Josh Kornbluth

Atlantic Fellow at GBHI
UCSF Memory and Aging Center
Home Country: USA
Field of Employment: Monologuist

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Professional Profile

Key Areas: storytelling, theater, monologues, comedy

Josh Kornbluth has spent over a quarter-century as a theatrical monologuist, performing autobiographical tales for diverse audiences. Now, at GBHI, he is applying his passion and skill for storytelling to the subject of dementia. This work is taking two forms: developing his own monologue about dementia, and helping people with dementia—and their caregivers—tell their own life stories.

Kornbluth develops his monologues via improvisations in front of audiences, which he then crafts into a full-length, touring, one-man play. These shows are fundamentally comedic, but they often deal with very serious subjects. During his year as a GBHI Fellow at UCSF’s Memory and Aging Center, Kornbluth is doing a series of improvises on the subject of dementia that he will later shape into a finished show designed to be performed on stages around the United States and elsewhere. He intends for this piece to educate audiences about the exciting research being done on brain disease and to help remove the stigma that society often attaches to people with dementia and their caregivers.

“A diagnosis of dementia doesn’t mark the end of a person’s life story—in fact, brain diseases can inspire a period of tremendous self-expression for patients and their caregivers.”
In addition, Kornbluth is working with an early-onset dementia support group, helping them develop and perform their own autobiographical tales. These stories are also generated through improvis—first to others in the group, and later (after shaping and rehearsing) to audiences in theaters. This exuberantly creative process brings joy to the participants and shows the public that people with dementia and their caregivers can be vital, funny, and profound.

**Bio:** Josh Kornbluth has performed numerous autobiographical monologues in theaters around the United States, Poland, and India. His show *Red Diaper Baby* was nominated for a Drama Desk Award and was selected for the annual Best American Plays collection. Other works include *The Mathematics of Change*, *Ben Franklin: Unplugged*, *Andy Warhol: Good for the Jews?*, and *Sea of Reeds*. With his brother Jacob, he has adapted two of his solo pieces into feature films—*Haiku Tunnel* and *Love & Taxes*—in which he has starred. His monologues have been collected into books and audiobooks, and have been captured in concert films. In recent years, he has been teaching a course at Stanford University called The Ethics of Storytelling.