# DTC DELAWARE THEATRE COMPANY

# INSIGHTS
## *DTC's Teacher Resource*
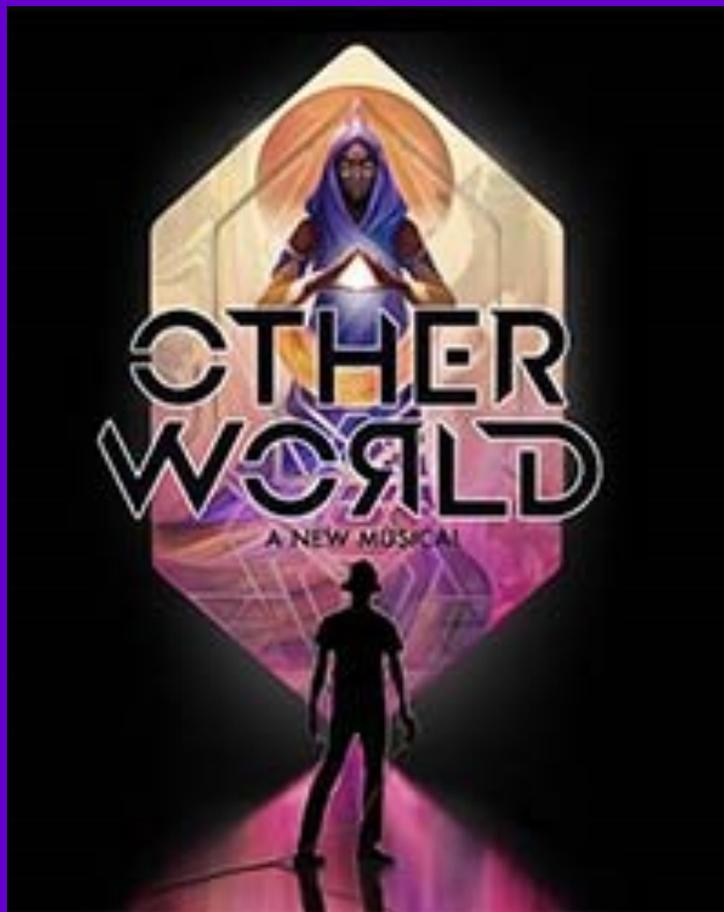


# OTHER WORLD
### BOOK BY **HUNTER BELL**
### MUSIC AND LYRICS BY **JEFF BOWEN & ANN MCNAMEE**

### **FEBRUARY 23–MARCH 20, 2022**

# *As you enter Other World...*

"See the glory and all its design,
Each with its own wonderful storyline.
Look around you and see what's begun by the kid in everyone."

**"I believe in the possibility of possibilities."**

"There is one simple answer that we can be sure of.
The one thing to know, there's no end to love."

**"Never underestimate the power of human connection."**



*The creative team behind Other World (left to right): Jeff Bowen, Ann McNamee, Adrienne Campbell Holt, Karla Puno Garcia, Hunter Bell*

# *Characters and Summary*

## Regarding Video Gaming and Terminology

The video game in the show is named Other World, and it is also an invention of the creators of the musical of the same name. This video game is a "massive multiplayer online role-playing game," or MMORPG, for short.  For those unfamiliar with this type of activity, MMORPGs really exist, and many people play these types of video games.  In an MMORPG, a player joins in online and creates a character that they will role-play throughout the game.  They may be able to design the look of the character themselves from choices offered—hair, clothing, physical type, etc.—and also develop a character's personality and pattern of behaviors.  This created character is called an "avatar," and avatars are controlled by their players in the game.  References to "NPC" stand for non-player characters in a video game.  A non-player character (NPC) is one that is preprogrammed to do and say certain things rather than an avatar character whose actions and interactions are controlled by a person playing the video game.  Often players in these games unite in teams to work together on tasks and challenges within the game.  People who play video games are sometimes called "gamers." Within this study guide, *Other World* (when italicized) refers to the musical production, and Other World (not italicized) refers to the video game within the show.

## Characters in *Other World*

**Sri:**  A young adult who works remotely and is an avid gamer. Sri is somewhat reclusive in his day-to-day life, preferring instead online interactions.  Sri's avatar in Other World is Tiger Shrike, a character created by Sri's deceased mother, Sumita.

**Lorraine:**  A young adult with a vibrant manner who enjoys socializing and pop culture.  Lorraine is a non-gamer despite being the daughter of Other World video game co-creator Will Houston.

**Jamie:** An avid gamer with a bright personality whose social media and gaming presence and brand have attracted many followers.  Jamie's avatar in Other World is J-Blitz, a tank.



*Jamen Nanthakumar (top) and Bonnie Milligan (below) play Sri and Lorraine, respectively, in Delaware Theatre Company's  world premiere of* <u>Other World</u>.

## Characters *(continued)*

**Myra:** An avid gamer and professor of computer science whose former students include Will, Sumita, and Roman. Myra's avatar in Other World is The Draz, a healer.

**Tris:** An avid gamer who takes efforts in the game seriously. Tris' avatar in Other World is Max Out, a range fighter.

**Roman Lloyd:** A former employee of Ultimate Games and part of the initial idea behind Other World with Will and Sumita. Roman was cut out of these projects when he was arrested for cyber-crimes. Roman uses the Other World character of Antagon in an effort to gain control over others.

**Hector:** Sri's neighbor.

**Temula:** NPC character in Other World who is the leader of the Forces of Light, a team representing goodness.

**Antagon:** NPC character in Other World who is a villain in the game. Antagon is the leader of the fearsome Army of Korberac.

**Lieutenant Marauder:** NPC character in Other World.

**1011:** Korberac Informant. NPC character in Other World.

**Xåhle:** Zone Merchant. NPC character in Other World.

**Will:** Co-creator of the video game Other World. Lorraine's father.

**Sumita:** Co-creator of the video game Other World. Sri's mother.

Additionally, there are various humans, virtual characters, creatures, and other featured roles in the show.
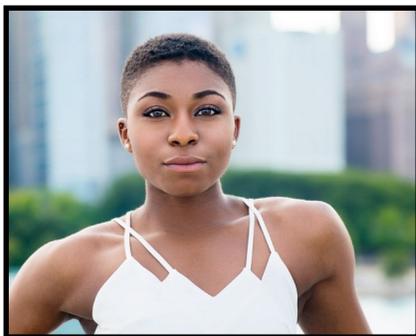


*Left to right: Charnette Batey plays Temula; Adam Harrington plays Roman Lloyd; Mukta Phatak plays Sumita.*

*Other World* is a world-premiere musical at Delaware Theatre Company. Throughout the rehearsal process, the script continued to be revised and refined. This summary was created from the script draft dated 12/22/21, and updates made during the rehearsal process since then may not be reflected herein.

## Summary

An otherworldly voice welcomes a group of gamers to the video game Other World. The lights come up on different people who are settling down to their computers to play the video game. Sri, whose avatar's name is Tiger Shrike, calls on the other characters in the online video game group—The Draz, a character who is controlled by Myra; J-Blitz, a character controlled by Jamie; and Max Out, a character controlled by Tris. The group of avatars is part of the Forces of Light, a set of beings in the video game who are led by the non-player character (NPC) Temula, and who battle the NPC villain named Antagon and the evil Army of Korberac. Sri pauses temporarily when a neighbor arrives with a dinner invitation. Sri declines the offer and hastily returns to Other World. After winning a key battle, the gamers are shocked by the news that the corporation running Other World plans to end the game permanently within days. The lights come up on Roman, who seems connected to the game and is also disturbed by the corporation's decision to end Other World. Roman hints that he will disrupt the operation of the game by taking over the NPC Antagon, now putting this powerful character under his direction and control.

*Melissa Salguero (above) plays Jamie; Jason Williams (below) plays Jamie's avatar, J-Blitz.*

Sri online chats with Myra, confiding that the loss of the game his mother, Sumita, created would be devastating. Myra, a professor of computer science who knew Sri's mother, offers to try to contact former students who might work at the corporation to see if they can help keep Other World alive. Sri gets the idea to seek Will Houston, Sumita's co-creator of the game, to see if he might be able to help. Myra believes Will is dead, regardless of internet rumors to the contrary. Sri has a quiet memory of his mother and the two of them playing the game she created. Sri goes through some old belongings and finds an address for Will Houston.

Arriving at Will's home, Sri meets Lorraine, Will's adult daughter, who remembers playing with Sri when the two were children and their parents attended a work party together. Lorraine, who has little regard for video games, tells Sri she believes her father is dead, and implies that the two were estranged for a long time before Will disappeared from her life. Lorraine shows Sri to her garage where much of Sumita's and Will's old computer equipment and files are stored. As Sri begins messing with a computer, suddenly he and Lorraine are sucked into the video game Other World.

Lorraine and Sri are stunned to find themselves inside the video game. Sri recognizes the locale within the game and tries to explain things to Lorraine, who, as a non-gamer, is confused. The two are suddenly attacked by NPC marauders, and Lorraine fights them off. Sri realizes his team member gamers should be logging on soon. Sri suggests attempting to make contact with Sri's gamer friends and solicit their assistance in safely escaping from Other World.

*(continued)*

## Summary *(continued)*

Meanwhile, Jamie, Myra, and Tris—through their avatars J-Blitz, The Draz, and Max Out—wonder why Sri (a.k.a. Tiger Shrike) has not logged on to the game. They decide to begin play without Tiger Shrike. The focus shifts to the villain Antagon, who calls upon an unusual creature known as Bikatipus to take on J-Blitz, the Draz, and Max Out. A fight ensues as Sri and Lorraine enter the scene. Sri sees the familiar avatars of his online friends and tries to get their attention, but the gamers only see them as somewhat blurry computer-generated beings. Sri tries to write a sign to show the gamers. Just as Lorraine wins her battle with the Bikatipus and Sri holds up his sign, the gamers' computers begin glitching and contact is lost.

Temula, the leader of the Forces of Light, now approaches Sri and Lorraine. As Sri explains to Lorraine that Temula—as an NPC—is a preprogrammed character, Lorraine touches Temula, and suddenly Temula is able to converse with the two people. Temula shows Sri a piece of a magical orb that, when whole, can reopen the portal through which the two entered the game. Temula informs them that Antagon has the other half of the magical orb. She tells them that to unlock the fortress where Antagon is imprisoned, they will need to collect "Ikons"—symbols of power they will be awarded when they meet certain challenges. Temula leaves, and as Sri and Lorraine try to figure out how to travel to the next realm of the game, Sri summons a video game creature called a "Hylox," a winged creature who will fly the two to their next destination.

*Sav Souza (top) and Adinah Alexander play guildmates Tris and Myra in DTC's production of Other World.*

The scene shifts to the villain Antagon, who learns from an informant that two visitors from Earth have arrived and have the other half of the orb. Antagon creates a being, names it 1011, and directs it to find and follow the visitors. The lights come up on Roman, who, in controlling Antagon, reveals that he seeks revenge and ultimate power. Antagon then continues to create beings who will form an army of destruction.

Back in the real world, Tris, having found online an address for the computer user that controls J-Blitz, meets Jamie for the first time. They introduce themselves to one another as the real-life gamers behind their avatars. Tris shows Jamie a screenshot of the moment when Sri held up the sign in the game. Jamie recalls that The Draz ordered merchandise from the J-Blitz brand, and using the shipping information, finds an address. The two decide to make a road trip to find the person who controls The Draz and consult about the mysterious screenshot.

In Other World, Lorraine and Sri have arrived at a locale known as the Red Caldera, and Sri explains the series of challenges ahead of them. Though the two chide one another regarding their recreational habits, they begin to appreciate one another's abilities when they complete a difficult challenge. Temula arrives to give the pair the Ikon, and Sri and Lorraine ask Temula to help them. Sri explains to Temula the creation of Other World. Antagon's informer, 1011, spies on the group and steals Sri's bag. Lorraine boldly takes it back, touching 1011 in the process, which sets off a slight glitch in the being. Sri and Lorraine run away. 1011 returns to Antagon.

*(continued)*

**Summary** *(continued)*

At Antagon's fortress, 1011 reports on meeting Lorraine and Sri. Antagon—controlled by Roman—realizes the two are the now-grown children of Sumita and Will. Antagon orders 1011 to steal the orb from Sri and Lorraine.

Lorraine and Sri enter a safe zone and talk about their connections with their parents and the game. Lorraine views it as something that took her father away from her. Sri sees it as a gift from their parents for himself and others to enjoy. In a parallel scene, Temula sings of awakening to the possibility of choosing one's own actions. Meanwhile, Roman's coding of Antagon overrides the rules of the game, and the Korberac army enters the safe zone, startling Sri and Lorraine. 1011 successfully steals Sri's bag, capturing the other piece of the magical orb for Antagon. Temula steps in and helps Lorraine and Sri in battle, defeating the Korberac.

The second act opens as gamers around the globe continue to lament the planned ending of Other World. In the meantime, Myra reacts in surprise as Jamie and Tris have now arrived at the university. After Tris shows Myra the screenshot, Myra shares the history behind the creation of the game. Myra explains that shortly before Sumita died and Will disappeared, the two were working on a fantastic project called Passport which would allow for human travel between the real world and the game world. Prompted by the words on the screenshot, Myra, Jamie, and Tris head to Will's home and the garage where he and Sumita last worked.

Sri, Lorraine, and Temula arrive at the Assemblage, a locale that holds all of the avatars of all of the people who play Other World. Sri wants to see Tiger Shrike because the avatar was first created and played by Sri's mother. Lorraine understands even more why Sri is so passionate about Other World. Suddenly, they realize the bag containing the piece of the orb is missing. They head off to find it.

1011 returns to Antagon with the bag containing the piece of the orb. Antagon reveals the plan for ultimate power between Earth and Other World, including destroying any humans in the way, and admitting responsibility for the death of Will Houston. 1011, who glitched at Lorraine's touch, recognizes Antagon as a force of evil, refuses to hand over the orb piece, and survives a battle with Antagon. Roman is revealed, intensely angry at the proceedings, and vows to take action. *(continued)*



*(Left to right) Arianne Meneses, Kristen Faith Oei, and Sommer Carbuccia play avatars The Draz, Tiger Shrike, and Max Out.*

**Summary** *(continued)*

As Lorraine and Sri fret over the lost bag, 1011 approaches and returns it, wanting to join the Forces of Light. Though Temula is suspicious, they accept 1011's help, knowing that time is running out. They head to the Aphotic Realm, a locale that Sri knows to hold an immensely difficult challenge, hoping that it will get them what they need to escape. They work together on the complex movement challenge, succeed, and earn an Ikon, which they give to Temula. They move on to the fortress to take on Antagon.

Myra, Tris, and Jamie have arrived at Will's garage. They use their individual skills to enter locked areas. Meanwhile, Lorraine, Sri, Temula, and 1011 arrive at a realm reminiscent of a garden, and Lorraine is startled to recognize her childhood backyard in the space. She recalls a beloved memory of her relationship with her father. 1011 makes the connection that Lorraine's father was Will Houston, and tells Lorraine of Antagon's role in Will's death. Temula, too, makes a connection between Will and Lorraine. Emboldened by the new information the team has, the four pledge to stop Antagon, though they know Antagon has the advantage of numbers.
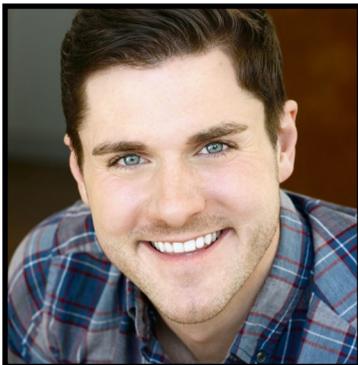
*Seth Rettberg plays 1011 in the video game within the musical Other World.*

As they make their way to the fortress, 1011 discovers powers of independent thought and action, and begins recruiting other neutral or rival beings in the game to join the Forces of Light. The new Forces join Temula, Lorraine, and Sri, who is jubilant to discover that among these Forces are guildmates—fellow gamers--Myra, Jamie, and Tris, who have also entered Other World. The battle begins between the Forces of Light and Antagon and the Army of Korberac. Antagon gains possession of the entire orb, opening the portal, and Roman enters the game. Roman and Myra clash, and Roman exposes the details surrounding the deaths of Will and Sumita. Roman attempts to utilize Antagon to bring about a rise to ultimate power, but Antagon, infected with the desire to commit evil, kills Roman, then closes the portal and begins an attack on the Forces of Light. Lorraine utilizes a Time Freeze she and Sri earned earlier in the game, and Sri uses this pause in the game to summon the avatars that have been fighting Antagon in the game for years. J-Blitz, Max Out, The Draz, and Tiger Shrike appear. Antagon morphs into a terrible dragon. The Forces of Light join in harmony with one another, and their united power defeats Antagon.

As the game comes to an end, Sri is struck with the sadness of losing such a powerful connection to his mother. Myra guides Sri to give voice to the love for his mother, and as Sri does so, images of Sumita and Will come forth, connecting across worlds to their children. Feeling at peace, Sri and Lorraine cross through the portal back to the real world. A glimpse of the new strength and connection among the friends—and families—brings the show to a close.

## From Isolation to Connection

In the new musical *Other World*, one of the protagonists, Sri, has spent three years working from home, isolated by choice from the outside world, and interacting with people he knows only through their teamwork during online gaming experiences in a video game called Other World.  When the corporation running Other World announces the game will be ending, Sri is motivated to look out-side of his home for answers.   He meets Lorraine, a non-gamer, and as they share their stories, he admits, "Coming to your house is the first time I've left home in three years."  With the new reality we currently live in due to the pandemic, this statement--which two years ago may have seemed im-probable to many--has new resonance for all of us.  But the desire for making connections and keep-ing connected is an age-old quest for human beings that pre-dates the worlds of video games, Zoom, and the smartphone.  How has this desire for connection among human beings manifested through-out history?  Why do we seek these connections?  And how do we as different people navigate the balance between our individual interests and pathways in life and our need for contact with others?

If you've ever visited Spaceship Earth in Epcot Center in Walt Disney World, you might remember the ride takes visitors on a journey of human communication throughout the ages.   From depictions of storytelling around a fire to the development of alphabets and writing systems, from the invention of the printing press to the earliest telegraph and telephone instruments, all of these scenes show the ways an individual human's thoughts and ideas are shared with others in an ever-widening circle. Technology developed during the past 200 years has enabled human beings to send messages across the miles and allow for contact and conversation to flow between people in real time, as though they are in the same room with one another.  Certainly our ability to look up or share information on the internet, to call or text someone, or sit down and meet with them virtually has been integral to our way of life for the past two decades; and particularly during the "shutdown" of our worlds that oc-curred as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, our ability to connect with anyone outside our own households often relied on our access to technology—our phones, computers, and Wi-Fi signals. And many people discovered new value of these technologies with regard to making connections with others.  Grandparents living across the country could watch their grandchild's Zoom graduation or school play, sharing in these experiences as they unfolded, when doing so might not have been possible previously because of distance.  Individuals who might have been isolated from communal experiences due to impediments such as lack of transportation or physical access, harsh weather con-ditions, or infirmity were able to take part in classes, worship services, and the like through the bur-geoning use of online interactive and livestreamed events. And it was no surprise that the video gam-ing industry saw immense growth in the past two years.  One example is Amazon's Twitch, which noted an increase of 83% in the number of active players in the months following the March 2020 shutdowns and quarantines resulting from the pandemic.  Video games that included socialization in their play provided an avenue for building and maintaining friendships.  As seen in *Other World*, real connections between people can be made through virtual means and can be valuable particularly when being together in person is not possible.

But why are these connections among people necessary?  Beyond the economics of trade, beyond the need to communicate news and information between parties scattered around the globe, why do individual human beings seek deeper connection with one another?  In *Other World*, Sri at first seems to lead a lonely existence, spending most of his time alone in his apartment.  But as the story unfolds, it is clear that Sri has meaningful connections to his guildmates.  Though he does not know their real names or other details of their lives outside the game, within the game, Sri has come to depend upon

*(continued)*

**From Isolation to Connection** *(continued)*



*Gamers Sri, Jamie, and Tris have built a friendship through their mutual love for and their teamwork in the video game Other World.*

their companionship, to respect their talents and expertise, and to seek them out when he needs help. Sri's online friendships have qualities that mirror those of close in-person relationships:  companionship, mutual respect, and interdependence.  Anthropologists and sociologists agree that humans are social beings, and have been so, for thousands of years.  Cooperation seen in groups of primates—the shared duties in caring for the young and providing food and protection—has provided the keys to survival and explains an evolutionary reason for group living.  Beyond caring for physical needs, though, is the quality of relationship-building that provides those other intangibles—friendship, a sense of belonging, and love—that are also fundamental to our human nature.  Humans thrive with loving contact with other humans. Scientist Matthew Lieberman, a professor of Social Cognitive Neuroscience at UCLA, pointed out that people experience true happiness and true pain as a result of social interactions.  "Because of how social pain and pleasure are wired into our operating system, these are motivational ends in and of themselves.  We don't focus on being connected solely in order to extract money and other resources from people – being connected needs no ulterior motive."  Sri, Tris, Jamie, and Myra—as guildmates—find pleasure not just from playing Other World, but from playing together, just as Lorraine finds happiness going out with friends.  Each experiences their own social pleasure in their interactions.

The theme of connection is further highlighted in *Other World* in several other sequences.  When Lorraine touches Temula and 1011, a metamorphic shift occurs as these two NPC characters become self-aware, and eventually make independent choices to help others or to love despite the risks involved.  The power of touch is evident in the story, and this power underscores how in-person connection cannot be entirely replaced by virtual communications.  Dr. Tiffany Field of the Touch Research Institute, who studied the necessity of touch in infant and child development and the role of touch in fighting disease in adults with HIV, explains, "Holding hands, hugging, cuddling, they're all pretty good….Heart rate decreases when you're getting moderate pressure…. Same with blood pressure….There's an increase in serotonin, which is the body's natural antidepressant and anti-pain chemical."  Being together and able to touch one another are necessary to human survival and happiness.

Lack of connection—or, more pointedly, loss of connection—is also found in *Other World*, particularly in the loss of parental relationships Sri and Lorraine have experienced.  Sri had a close and loving relationship with his mother, Sumita, and the two used computer gaming as a way to play together and be connected.  When she died, Sri felt her loss deeply, but was able to feel connected to her as he continued play in Other World.  "When my mom's game is gone, she's gone," Sri laments.  Sri values Other World for the memory of playing with Sumita as well as for the continuing existence of something she created that provides joys to him, his guildmates, and thousands of others.   Lorraine,

*(continued)*

# Teachable Themes and Topics *(continued)*

**From Isolation to Connection (continued)**

on the other hand, felt distanced from her father, Will, leading to an estrangement that continued for many years.   "[This game is] a reminder of an absent dad who spent most of my childhood building this world and very little time with me. So, no, I don't think this is amazing."  Both characters are experiencing the social pain that comes from a loss of meaningful connection.  But in a beautiful moment depicting family love, Will and Sumita are able to communicate with Lorraine and Sri as the game begins its shutdown.  Again, the power of touch is seen, cementing the connection between parent and child.

The stereotypes of the gamer as a loner and the party girl as a shallow person are demolished when viewed, as in *Other World*, through the lens of the quest for human connection that Sri and Lorraine both seek and discover.  The musical brings to light the poignancy of the plight of all humans—our need to find someone who understands us, our need for companionship and play, our need to be touched, and our need to love.  These needs are satisfied when we make connections with others.  And as the show illustrates, there are many ways—virtual and in person--to make those heartfelt connections.



*Sri and Lorraine, childhood acquaintances, meet again as adults as
their adventure —and newfound friendship—awaits.*

**Identity, Inclusion, and Imagination in *Other World***

When Sri visits the Assemblage in the Other World game and sees his avatar, Tiger Shrike, that was created and first played by his mother, he shares with Lorraine the meaning of that character.

> Sri:     ON THE WALL, HUNG IN THE HALL,
>          SO SMALL AND UNDERSTATED, SO GRACEFUL AND STRONG.
>          IT HELPED ME SEE WHO I COULD BE.
>          SHRIKE IS MORE THAN A HERO, SHE'S A PART OF ME.

Sri's identity as an avid gamer, a leader of a guild, and as a beloved son are intertwined in the Tiger Shrike avatar. Other gamers, including Tris, Jamie, and Myra, have online identities that are meaningful to them as part of the game, and moreover, are considered by these players to be reflective of elements of themselves as people.

> Gamers:     THIS IS MY ESCAPE TO LIVE A NEW IDENTITY.
>             IT'S MORE THAN JUST A GAME,
>             IT'S PART OF ME.

The question of "Who am I?" and the related question "Who am I to the world?" have been a source for reflection throughout human history for persons in many stages of their lives, from young to old. Not surprisingly, the prevalence of the personal use of technology in the past few decades has resulted in what seems an even greater examination of these questions, for people both send and receive messages about identity through online channels like social media, gaming avatars, and chat rooms, for example. This online sending of social messages—particularly those about identity—broadcasts a person's self-expression in ways that far exceed the social circle of family, close friends, and those who interact daily with that person. The broadening of this social circle to include recipients who often don't really know one another at times makes us wonder if the person presented online is a representation of that person's true self. Is "Twitter you" the same as "real you," for example? Is it possible to capture the essence of who a person is through a social media account or a chosen character in an MMORPG? Does the fact that a person can choose to conceal or reveal facets of themselves in online exchanges lead to a more authentic representation of their self-identity, or does the very act of editing what is shared create a skewed portrait of "self"?

*Other World* illuminates several positive aspects of the relationship between video gaming and identity. First, technology creates a welcoming and inclusive environment for diverse individuals by showing that through the medium of online interactions, one can overcome perceived vulnerability to reveal important aspects of the self. For example, rather than judging someone based upon their physical appearance, or perhaps assuming someone can or cannot do something based upon a perceived ability or disability, the buffer that comes with interacting only through the video game allows for individual gamers to create avatars that shed light on their personalities, or emphasize the essential personal qualities those gamers value. Myra's avatar identity in The Draz as a healer, for example, shows her friends the kind of traits she wishes to represent. Thus, when Jamie and Tris meet Myra for the first time, they already have a level of trust in her and are willing to journey with her into the unknown because of their knowledge of her values as she has displayed them in the game, not because of how she appears to them or because of the social groupings (age, gender, ability, race/ethnicity, economic status, etc.) to which she belongs. The same is true for Tris and Jamie's identities; Tris' Max Out avatar values working cohesively as a team, and Jamie's J-Blitz demonstrates a can-do spirit in the face of an obstacle. These qualities of avatars—and the characters within the musical

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**Identity, Inclusion, and Imagination in *Other World* (continued)**

that the avatars represent—are observable through words and actions, and not limited by the outward appearance of the person: inclusion by selected identity rather than exclusion by perceived identity. Moreover, because the show explores character and identity beyond what is outwardly visible, the actors portraying those characters also are not limited to visible "types," as is often the case in the casting of shows. The creators of *Other World*—Hunter Bell, Jeff Bowen, and Ann McNamee—purposefully chose to create characters in the musical who could be portrayed by diverse actors. In other words, the actors in the show are, in Bell's words, "meeting the role as their authentic self." In both real-life casting and performing, and in the given circumstances within the show, the intangibles of authentic self have greater import than social categories or constructs, highlighting a theme of inclusiveness in and around *Other World*.

Another positive outcome illustrated in the show that relates identity to video game play is the way a person can use imagination to explore facets of themselves and, as a result, broaden their own self-concept. Sri, who admits to an embarrassing moment at a pool party as a child, and whose reclusive nature as an adult keeps him from opening up to a friendship with a neighbor, is able to envision himself as a leader through Tiger Shrike, and in turn, becomes that leader in person as he gathers allies and navigates the challenges of surviving the game. In the song "That's Why We Play," Sri sings of this connection between imaginative play and becoming. In fact, including and beyond video games, the real-life act of "play" allows children and adults to try out experiences and expand their definitions of who they are. Play can involve imagining, designing, constructing, and creating—all skills that are useful in the job market and rewarding in recreational activities. Play that involves problem-solving builds skills for real-life conflict-resolution scenarios. If you play a hero in a video game, you are a hero, even if it is just among friends as you take on fictional villains; that action can in turn boost confidence in worlds outside the video game. Play has meaning. Pediatrician Dr. Kenneth Ginsburg,

*(continued)*



*Above, Atari 2600 video game system, popular during the early 1980s. Right, a gamer joins in an MMORPG during Gamescom 2018.*

**Identity, Inclusion, and Imagination in *Other World* (continued)**

writing about the value of play, remarks, "When play is allowed to be child-driven, children practice decision-making skills, move at their own pace, discover their own areas of interest, and ultimately engage fully in the passions they wish to pursue." That statement can be expanded to include adults and play. An avid recreational golfer practices both her swing and her decision-making skills in selecting the right club for a tough shot. Just because it is an enjoyable activity does not make it trivial. The same can be said for gaming; players can build their social skills in working as a team during an MMORPG and can exercise critical thinking muscles in working out a complex series of tasks to achieve a goal. Thus, a person's sense of identity can be strengthened or expanded to include personal descriptors that align with what happens during play: I am a team player. I am a planner. I am persistent.

The theme of "Who am I?" flows throughout *Other World*, and is shared through dialogue, plot, characterization, and even song.

> Temula:  SO MANY MOONS HAVE COME AND GONE,
> THE SAME ODYSSEY EVERY DAY.
> NEVER ONCE PAUSING TO ASK,
> WHO AM I? WHY AM I HERE? WHAT DO I WANT TO SAY?

Just as humans in real life learn about themselves, grow, change, and discover even more about their identities, so do the characters in the show. We can all relate to the same awakenings to self-awareness and growth that Temula sings of as she, like other characters in *Other World*, ponders the essential questions of identity.



*Charnette Batey as Temula, the leader of the Forces of Light in Other World.*

## Creating The World of *Other World*

The musical *Other World* is an original show that centers on a video game of the same name. Because the musical is truly new, the writers had no source material for their work, but used their imaginations to create the characters and plot of the piece, along with creating the world of the video game within the musical.  This video game world has its own inventive lands, unusual creatures, and even specific vocabulary that the characters who play Other World come to learn and understand.  As writers, Hunter Bell, Jeff Bowen, and Ann McNamee shared some of their process for this work. DTC's Johanna Schloss, Director of Education and Community Engagement, sat down with the trio to discuss the creation of *Other World*.

**JS:**  How did the three of you connect and begin collaborating on this piece?

**Ann:**  It began, actually, in October of 2011.  I was working on a different project, and I needed to find a book writer.  I talked to Maury Yeston, my mentor, and he sent me a list of his favorite young writers, and at the top of his list was Hunter Bell.

**Hunter:**  Ann and I began working together, but I'm not the greatest at show doctoring.  I have many strengths, but that's not one of them.  So we thought, "Let's do something new," and we were working on the West Coast where Ann is based, in the Silicon Valley area, and technology is certainly in the air there, and we landed on gaming as a backdrop.  The opportunities that provided for worlds you can create that didn't exist, and exploration of a lot of different kind of folks who game, who are gamers… It was fun to enter that world.  I had also watched Jeff Bowen play an MMO game, and we folded in Jeff  who is not only a great composer-lyricist, but also an avid and passionate gamer, and that is where his experience expanded the thrust of the story.

**JS:**  When we work with students who are playwrights and they are creating works of science fiction, or even just worlds that we don't know, we talk about how you have to create the rules of that world and introduce those to the audience, to people who don't necessarily know your world.  Can you talk about writing a new world?

**Jeff:**  There are many, many different online games, massive-multiplayer online role-playing games—MMORPGs--like World of Warcraft.  They are all different worlds; they use different terminology, different languages; but there are kind of the same things in different games, too.  The vocabulary that I was aware of sort of helped, providing some shortcuts, but still the audience needs definition on some, and so we did that.  Then there are other terms you think they'll figure out. . . .The responsible thing is anytime you write outside your identity--and there are many different identities, different folks in this show—you want to represent them.

**Hunter:**  We're also building two worlds—we're building a fictional game world within the story—and that's where the collaboration with WETA Workshop was so helpful.  You have to establish the rules as you go in, the rules of the world.  So It's refining and clarifying that, trying to make things efficient, cleaner. We are building the plane, flying it, and making the map.

**JS:**  Did you make show bibles?

## Creating The World of *Other World* *(continued)*

**Hunter:**  Yes, lore and logic of the show, and history of the game.  Sometimes it's helpful for the actors to have that background.  They need to know what was in our heads so they're not flying blind.  They're looking to us for backstories and the backstory of the game world.  It's fun because you get to make up words.  Very Shakespearean, very *Star Trek*.  Words that seemed so strange on Day One [of rehearsal], like "Bikatipus" or "Army of Korberac."  now fall off the tongue from cast and crew.

**JS:**  You've been working on this show for years, and you were set to premiere the show [at Bucks County Playhouse], and then the pandemic hit.  And you never opened.

**Ann:**  We were shut down on Friday the 13th [March 13, 2020].  We all hugged each other goodbye, and we thought, okay, it's a month or two.  We had weekly meetings, and we were used to working remotely.  We'd go back and forth from Woodside (California) to New York, but then we just started on Zoom, and kept working on the show.

**Hunter:**  Even just the elements of Zooming, it's part of connection and communication, like in the show.

**Jeff:**  That was truly something for the gaming community, Twitch; they would look at each other and talk to each other in games online; my Uncle Jerry didn't have that capacity before.  Cut to six months later…

**Hunter:**  Now we're looking at each other in little boxes, but that's how gamers had been interacting.  It's been fascinating watching that evolution.  I'm really proud that we took that pause, that break [during the pandemic] to work not just on the show, but also the ethos, how to keep the show as relevant as possible.  The timing is great.

**JS:**  Were there any major rewrites or re-imaginings that occurred during that hiatus?

**Hunter:**  We changed characters, names.

**Ann:**  One important thing that happened was we realized that we had this spectacular choreographer, Karla Puno Garcia.  And because a costume choice for avatars, for in-game characters, was to have scale, one way to achieve that was to have high platform shoes, high platform boots.  But then all of a sudden, what do you forfeit?  You can't move!  So we decided to flip it on its ear.  If we're in a game, we want to see motion.  We thought, let's get Karla, during this pandemic, to choreograph whatever she feels.  Jeff and I said, "Karla, you design the movement for all these moments. We're not going to tell you 32 bars, or 'it has to be this amount of time.'  You design the movement, and then we will write the music for that."

**Jeff:**  It was like scoring a film.  There are a couple moments in the show where there are no counts because, spoiler alert, there are giant puppets moving around onstage, and like 17 people operating them, so it's impossible to get them all to count at the same time.  There's no room for error if you base it on counts.  So we basically just said, "Stage it.  Once you decide, we will score it to fit."  We have the elements; we know what it's going to be; but we don't want them to feel like they have to count to it or be at a certain place at a certain time. And the movement becomes more organic and

## Creating The World of *Other World* (continued)

character-based if they're not locked into, as Ann said, "32 bars to get that done!"

**Ann:**  And during that time, Karla remembered her father talking about Filipino martial arts, and she decided to look into it, and online found a trainer, a coach.  She had the time to take the lessons, and she decided to infuse that into her work, which is great.

**Hunter:**  Original work takes time.  We're proud of that

**JS:**  You've mentioned that this show is about more than gaming.

**Jeff:**  Gaming is only a backdrop of the show, but it's not about it.  There's connection, connecting with others, finding connection after loss….  This thing that lined up with the song "That's Why We Play."  There's some part of a person that is always here, that just doesn't go away.  Everything you create, every relationship you ever make, every person you've ever loved, is always going to be real, it's always going to feel like it's a living, breathing thing forever.

**Ann:**  Like when Sumita says, "I'm here but I'm not here," there's a connection.

**Jeff:**  You're in the game, but you're also in your room, your office… here and not here…your brain and your body experience through imagination that you're in it, you are connected.

**Hunter:**  We heard a talk one time about how empathy is taught through gaming.  Sometimes you choose an avatar that is similar to you, but often you choose one that is not you at all, and you have that first-person experience as you go through it.  There are interesting thoughts about empathy and experience.

**Ann**:  Something for us, we say, "No guns, not a first-person shooter."  But there is a tip of the hat in one of our game levels that is similar to a beautiful little computer game called Monument Valley; it's lovely and sweet. And I don't know if you remember Dance Dance Revolution.  There are no guns!  But yes, dance.  That's as big of a spoiler you'll get from me.

**Jeff:**  For every big-name game, there are 35 independent ones, on a range of topics.  They run deep.



*(continued)*

*Choreographer Karla Puno Garcia incorporated movement inspired by Filipino martial arts into the dance  styles of Other World  at Delaware Theatre Company.*

**Identity, Inclusion, and Imagination in *Other World* (continued)**

**Hunter**:   When you see the worlds, the storytelling that games have been doing the past 30 years, they're plays—they're screenplays, they're movies.

**Jeff:**  Very choose-your-own adventure.  And now Apple and Android are loaded with these independent choose-your-own adventure games.

**Hunter:**  For folks who game that wouldn't think of going to the theatre to see themselves, I hope they come and realize they have another venue of connection and entertainment.

**Jeff:**  We want to honor and celebrate gamers, and hope that they feel seen and excited that someone is representing them with care onstage.

**Hunter:**  And people who don't game—I think you'll walk away from this show understanding "that's why they play."  It's imagination, it's connection to others….  Just like when you're playing on the hill, when you're little, you make up rules, and you all agree, "So we're on a ship, and when you touch the side of the pool, that's lava"—that's how we play.

**Ann:**  [Growing up] in Massachusetts, we played ice hockey.  We flooded the strawberry patch and made a rink.  They gave me a broom instead of a stick, and I went to town.

**Hunter:**  We all create rules and dynamics and an imaginative world… some of this is a celebration of that wild creativity, that fun energy; and doing it theatrically, in real time, it's tangible in the room.

**Jeff:** I kind of chuckled during rehearsal.  I am a grown man doing exactly what I did on the playground.

**Hunter:**  It's fun to create the world through your imagination and see how it unfolds when you introduce it.  I think the most exciting thing is it gives the audience a chance to come and be surprised. You have no expectation; you get to meet these people, these characters, in real time, in Wilmington, at the world premiere.  It's very rare to have that pure original story in musical theatre.



*Avatars engage in a battle with an otherworldly creature.*

# *Questions for Classroom Discussion*

**Knowledge and Comprehension**
1. Who is Sri's avatar on the video game Other World? Who are the avatars on the same team (guild)?
2. Why does Sri go to Will Houston's home?
3. What does Sri mean when he tells Lorraine that Temula is an NPC?
4. What happens when Lorraine touches NPCs like Temula and 1011?
5. Which avatar does Roman control? What is Roman's goal?
6. How does Tris find Jamie's home? How do they find Myra?
7. Name and describe two successes that Sri and Lorraine have within the Other World game.
8. Summarize the ending of the show.

**Application and Analysis**
1. How are Sri and Lorraine alike? How are they different?
2. Why, beyond the fun of simple recreation, is Other World so important to Sri?
3. Why does Lorraine dislike video gaming?
4. What skills do Sri and Lorraine have that assist them in overcoming challenges in the game?
5. How are NPCs different from avatars?
6. How do the avatars used by Sri, Tris, Jamie, Myra, and Roman reflect them as people? What differences between the avatars and the people operating them do you note?
7. How does the relationship between Sri and Lorraine grow throughout the play? Give evidence supporting your statement.

**Synthesis and Evaluation**
1. Though Tris, Jamie, and Myra have worked together as guildmates (teammates) in Other World for a long time, the show depicts these characters meeting for the first time in person. What do you imagine would be going through their minds upon meeting one another?
2. Why might a gamer create an avatar with similarities to themselves? Why might a gamer create an avatar that is different from who they are? How might the type of game played influence the choices a player makes in creating an avatar?
3. Consider the concept of equality and/or an equalizing force in someone's life. How might a video game like Other World serve as an equalizing force among players?
4. What elements of playing a video game such as Other World are similar to in-person, physical or strategy games (e.g. sports, certain board games, or other play)?
5. Do you believe there is an age where "play" should stop? Why or why not? Support your answer with examples from *Other World* and from your own experience and understanding.

# *Classroom Activities*

1. In a musical, songs help propel the action or reveal character. For example, in *Other World,* Antagon sings "Ultimate Power" about wanting to take control and wreak havoc, advancing the story by sharing the plan for intended revenge. In another song, "My Journey Begins," Temula reveals in song that she is now self-aware and ready to speak and act for herself. Choose a favorite non-musical work—a book, play, or even TV show or movie, and identify either a key plot point or a character's inner thoughts that could be a pivotal moment to share in song. Who would be singing in this moment? What ideas, feelings, wishes, or actions would the character(s) want to express? Think about the qualities of this moment and how the music itself might reflect those qualities. (High energy? Gently reflective? Wacky or humorous?) Is there a genre of music that would more aptly fit the story you are conveying? Write the lyrics and, if you wish, the music for this song, and share the piece live or recorded with your class, including the context for the piece.

2. Create a web of words or phrases that you would use to describe yourself. What types of interests do you have? What dreams or goals do you have? How would you describe your personality? Consider facets of yourself that you share publicly, more privately with trusted friends or family, or hold in your own mind. Now imagine that you can create an avatar for yourself to navigate a fantastic realm such as seen in *Other World* or another video game or adventure story. With what qualities would you want to endow your avatar? Sketch or design your avatar, or assemble pictures/photos in a collage that bring out those same qualities. Do you have a special name you'd give your avatar for this other world or adventure story? Share your work with your class or with trusted friends/family in your inner circle. What can you learn about yourself from this exercise? What can you learn about others? Can you find commonalities with others that surprise you? Are there any surprises about yourself you found from the exercise? Discuss together the idea of identity and how we choose to share certain facets of ourselves.

3. There are many books, movies, and plays that follow a similar archetypal structure as *Other World i*n which a character is transported into a new and unfamiliar world, learns to navigate the seemingly topsy-turvy rules of that world, and meets friends and foes along the way as that character works to return home. *The Wizard of Oz, Alice's Adventures Through the Looking Glass,* and *The Hobbit* are just three examples of this type of journey into an unknown and sometimes confusing world. What are other examples of this type of story? What are some of the common themes or elements of these stories (or books/movies/plays)? Create a chart that shows links between the style and story of *Other World* and one or two other well-known works. What do you think are the common tasks of the writers of these works? Why do you think this type of story is so prevalent in our culture? Are there stories like these from other times or cultures? Share your ideas and findings with your class.

4. Design a board game, video game, or short film that takes place in an imagined or fantasy world. What types of lands/realms/settings are in your imagined world? What types of characters or beings might be found in these settings? Create a through-line challenge and

*(continued)*

goal for players of your game or protagonists of your film, and other obstacles/challenges that might occur for players or characters in the course of the story you are telling.  Flesh out your ideas with drawings, models, or descriptions.  Then assemble your ideas in a sequence that a player or audience member would be likely to experience.  Share your design through a storyboard, flow chart, map, or other format of your choosing (and be sure to title your piece!).  Afterward, reflect on your experience.  What was fun or intriguing about inventing this world, its inhabitants, and its structures and rules?  What was the hardest part of this process for you?

5.  Delve into the history of the video game, looking at roots in arcade games, home gaming systems (handheld or those that hooked into a television), the use of purchased apps, and  / or online subscriptions.  What are some of the iconic games, characters, or gaming systems that enjoyed widespread popularity?  How and when did massive multiplayer online games gain a foothold in the industry?  What types of careers are available in the industry, and what skills are useful for employment in the creation, development, and operation of the games?  Take a poll that includes a diversity of respondents about their interest in video games, favorite gaming-related activities, or level of social interaction within the gaming world.  Share your findings with your class.

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Page 13—Temula in *Other World*.  Photo by Matt Urban, NüPOINT Media .

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Page 17—Avatars in *Other World.*  Photo by Matt Urban, NüPOINT Media .

## Why Go to the Theatre?
### State and National Education Standards Addressed Through
### Taking Your Students to a Live Theatre Production

When your students view live theatre, they are taking part in a learning experience that engages their minds on many levels. From simple recall and comprehension of the plot of a play or musical to analysis and evaluation of the production elements of a show, students receive and interpret messages communicated through words, movement, music, and other artistic devices. Beyond "I liked it; it was good," students learn to communicate about the content and performance of an artistic piece and to reflect on their own and others' emotional, aesthetic, and intellectual points-of-view and responses. And the immediacy of live theatre--the shared moments between actors and audience members in the here-and-now--raises students' awareness of the power and scope of human connection.

**The following educational standards are addressed in a visit to a performance at Delaware Theatre Company along with a pre-show DTC classroom presentation and post-show talkback session at the theatre.** *(Additional standards addressed through the use of the study guide or through further classroom study are not included here.)*

Common Core English Language Arts Standards:
*Reading: 9-10 and 11-12, Strands 3, 4, 6*
*Language: 9-10 and 11-12, Strands 3, 4, and 5*


National Core Arts Standards—Theatre:
*Responding: Anchor Standards 7, 8, and 9*
*Connecting: Anchor Standard 11*


Delaware Standards for English Language Arts (DOE):
*Standard 2: 2.2a, 2.4bl, 2.5b, 2.5g, 2.6a*
*Standard 3: 3.1b, 3.3b1, 3.3b2*
*Standard 4: 4.1a, 4.1b, 4.1c, 4.2f, 4.3a, 4.4b*

# Teamwork in Theatre = Artists + Audience

Going to the theatre is a wonderful way to experience **TEAMWORK.**

The **ARTISTS** who put on the show—that includes people like actors, musicians, sound designers, costumers, painters, carpenters, and even electricians—are not only involved in the performance, but have often spent weeks or months getting the show ready.  That's a lot of work!  And there would be no show without the efforts of these artists.  They are very important!

The **AUDIENCE** who comes to see the show is also important.  There is no show if there is no audience!  The actors, musicians, and technicians can practice all they want to, but it takes an audience to turn all that work into a theatre performance!

**THEATRE** is not the same as a movie or a TV show.  Theatre is LIVE in front of you.  The actors onstage?  They are real people in the room with you!  The lights shining onstage?  They are controlled by real people in the room with you!  The sound of applause during the bows?  That comes from real people in the room with you!  **Everything anyone does in the room, whether that person is an ARTIST or an AUDIENCE member, affects everyone else.**  If an actor decides not to wear his costume, it disrupts the performance, surprises the other actors, and confuses the audience.  If an audience member decides to play a video game during the show, it disrupts the performance, creates strange lights and sounds that don't fit in the show, and distracts other audience members and the artists involved with the performance.  When you are in the theatre, your words and actions are observed by everyone in the room, and these words and actions can make the theatre experience a good one for everyone else or a bad one for everyone else.  This is why TEAMWORK is so important in theatre.  Everyone in the room needs everyone else to DO THEIR PART for the experience to be successful.

### What must the ARTISTS do during the theatre performance?

Do the show as rehearsed, and not suddenly change something or surprise other actors or technicians.

Give full attention to your job, whether that is acting or moving scenery or opening a curtain on time.

Give full energy to the performance, showing that you care about what the audience sees and hears.

### What must the AUDIENCE do during the theatre performance?

Give full attention to the activity onstage, with no talking during the show, no sleeping, and no playing with or using things like phones, toys, or papers.

Practice courteous behaviors towards other audience members, not making noises during the show, keeping hands and feet to yourself, and staying in your seat rather than distracting others by getting up and down.

Show respect for the place and the people in it by doing things like arriving on time; waiting until after the curtain call to leave; not eating, drinking, or chewing gum in the theatre; and responding to the show in a way that recognizes the efforts of the ARTISTS and the AUDIENCE in making the experience positive.

When ARTISTS and AUDIENCE members all do their part, they show respect for each other and for the work involved in creating theatre.  **That mutual respect and the efforts to make the experience a positive one for all add up to make TEAMWORK in the theatre!**