safe career choices.

So, Foo set about reinventing herself during the pandemic pause. In addition to her acting classes with Ross, she started modeling, signed with a talent agency, began training as a voice-over actor and hosting segments of the Asian Pacific Voices podcast.

She also joined [Ajumma EXP](#), a crew of middle-aged women who embrace growing older, getting wiser and stepping outside their comfort zones by breaking into hip-hop flash dances in public venues, including Belmont Park, Chicano Park and the Fashion Valley mall.

She also acted in the ensemble cast in two of a trilogy of short feature movies directed and filmed in Europe by Ross.

The romantic comedy, "[A Chateau in the Loire](#)," in which Foo portrays a travel blogger has won Ross several film festival accolades, including a 2023 IndieFEST "Best Woman Filmmaker" award.

Does she have any regrets about leaving her dream job? "No," she says. "I'm not a person who likes to think about what-ifs. ... As a journalist, you're always constrained. When working in an art form, you have more freedom of self-expression."

In her final KUSI goodbye segment, Foo danced in a puddle on the Mission Beach Boardwalk advising: "Let's remember to look after each other, and to find the thing that makes you want to dance in the rain."



Diane Bell

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